

**Romantic Love in Words and Objects during Courtship  
and Adultery *c.* 1730 to 1830**

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### **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Sally Holloway hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Sally Holloway

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2013

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores romantic love during premarital and extramarital relationships in England between c. 1730 and 1830. It is situated within the fields of Cultural History, Gender History, the History of Emotions, Marriage, the Life-Cycle and Material Culture. It uses evidence from sixty-eight different relationships, from which twenty-seven were selected for detailed scrutiny. These include both courting and adulterous couples, which have previously been problematically elided by historians. It draws upon a broad source base, including letters, material objects, newspaper reports, novels, ballads, poetry, prints, paintings, religious texts, medical treatises and court records.

After the historiographical introduction in Chapter One, Chapter Two explores the indispensable role played by creating, exchanging and physically handling love tokens on the path to matrimony. Chapter Three reveals the quasi-public nature of love letters, the myriad dichotomies between male and female epistles, and the haptic power of letters as material objects. Chapter Four unearths the secret codes and disappearing ink utilised by adulterous couples, outlining the unique features of the language of forbidden love. Chapter Five challenges preconceptions of romantic love as ‘innate’ or ‘transhistorical’ by outlining the religious, medical and literary developments shaping conceptions and expressions of love. The final two chapters focus on the darker side of love; Chapter Six argues that languishing from heartbreak was redefined as a uniquely female malady from the mid-1750s, while men were expected to resist to maintain their pride and self-control. Chapter Seven charts the evolution of breach of promise actions under the common law, and the objects invoked as ‘proof’ of an attachment.

The thesis recognises that the understanding and expression of romantic love was historically and culturally contingent upon social and cultural shifts. It locates romantic relationships firmly within the material world, as letters and tokens guided couples from initial intimacy to a deeper emotional connection.

## Acknowledgements

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### Conventions and Abbreviations

In all quotations from primary sources, original spelling and punctuation has been maintained throughout. Capitalisation, italics, underlined phrases and crossings-out have been reproduced as in the original, with my own insertions made in square brackets. Dates have been arranged in the style chosen by writers, usually with the month first, followed by the day and year.

BCA	Birmingham City Archives, Birmingham
BCLM	Black Country Living Museum, Dudley
BI	Borthwick Institute, York
BIWLD	British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries Database
BL	British Library, London
BLARS	Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service, Bedford
BLO	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BM	British Museum, London
BND	British Newspaper Database, British Library
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone
CRO	Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock
EBBA	English Broadside Ballad Archive
ECCO	Eighteenth-Century Collections Online
EKAC	East Kent Archive Centre, Dover
<i>Eng. Rep.</i>	<i>English Reports</i>
ERO	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office, Lewes
HLC	Huntington Library, California
HM	Horsham Museum, West Sussex
HRO	Hampshire Record Office, Winchester
JRL	John Rylands Library, Manchester
KJV	The Bible, Authorized King James Version
LA	Lancashire Archives, Preston
LERO	Leicestershire Record Office, Leicester
LIRO	Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool

LUL	Liverpool University Library, Liverpool
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, London
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London
LSF	Library of the Society of Friends, London
LWL	Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, Connecticut
NA	Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
NRO	Norfolk Record Office, Norwich
NYRO	North Yorkshire Record Office, Northallerton
OBO	Old Bailey Online
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OEDO	Oxford English Dictionary Online
SHC	Surrey History Centre, Woking
TDA	Times Digital Archive
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, London
WAC	Wallace Collection, London
WC	Wellcome Collection, London
WCA	Westminster City Archives, London
WLD	Winterthur Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware
WSA	Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, Chippenham
WSU	Washington State University Library, Washington

[I]n my mind, there cannot be higher felicity on earth enjoyed by man than the participation of genuine reciprocal amorous affection with an amiable woman. There he has a full indulgence of all the delicate feelings and pleasures both of body and mind, while at the same time in this enchanting union he exults with a consciousness that he is the superior person...I am therefore walking about with a healthful stout body and a cheerful mind, in search of a woman worthy of my love, who thinks me worthy of hers.

Frederick A. Pottle (ed.) *Boswell's London Journal 1762-1763*, 14<sup>th</sup>  
December 1762, (Edinburgh, 2004), p. 84.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 1762, the gentleman James Boswell (1740-95) noted in his London journal that there could be no ‘higher felicity on earth’ than a ‘reciprocal amorous affection’ between a man and a woman. The dynamics of these romantic dalliances are indicative of gender roles in society as a whole, and the negotiation of power between the sexes, as demonstrated by Boswell’s description of himself as the ‘superior person’ in such exchanges. His detailed account of his untiring search for ‘a woman worthy of my love’ also succinctly demonstrates how the search for a spouse dominated the lives of single men and women during this period. This is because marriage provided a crucial turning point in setting-up a new household and signalling the beginning of adulthood.

When a man found an amiable woman to create an ‘enchanted union’ with, he would have conducted his courtship through a number of avenues. These varied significantly according to the wealth and social status of the two parties.<sup>1</sup> Meetings could be arranged in the houses of friends and family members, where individuals could talk, eat and drink together.<sup>2</sup> Fairs provided a raucous space for young men and women to mingle, while pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall (redesigned in 1732) and Ranelagh (est. 1742) provided a more respectable venue in which couples could promenade.<sup>3</sup> Balls, operas and plays also provided additional opportunities for amorous encounters. The progress of an alliance was marked through the exchange of love letters and love tokens, which are among the subjects of this thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> As David Cressy has noted, ‘Individual cases varied, according to the circumstances and inclinations of those involved, but custom established a social framework within which particular approaches could be judged’, *idem, Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 233-66, at p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Loreen Giese has found that talking together was the most common ‘proof’ of courtship in matrimonial enforcement suits in the London Consistory Court between 1586 and 1611, while eating and drinking were also important. See *idem, Courtships, Marriage Customs, and Shakespeare’s Comedies* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 82-4, 96.

<sup>3</sup> In particular, Ranelagh was the favoured location for aristocratic courtship. While not confined to a particular social group, domestic servants in livery were explicitly banned from Vauxhall’s Walks. See Penelope J. Corfield, *Vauxhall and the Invention of the Urban Pleasure Gardens* (London, 2008), pp. 13, 16 and David E. Coke and Alan Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History* (London, 2011), esp. pp. 75-6.



This thesis will explore romantic love during courtship and adultery in England between *c.* 1730 and 1830 by using letters, material objects, newspaper reports, court cases, novels, ballads, poetry, prints, paintings, religious texts and medical treatises as source material. In particular, it focuses on how individuals mediated and shaped romantic relationships in text and object. Love letters were exchanged in their greatest numbers by couples forced to endure long periods apart. The relationships studied in this thesis involved soldiers and sailors,<sup>4</sup> religious men,<sup>5</sup> merchants who travelled for work,<sup>6</sup> Members of Parliament,<sup>7</sup> and couples indulging in secret relationships to evade parental censure.<sup>8</sup> Many wrote for the pleasure of writing itself, especially authors such as William Godwin (1756-1836), Mary Hays (1759-1843), John Keats (1795-1821), Eleanor Anne Porden (1795-1825) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), whose letters are preserved in greater numbers due the author's fame and perceived literary skill. Such letters constitute a sub-genre of their own, and are dominated by references to luminaries such as Shakespeare. A second notable category of love letters are those exchanged by adulterous couples, featuring manual labourers, moneylenders, sailors, gentlemen, noblemen and royalty.<sup>9</sup> Adulterous letters have frequently been problematically elided with courtship letters into an undifferentiated category of 'love letters' which contains diametrically different forms of epistle. In response, this thesis considers the scandalous epistles of extra-marital affairs in a separate chapter on adultery. For a chronological chart of every couple consulted listing the religion, occupation and social rank of individuals

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<sup>4</sup> Charles O'Hara was appointed to a Cornetcy in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoons in 1752, becoming a Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards in 1756, Isaac Rebow was a Colonel in the East Essex militia *c.* 1759-79, Henry Smith served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Marines in *c.* 1756, and was promoted to Major in 1759, Richard Dixon was Captain of the 85<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, and Robert Garrett joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queen's foot in 1811, becoming Captain of the 97<sup>th</sup> Queen's Own in 1814. Thomas Pye became a Lieutenant in the navy in 1734, and Admiral in 1773, while Horatio Nelson became a Lieutenant in 1777 and Vice-Admiral in 1801.

<sup>5</sup> Religious men include Edward Leathes, Rector of Reedham and Freethorpe from 1775-88 and Southwood 1779-88, and Charles Powlett, Rector of Winslade from 1789 and Chaplain to the Prince of Wales from 1790.

<sup>6</sup> Merchants include the linen merchant James Nicholson, bridle-maker John Fawdington, cotton-trader Joseph Strutt and banker and brewer Francis Cobb.

<sup>7</sup> MPs include Isaac Rebow of Colchester (from 1754), Samuel Whitbread II of Bedford (from 1790), Henry Goulburn of Horsham (from 1808) and John Kerr, Earl of Ancram of Huntington (from 1820).

<sup>8</sup> Forced separations due to parental disapproval were endured by Samuel Whitbread II and Elizabeth Grey in 1787, and Mary Hays and John Eccles from *c.* 1777-80.

<sup>9</sup> These include the Bedfordshire gentleman Richard How II's affair with Silena Ramsay from 1759-62, Isabella Carr's affair with Sir James Lowther, first Earl of Lonsdale from 1759-69, the Duke of Cumberland's affair with Lady Henrietta Grosvenor in 1769, John King's affair with Mary 'Perdita' Robinson in 1773, Anna Maria Bennett's affair with Admiral Thomas Pye from 1780-5, Admiral Horatio Nelson's famous affair with Lady Emma Hamilton from 1798-1805, and the Lincoln housekeeper 'B.F.'s affair with William Pratt from 1814-16.

plus the date and location of a relationship, see Appendix One. For a biographical index of the key couples selected for detailed scrutiny see Appendix Two.

The thesis focuses on the time period from *c.* 1730 to 1830, which witnessed growing literacy rates and the rise of the culture of letters. It encompasses the writing and publication of Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel *Pamela* (1740), and the flourishing of romantic, sentimental and gothic fiction. The era also includes key legal shifts such as the Hardwicke Marriage Act in 1753 and subsequent development of breach of promise under the common law. The choice to focus on a one hundred year period was also a practical decision, with increasing numbers of letters surviving as the eighteenth century progressed. During an initial overview of surviving manuscripts between *c.* 1680 and 1850, I discovered that love letters were relatively scarce between *c.* 1680 and 1740, with greater numbers surviving from mid-century. After a boom in the 1780s love letters continued to proliferate into the early Victorian period.<sup>10</sup> The years from *c.* 1730 to 1830 were judged to be vital in the development and proliferation of the genre, also providing a clear framework within which to analyse distinguishing features and changes over time.

One of the central challenges for this thesis has been defining what exactly a 'love letter' is. Perhaps all letters containing amorous declarations could be described as such? What if writers expressed their undying love in a letter which is dominated by more mundane expressions? Did what constitutes a love letter change over time? In more than one case, the boundary between letters and love letters is blurred. To provide a degree of context about styles of male and female letter-writing, this thesis considers love letters in conjunction with letters written to family and friends, to help distinguish between a person's writing style as a whole and their specific *romantic* writing style.<sup>11</sup> It also uses love poems written by men such as the gentlemen Richard How II (1727-1801) and John Eccles (d. 1780), brewer and politician Samuel Whitbread II (1764-1815), banker and poet Paul Moon James (1780-1854) and politician Henry Goulburn (1784-1856), plus numerous anonymous suitors. In addition are formal proposals of marriage which have been preserved in the archives. All four of the written proposals studied here were rejected; firstly from

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<sup>10</sup> For an overview of manuscripts arranged according to archive see Bibliography, pp. 328-34. Also see Chapter 3, p. 107.

<sup>11</sup> Also see Chapter 8, pp. 267-9.

Staunton Degge to ‘Miss Sanders’ in c. 1745, secondly from Richard How II to ‘dearest & most worthily esteemed Sally’ in 1751, thirdly from Andrew Livesay to Mary Orbelar in 1762, and finally from Thomas Cobb to ‘Miss Torre’ in 1827. Taken together, these sources provide detailed primary evidence of the self-conscious and crafted language of love.

In analysing these sources this thesis draws upon four broad areas of historiography, which are outlined in this chapter. The chapter begins by describing how the burgeoning field of emotion history has historicised emotions such as love, jealousy, anger and empathy, while facing the difficult question of what exactly an ‘emotion’ is. Secondly, it engages with heated debates about marriage for love in the thirty-five years since Lawrence Stone’s pathbreaking study *The Family, Sex and Marriage* (1977). Thirdly, it focuses upon the role of love tokens to reach beyond the literate, highlighting scholarly neglect of eighteenth-century customs, and the opportunities presented by studying material culture. Fourthly, it draws upon debates about letter-writing in historiography, describing the widening spectrum of literacy and increasing scholarly recognition of the centrality of letter-writing in developing subjectivity. While these four fields may initially appear distinct, they are fused in this thesis in a consideration of how lovers used letters and objects to both shape and express their emotions.

In the previous two decades, scholars such as Fay Bound Alberti, Thomas Dixon, Ute Frevert, Keith Oatley, William Reddy and Carol and Peter Stearns have repeatedly and convincingly established that emotions can be subject to historical analysis. Frevert has coined the phrase ‘the historical economy of emotions’ to describe emotional states in history as dynamic and mobile, ‘enacting and reacting to cultural, social, economic and political challenges.’<sup>12</sup> Since Bound Alberti described the discipline as being ‘in its infancy’ at the millennium, research centres have been created across the world to stimulate interdisciplinary debate and extend the boundaries of emotion research.<sup>13</sup> These include centres in London, Manchester, Exeter, Berlin, Geneva, Amsterdam, Umeå, Navarre, Montreal and Perth.<sup>14</sup> A plethora of conferences in the past year alone have created detailed histories of love,

<sup>12</sup> Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (New York, 2011), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Fay Bound, ‘Emotion in Early Modern England, 1660-1760: Performativity and Practice at the Church Courts of York’, PhD thesis, University of York, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive list see <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/emotions/links/index.html>

empathy and pain, focusing particularly on how emotions were translated into language and shared with others.<sup>15</sup>

The boundaries of the field were initially articulated in Peter and Carol Stearns' groundbreaking article 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards' in *American Historical Review* (1985). They coined the term 'emotionology' to distinguish the 'collective emotional standards of a society from the emotional experiences of individuals and groups.' The term encouraged historians to focus more closely upon the social factors determining how emotions such as love were expressed in the past.<sup>16</sup> The central legacy of this work was to establish that emotions are time and space relative, in turn bolstering the history of emotions as a legitimate scholarly endeavour. As Peter Stearns and Jan Lewis have emphasised in later publications, emotions do not simply *count* in history, but they also *change*.<sup>17</sup> This is demonstrated by the changing language used to describe particular sorrowful emotions. While 'acedia' connoted listlessness, sloth and lack of desire to read or pray during Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 'melancholia' entailed sadness and lack of enthusiasm during the early modern period. Later in the twentieth century, the term 'depression' was used to describe helplessness, anxiety and loss of pleasure. The changing language used to describe these emotions reveals how they have been understood, interpreted and experienced in different ways throughout history.<sup>18</sup>

An influential critique of 'emotionology' was provided by Barbara Rosenwein's important article 'Worrying about Emotions in History' in *American*

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<sup>15</sup> For example 'The Transmission of Emotions: An Interdisciplinary Symposium', 10<sup>th</sup> February 2012, VU University Amsterdam, 'New Histories of Love and Romance, c. 1880-1960', 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> May 2012, University of Glamorgan, 'Conference on Empathy and Memory Studies', 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2012, Birkbeck and 'Pain as Emotion: Emotion as Pain: Perspectives from Modern History', 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012, Birkbeck.

<sup>16</sup> Peter and Carol Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (October, 1985), pp. 813-36, at p. 813. This is not to say that emotion history did not exist before 1985. Familial emotions were addressed less explicitly in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975), Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1978) and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. I: The History of Manners, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> See P. Stearns and Jan Lewis, 'Introduction' in *idem* (eds.) *An Emotional History of the United States* (London, 1998), pp. 1-14.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26, note 11. Frevert, *Emotions in History*, pp. 31-6. Frevert makes a similar point regarding changing notions of honour at pp. 37-40.

*Historical Review* (2002). She rightly pointed out that the Stearnses isolated an incredibly narrow source-base for accessing the emotional standards of a society, meaning that ‘virtually nothing from the pre-modern period can be considered true emotionology.’<sup>19</sup> As a solution, Rosenwein proposes the study of ‘emotional communities’ in history. Such studies include the evaluations which communities make about one another’s emotions, including ‘the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognise; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.’ Rosenwein’s model also allows for contradictory values to exist within the same society.<sup>20</sup> Frevert provides a pertinent example of this theory by emphasising how groups such as ‘emos’ constitute a significant subculture in modern society, deliberately setting themselves apart from others.<sup>21</sup> A recent edition of *Rethinking History* (2012) has problematised the notion of emotional ‘communities’, ‘groups’ or ‘styles’, arguing that it is difficult to separate particular styles from the spaces in which they are created. As Benno Gammerl argues, ‘diverging emotional patterns and practices prevail in distinct spatial settings.’ In other words, the expression of emotions such as grief or affection depends on *where* they occur.<sup>22</sup>

Fay Bound Alberti further critiques the way in which large-scale narratives of change such as Norbert Elias’ ‘civilizing process’ treat emotions as ‘pre-cultural human experiences.’ She argues that the identification of ‘modern’ ways of thinking, feeling and being in these histories oversimplifies emotions, with little acknowledgement of their culturally and historically situated meanings. Historiography has therefore created an ‘internal, pre-cultural essence of emotion’ moulded by broader patterns of social expectation, which mistakenly treats emotions as transhistorical phenomena.<sup>23</sup> While emotions are ‘physical and lived experiences, giving rise to increased heartbeat, sweat, and goose bumps’, historians are reliant upon representations of these emotions in text and object. Emotions are therefore not abstractable from their means of expression in letters, diaries, courtrooms and material culture. Instead, they become evident as ‘a performative act or concept’

<sup>19</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Worrying about Emotions in History’, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 3 (June, 2002), p. 825.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 842.

<sup>21</sup> Frevert, *Emotions in History*, pp. 206-7.

<sup>22</sup> Benno Gammerl, ‘Emotional Styles – Concepts and Challenges’, *Rethinking History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2012), pp. 163-6.

<sup>23</sup> Bound, ‘Emotion in Early Modern England’, p. 19. Cf. Elias, *Civilizing Process*, Vol. I.

which is realised and shaped by these expressions. Taking a similar approach to Gammerl, Bound Alberti has called for historians to focus on ‘emotional performances in particular sites of conflict’ such as the courtroom or diary.<sup>24</sup> In the context of this thesis, this involves studying emotional performances in love letters, diaries, objects and court cases conducted during courtship and adultery, which had distinct ‘emotional languages’ of their own.

One of the central challenges for the discipline has been defining what exactly an ‘emotion’ is. As William Reddy noted in 2001, ‘despite the many positive findings this new research has generated, the revolution has done little to clear up the vexed question of what, exactly, emotions are. Disagreements persist, uncertainties abound.’<sup>25</sup> The issue is not restricted to historians; attempts to tackle this thorny question have been made by anthropologists, ethnographers, psychologists, philosophers and literary critics.<sup>26</sup> Jerome Kagan has attributed scholarly hesitancy to pin-down ‘emotion’ to the fact that ‘any proposed definition is unlikely to escape controversy or be permanently correct.’<sup>27</sup> The term itself only emerged to describe ‘morally disengaged, bodily, non-cognitive and involuntary feelings’ between c. 1800 and c. 1850, a shift outlined in Thomas Dixon’s influential work *From Passions to Emotions: the Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (2003).<sup>28</sup> In his recent article “‘Emotion’: The History of a Keyword in Crisis’ in *Emotion Review* (2012), Dixon traced the semantic history of the term, suggesting that the

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<sup>24</sup> Bound Alberti, ‘Introduction: Medical History and Emotion Theory’ in *idem* (ed.) *Medicine, Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. xiii-xxviii, at p. xvii and xxiii.

<sup>25</sup> William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), p. ix.

<sup>26</sup> See Jaak Panksepp, ‘Toward a General Psychobiological Theory of Emotions’, *The Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1982), pp. 407-69, Panksepp and Lucy Bivian, *The Archaeology of Mind: Neural Origins of Human Emotion* (New York, 2010), WV Drevets and ME Raichle, ‘Reciprocal suppression of regional cerebral blood flow during emotional versus higher cognitive processes: Implications for interactions between emotion and cognition’, *Cognitive Emotions*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1998), pp. 353-85, Phillip R. Shaver, Hillary J. Morgan and Shelley Wu, ‘Is Love a “Basic” Emotion?’, *Personal Relationships*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1996), pp. 81-96, Benedicte Grima, *The Performance of Emotion among Paxtun Women. “The Misfortunes which have befallen me”* (Austin, 1992) and Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, 1996). For a useful overview see Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, ‘The Thing Called Emotion’ in Peter Goldie (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 41-62.

<sup>27</sup> Jerome Kagan, *What Is Emotion? History, Measures, and Meanings* (London, 2007), p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: the Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 3. Paul Griffiths has made a similar argument, distinguishing at least two categories of ‘emotion’ (‘affect programs’ and ‘higher cognitive’ emotions), arguing that these ‘do not constitute a single object of knowledge.’ See *idem*, ‘What Emotions Really Are’ in Robert C. Solomon (ed.) *What Is an Emotion? Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 284-90 and *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories* (London, 1997).

‘overinclusivity’ of ‘emotion’ can be rectified by reinstating a more nuanced definition such as the ancient distinction between ‘passions’ and ‘affections.’<sup>29</sup>

Two general approaches have been adopted by scholars attempting to define ‘emotion,’ beginning with the cognitivist mainstream (predominantly composed of philosophers) who echo the principles of Aristotle (384-322 BC), Seneca (c. 4 BC-AD 65), Benedict de Spinoza (1632-77) and David Hume (1711-76). Their central argument is that the experience and expression of emotion is intellectually and culturally conditioned. Cognitivists argue that emotions are judgements or beliefs, with some suggesting that certain beliefs are antecedent conditions for particular emotions. On the other hand, physiologists argue that emotions are predominantly embodied and neuropsychological phenomena.<sup>30</sup> The complex interplay between feelings and neurology is neatly summarized in Caroll E. Izard’s argument that ‘Emotion consists of neural circuits (that are at least partially dedicated), response systems, and a feeling state/process that motivates and organizes cognition and action.’<sup>31</sup>

Both of these approaches help to formulate our understanding of love, which was at once neuropsychological and shaped by certain cultural discourses. This thesis opposes the argument that romantic love was ‘invented’ by the troubadour poets of twelfth century France. Such a view would be unsustainable in light of the rich research conducted into love in diverse societies from Ancient Egypt to Africa and the Muslim world.<sup>32</sup> Instead, it argues that social and cultural shifts transformed the expression of love. This is distinct from the psychological processes determining how individuals actually *felt*. The deification of love in the Western world has

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<sup>29</sup> Dixon, ‘“Emotion”: a Keyword in Crisis’, *Emotion Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October, 2012), pp. 338-44.

<sup>30</sup> See Judith Horstman, *The Scientific American Book of Love, Sex and the Brain: The Neuroscience of How, When, Why and Who We Love* (San Francisco, 2012), esp. pp. 18-28, John Deigh, ‘Concepts of Emotions in Modern Philosophy and Psychology’ in Goldie, *Philosophy of Emotion*, pp. 17-40, Solomon, ‘Introduction’ in *idem* (ed.) *What Is An Emotion?*, pp. 1-2 and Dixon, ‘Why I am angry’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Notably, Izard emphasised that this ‘description’ was not intended as a definition. Caroll E. Izard, ‘The Many Meanings / Aspects of Emotion: Definitions, Functions, Activation, and Regulation’, *Emotion Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (October, 2010), p. 367. Also see discussion of these issues by Izard, Maria Gendron, Geoffrey White, Sherri C. Widen and James A. Russell in the same volume.

<sup>32</sup> Jack Goody, *Food and Love: A Cultural History of East and West* (London, 1998), pp. 96-123, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 267-85 and R. Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-Lyric* (Oxford, 1965). For opposing views see CS Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: a Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford, 1936) and Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (Princeton, 1940; 1983).

created a number of problems for scholars of love, with Stephen Kern expressing concern that ‘for all the apparent change, love might be a universal.’ However despite the scepticism, he found ‘abundant evidence for the historical nature of love.’<sup>33</sup> As Reddy has argued in his landmark book *The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia & Japan, 900-1200 CE* (2012):

‘Love’ is not a separable feature of human experience independent of social life. Emotions do not exist prior to social organisation or cultural form, but arise from an interaction between social organization and cultural form, on the one hand, and our capacity to feel, on the other.<sup>34</sup>

Any history of the understanding and experience of romantic love is therefore also a history of social and cultural change. Each of the couples studied in this thesis were guided through courtship by the ‘interaction’ of feelings with the accepted language, conventions and actions used in the expression of romantic love.<sup>35</sup>

The ‘distinct semantic networks’ used to describe particular feelings are fundamental to the social construction of emotion.<sup>36</sup> James M. Wilce has described a ‘hot-as-molten-metal mental fusion’ between language and emotion, arguing that ‘forms of discourse – and more specifically, genres of emotional expression – help constitute social understandings and apparently internal processes.’<sup>37</sup> When Caroll E. Izard asked thirty-five scientists to isolate topics for future emotion research in October 2010, one of the most important subjects identified was ‘relations between emotion and language.’<sup>38</sup> This is due to the assumption that ‘the way in which people think and talk about emotions offers a clue as to how they experience and handle them.’<sup>39</sup> Paolo Santangelo makes a similar point in his edited collection on emotions in China, arguing that emotions are ‘the product of a specific culture and of a specific language.’ This means that the historian must consciously interpret emotions

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<sup>33</sup> Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns* (London, 1992), p. 396.

<sup>34</sup> Reddy, *The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia & Japan, 900-1200 CE* (London, 2012), p. 348.

<sup>35</sup> Also see Chapter 5, pp. 158-60.

<sup>36</sup> Kagan, *What Is Emotion?*, p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> Wilce continues that historians have neglected the ‘capacity of language itself (that is, a code or register, as locally conceived) to serve as an affect-laden index – as the epitome of some identity, and thus the object of emotion.’ See James M. Wilce, *Language and Emotion* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 2, 8, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Izard, ‘The Many Meanings / Aspects of Emotion’, p. 367.

<sup>39</sup> Frevert, *Emotions in History* p. 24.



such as love ‘within the semantic frame of a certain world.’<sup>40</sup> This thesis uses letters, diaries, newspaper reports and court records to examine the nature of romantic love as spoken or written in the words of lovers themselves. The nuanced vocabulary they chose to use not only expressed their love for another, but also shaped and influenced their understanding and experience of love itself.

Eighteenth-century historians will be most familiar with romantic love through debates over companionate marriage, which are addressed in the second part of this literature review. Courtship and marriage practices have provoked some of the most fervent debates among historians, ever since Stone famously outlined his shift from ‘distance, deference and patriarchy’ to ‘Affective Individualism’ between 1500 and 1800.<sup>41</sup> Scores of historians have since disputed his argument for the development of affection, most notably Alan Macfarlane, who argues for intense individualism and personal choice in marriages from the medieval period onwards. He rejects Stone’s idea of love as a ‘side-effect’ of capitalism, arguing for continuity in marriage with ‘a mixture of love and economic considerations from the fifteenth century onwards.’<sup>42</sup>

While Stone and Macfarlane must be referenced by any scholar of marriage, eighteenth-century historians have long since reached a consensus that marriage was neither universally strategic nor wholly individualised. David Lemmings argues that debates over the provisions of the Hardwicke Marriage Act in 1753 reinforced ‘narrowly paternal and male control of marriage’ over the influence of mothers and children, demonstrating an ‘abiding attachment’ to patriarchy and materialism, rather than romantic considerations and personal choice.<sup>43</sup> Amanda Vickery has argued for the persistence of prudence, as ‘money and magnificence were conducive to passion

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<sup>40</sup> Paolo Santangelo, ‘Introduction’ in *idem* and Donatella Guida (eds.) *Love, Hatred, and Other Passions: Questions and Themes on Emotions in Chinese Civilization* (Leiden, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *The Culture of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1987), p. 128. Also see *idem*, ‘Review of Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England*’, *History and Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (February, 1979), pp. 103-26, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978) and *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1830* (Oxford, 1986). Further critics include Keith Wrightson in *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), esp. Chapters 3 and 4, ‘The Family in Early Modern England: Continuity and Change’ in S. Taylor, R. Connors and C. Jones (eds.) *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Suffolk, 1998), pp. 1-22 and Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (eds.) *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-17.

<sup>43</sup> David Lemmings, ‘Marriage and the Law in the Eighteenth Century: Hardwicke’s Marriage Act of 1753’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (June, 1996), pp. 356-7.

in many a female breast.’<sup>44</sup> Ingrid Tague has noted that marriage portions rose across the early modern period, with the use of settlements to preserve women’s separate property rights making marriage contracts look increasingly like ‘a business contract.’<sup>45</sup> The financial implications of matrimony were nowhere expressed more clearly than in *A Master-Key to the Rich Ladies Treasury. Or, The Widower and Batchelor’s Directory* (1742) which listed the title, abode, reputed fortune and stocks of eligible women. This makes it difficult for historians to separate the ‘emotional’ and ‘strategic’ reasons for marriage, as they were almost always fused. The various considerations in choosing a spouse were a standard feature of contemporary prints, such as Richard Newton’s *Matrimonial Speculation* in 1792 (Fig. 1). The etching presents an array of reasons for choosing to marry including for work (‘She will be a great addition to the shop’), money (‘In all human probability she cannot exist a fortnight’), pregnancy (‘Never mind John, it may be all for the best’) and social advancement (‘A good subject for keeping up the Family Title.’)



**Fig. 1 – Richard Newton, *Matrimonial Speculation*, London, 1792, hand-coloured etching, 47.6 x 74.7 cm, British Museum, London, AN179207001, © The Trustees of the British Museum.**

<sup>44</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Ingrid Tague, ‘Love, Honour and Obedience: Fashionable Women and the Discourse of Marriage in the Early Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 40, No. 1 (January, 2001), pp. 78-9.

Historians have also emphasised the importance of multi-faceted consent to a marriage, as family, kin and community had a distinct role to play. They could act as ‘facilitators and prompters’ to make or improve a match, or could even end it altogether. Their main role was at the beginning of the process, to screen suitable suitors, and at its conclusion, to draw up agreements on behalf of a newly contracted couple.<sup>46</sup> As argued in Chapter Three of this thesis, family members also played a noteworthy role in reading love letters to assess the writer’s suitability as a spouse.<sup>47</sup> In noble marriages in particular, ‘more was at stake than momentary infatuation’, and emotion was often a secondary consideration to land, status and wealth.<sup>48</sup> As Lord Courtland instructed his daughter in Susan Ferrier’s novel *Marriage* (1818), she was expected to marry ‘for the purpose for which matrimony was ordained amongst people of birth---that is, for the aggrandisement of her family, the extending of their political influence---for becoming, in short, the depository of their mutual interest.’<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, we would be mistaken to assume that the wishes of individuals and their families were naturally polarised, as ‘most girls had the same criteria of suitability as their parents anyway,’ meaning that ‘many a happy marriage resulted from a sort of willing drift into a suitable alliance.’<sup>50</sup>

With this in mind, it is evident that marriages between c. 1730 and 1830 were characterised by myriad forms of love, including romantic, passionate, companionate and prudent love. Love was not necessarily ‘an irrational distraction from rational behaviour’, and could be rational, calm and calculating.<sup>51</sup> The ultimate calculated match is represented in the first painting from William Hogarth’s *Marriage A-La Mode* series, entitled *The Marriage Settlement* (Fig. 2). It depicts the Earl of Squander and a wealthy city merchant negotiating the marriage of their children. The syphilitic groom gazes vainly into a mirror, while the miserable bride has to be consoled by the lawyer Silvertongue. The inescapability of their unhappy fate is symbolised by the chained dogs in the foreground, and the crazed Medusa hanging

<sup>46</sup> Cressy, *Birth Marriage and Death*, p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 97-101.

<sup>48</sup> Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1989), p. 54.

<sup>49</sup> Susan Ferrier, *Marriage. A Novel* (Cambridge, 1818; 1999), p. 3. For a similar equation in earlier novels see Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling* (Ware, 1749; 1999), pp. 224-5.

<sup>50</sup> Perkin, *op. cit.*, p. 60. Also see Catherine Frances, ‘Making Marriages in Early Modern England: Rethinking the Role of Family and Friends’ in Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson (eds.) *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400-1900* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 39-56, esp. p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> Kern, *Culture of Love*, p. 1.

on the wall behind them. Marital arrangements before the legal codification of marriage in 1753 were thus carefully orchestrated by parents because of the anxiety surrounding passionate love-matches. Marriages of convenience were therefore seen as more stable, as the passion of romantic pairings often burned out. One of the most infamous mismatched couples in fiction were Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), where 'the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character.'<sup>52</sup>



**Fig. 2 – William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la Mode: 1, The Marriage Settlement*, England, c. 1743, oil on canvas, 69.9 x 90.8cm, The National Gallery, London, NG113.**

Historians have devoted much time to categorising the 'spectrum of irregular unions' which characterised the period before 1754, which ranged from 'consensual relationships at one end to fully sanctioned church marriages at the other.'<sup>53</sup> At the start of our period in c. 1730, clandestine marriage was out of control, the uncertainty of the law facilitated bigamy, and there was a 'roaring trade' for Fleet marriages, particularly at the Fleet Prison in London.<sup>54</sup> As a result, love tokens were implicated in a web of customs that led to betrothals, and 'gift-giving was a socially

<sup>52</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London, 1813), Vol. I, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1996), p. 140.

<sup>54</sup> Lemmings, 'Marriage', p. 345. See Roger Lee Brown, *The Fleet Marriages: a History of Clandestine Marriages* (Welshpool, 2007).

recognised, even psychologically binding custom.’<sup>55</sup> These customs were so important because the verbal exchange of vows *per verba de praesenti* (in the present tense) or *per verba de futuro* (in the future tense) continued to govern the making of romantic alliances until the Hardwicke Marriage Act in 1753.

In 1753, Hardwicke’s Act codified marriage law by making the ‘creation of a binding union by simple contract’ the only path to a valid marriage. The Act only applied to ceremonies taking place in England and Wales, leading to the development of Gretna Green as a popular site for elopements. It included all Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and Independent ceremonies, only exempting Jewish and Quaker weddings.<sup>56</sup> While the bill itself was debated and passed (by 125 votes to 56) in 1753, the actual provisions became law on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1754. The Act declared that no suit could be brought in the church courts to compel the performance of a contract *per verba de praesenti* or *per verba de futuro*.<sup>57</sup> It required a valid marriage to be preceded by the calling of the banns on three consecutive Sundays, or the purchase of a costly wedding licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>58</sup> While the marriages of minors by licence were void in the absence of parental consent, marriages by banns were only void if a parent or guardian had raised their objections while the banns were being called. Their permission was deemed unnecessary if the individual in question had previously been widowed.<sup>59</sup> The Act provided ‘firm evidence of every marriage by proper registration’ through recording the signatures of the parties involved, and made individuals tampering with the register or forging a licence guilty of felony without benefit of clergy.<sup>60</sup> Most importantly, it required a valid marriage to take place at the Church in a single legal event, eliminating previous ambiguities by making marriage more formulaic.

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<sup>55</sup> Diana O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester, 2000), Chapter 2, pp. 57-98, at p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> Rebecca Probert, *Marriage Law and Practice in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 314-39.

<sup>57</sup> Section 13. See *Hansard’s Parliamentary History*, Vol. XV.

<sup>58</sup> Sections 1 and 2. In order to purchase a licence, one of the parties had to have resided in the parish or chapelry for at least four weeks. However there was no stipulation that the licence had to be properly obtained, somewhat undermining the premise of the Act. In 1759, the Archbishop added that licences would only be granted to Peers and Peeresses in their own right, their sons and daughters, Dowager Peeresses, Privy Councillors, Judges, Baronets, Knights and Members of the House of Commons, except in exceptional circumstances. See Probert, *Marriage Law*, pp. 222-4, 232-3.

<sup>59</sup> A minor was an individual under 21. See *ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>60</sup> Lemmings, ‘Marriage’, pp. 345-6.

John Gillis has famously argued that Hardwicke's Act was ultimately a failure, as sixty per cent of couples in the Welsh village of Llansanffraid Glyn Ceiriog continued to marry by jumping over a broomstick.<sup>61</sup> However Rebecca Probert has questioned his reliance on the Welsh folklorist Gwenith Gwynn, who made unwarranted inferences from just three oral testimonies. In turn, historians have uncritically adopted Gillis' arguments, falsely perpetuating an unsubstantiated myth.<sup>62</sup> Probert has developed this argument in her pioneering study *Marriage Law and Practice in the Long Eighteenth Century: A Reassessment* (2009). She castigates historians for making 'basic errors' about Hardwicke's Act with 'alarming frequency,' chiefly through arguing that the marriage of a minor would be invalid in the absence of parental consent, and that failure to comply with any requirements of the legislation made the marriage void.<sup>63</sup> Probert rejects the notion that practices before 1754 were 'in chaos,' refuting Stone's claim that there were 'a mass of individuals' who were unsure whether they were married or not. By analysing church court records, legal treatises, pamphlets and novels, Probert argues that vows *per verba de praesenti* should be understood as a contract rather than a marriage, as this is how they were seen by contemporaries.<sup>64</sup> When viewed in this light, the 1753 Act 'did not constitute such a radical break with the past as has been claimed, was almost universally observed, and was not subject to harsh interpretation by the courts.'<sup>65</sup> Probert's findings paradoxically place her in line with Gillis in questioning the far-reaching impact of legal reform.

In addition, historians have challenged the hegemonic status of patriarchal marriage by studying alternative unions between the sexes.<sup>66</sup> Rictor Norton has controversially charted the emergence of a 'gay subculture' between 1700 and 1830, characterised by mock 'Marrying' ceremonies between men at molly houses such as

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<sup>61</sup> JR Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present* (Oxford, 1985), p. 219.

<sup>62</sup> Probert, 'Chinese Whispers and Welsh Weddings', *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2005), pp. 211-28.

<sup>63</sup> Probert, *Marriage Law*, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-67. Cf. Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990), p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> See John Boswell, 'Categories, Experience and Sexuality' in Edward Stein (ed.), *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy* (London, 1990), pp. 133-74 and Berry, 'Queering the History of Marriage: the Social Recognition of a Castrato Husband in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Autumn, 2012), pp. 27-50. The debates, methodologies and evidence used in queer histories are usefully laid out in Chris Mounsey and Caroline Gonda, 'Queer People: An Introduction' in *idem* (eds.) *Queer People: Negotiations and Expressions of Homosexuality, 1700-1800* (Lewisburg, 2007), pp. 9-37.

Mother Clap's.<sup>67</sup> Historians such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Diana Fuss and Helen Berry have urged historians to recognise the 'plasticity' of marriage, rejecting the 'binary logic' of pairings such as male/female and same/different.<sup>68</sup> Berry's research has revealed the curious position occupied by castrati in the world of sexuality, as they provided 'life-size dolls, colourfully dressed and flamboyant, safe for women to dress up, buy presents for, and play with, but pass over according to their whim.'<sup>69</sup> This loophole in the sexual double standard meant that women could write love letters to castrati, as their sexless effeminacy made them harmless.<sup>70</sup> Berry's notion of alternative unions is exemplified by Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci's (c. 1735-90) marriage to the barrister's daughter Dorothea Maunsell (c. 1750-1814) in 1766, which was accepted by many of their contemporaries even though he was physically unable to father children.<sup>71</sup> While this thesis focuses exclusively on heterosexual relationships, these studies provide a pertinent reminder of the diversity of unions in society as a whole.

Despite the evolution of debates concerning the nature of marriage, the actual practices of courtship – in the form of letters and tokens exchanged by lovers – remain woefully neglected by historians. The majority of research to date has centred on the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, with virtually no recognition of the centrality of gift-exchange during eighteenth-century rituals. While Stone and Macfarlane provoked myriad debates taken up in the work of Adair, Lemmings, Tague and Vickery, little research has focused upon the making and breaking of relationships through material culture. This is one of the central aims of this thesis, and is contextualised in the third part of this literature review.

In Laura Gowing's *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (1996), she analyses the role of litigation for betrothed, married, and

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<sup>67</sup> Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: the Gay Subculture in England, 1700-1830* (Stroud, 2006), pp. 100-2. As Norton notes, 'Quite often the term is merely synonymous with "fucking."'

<sup>68</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called on historians to reject 'epistemologically charged pairings' such as masculine/feminine, majority/minority, as to 'discuss any of these indices in any context, in the absence of an antihomophobic analysis, must perhaps be to perpetuate unknowingly compulsions implicit in each' in *idem*, *Epistemology of the Closet* (London, 2008), pp. 72-3. Diana Fuss has charted the efforts of lesbian and gay theorists to question 'the stability and ineradicability of the hetero/homo hierarchy.' See 'Inside/Out' in *idem* (ed.) *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (London, 1991), pp. 1-10, at p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Berry, *The Castrato and his Wife* (Oxford, 2011), p. 81.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-9.

separated couples between 1570 and 1640. Such cases placed particular emphasis upon the ‘transactions of courtship,’ involving the exchange, offer and refusal of ‘words, gestures, emotions, and gifts.’ Gowing rightly recognises the significance of these transactions in illuminating both ‘the special time of courtship’ and gender roles in marriage and wider society.<sup>72</sup> She argues that ‘Women and men both gave and received the gifts of courtship, but it was women who found themselves most obligated by them...A man’s gifts held, as a woman’s did not, the implication of an emotional and, potentially, a marital bond, and a woman’s receipt of gifts implied consent to that bond.’<sup>73</sup> Women’s gifts are thus marginalised as they did not imply the same obligation in court as a gift given by a man. As a result, the main power which Gowing grants women is their *response* to the tokens which were offered to them.<sup>74</sup> Loreen Giese and Peter Rushton have supported Gowing’s conclusions, arguing that more women ‘acted in response’ to gifts given by suitors and that ‘it was comparatively rare for there to be a balanced exchange of tokens.’<sup>75</sup>

Diana O’Hara’s *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (2000) again focuses upon the sixteenth century, using church court records, act books and wills to analyse the ‘language of tokens’ during this period.<sup>76</sup> O’Hara argues that an assortment of tokens was sent from men to women to mark distinct stages in their courtship, including money, clothing, domestic goods, jewellery, hair, and finally a ring.<sup>77</sup> Community awareness of these exchanges was pivotally important, as relationships were played out as a ‘social drama’ in the public eye, and gifts were weighted with moral value such as a promise. Within the diocese of Canterbury between 1542 and 1602, O’Hara finds that 57% of 301 matrimony cases from towns and villages discussed the giving of gifts and tokens. Money was the most popular gift, given by 39.5% of couples, while 32% gave clothing and leather, most commonly gloves, and 20.8% gave metal and trinkets, usually a ring. When comparing the dominant items within each of these

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<sup>72</sup> Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161. For women’s gift-giving in this thesis see Chapter 2, pp. 69-73.

<sup>75</sup> Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, p. 85 and Peter Rushton, ‘The Testament of Gifts: Marriage Tokens and Disputed Contracts in North-East England, 1560-1630’, *Folk Life*, 24 (1985-6), p. 26.

<sup>76</sup> O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, pp. 57-98.

<sup>77</sup> A similar argument is made in EJ Carlson, ‘Courtship in Tudor England,’ *History Today*, Vol. 43, Issue 8 (August, 1993), pp. 23-9.



three categories, O'Hara finds the giving of a ring 'most common', as it was exchanged 61 times out of a total of 403 transactions.<sup>78</sup>

While eighteenth-century love tokens have been almost entirely overlooked by scholars, Ginger Frost's *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class and Gender in Victorian England* (1995) reprises the topic for the Victorian period. The text is based upon breach of promise cases between 1750 and 1970 (largely from 1850 to 1900), with one chapter focusing exclusively on 'Courtship and Weddings.' Frost finds 173 cases which used love letters as evidence, with plaintiffs summoning letters and tokens as 'props with which to support their stories.'<sup>79</sup> Gifts varied according to the wealth of suitors, with affluent men giving expensive jewellery and even paintings to their sweethearts.<sup>80</sup> The three 'universal' tokens exchanged by the majority of couples were engagement rings, locks of hair and photographs, which provide intriguing evidence of courtship adapting to new technologies. If a man had presented a woman with these three gifts, 'she was perfectly justified in assuming that he intended marriage.' Conversely, Frost argues that Victorian women rarely gave presents to their lovers – their gifts 'usually consisted of service', such as nursing elderly relatives or cooking meals for a lover's family.<sup>81</sup> This has been contested by Jane Hamlett, who uses the diary of the gentleman's daughter Annie Dickinson to demonstrate how middle-class women used gifts to test their suitors' commitment and beliefs before marriage.<sup>82</sup>

As Hamlett's check on Frost's legal research clearly demonstrates, it is important to remember that only a small proportion of courtships entered the legal system. Those that did were the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, breach of promise cases were largely initiated by women, who brought 80% of the suits studied in Chapter Seven.<sup>83</sup> While female plaintiffs produced men's gifts as evidence of commitment, it was unnecessary for them to use their own tokens to win their

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<sup>78</sup> O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, pp. 64, 69. Giese has found the same items in a different order at the London Consistory Court between 1586 and 1611, where 'items of clothing or personal accessories' were most common, followed by money and then a ring. See *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, pp. 89-92.

<sup>79</sup> Ginger Frost, *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class and Gender in Victorian England* (London, 1995), p. 30.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 76-7.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter 7, p. 246.

cases. Moreover, the items they chose to reveal as evidence were undoubtedly not the only tokens they received. These were simply the gifts which had been purchased, given or received in such a way that they believed would win them the case, revealing clear hierarchies in the material culture of love. Court records also fail to account for the dynamics of exchange, and how couples used letters to request, praise or deplore particular gifts. The use of letters and tokens in this context is therefore somewhat oversimplified, as more complex emotions were at play than simply the making and breaking of engagements. Moreover, Frost's study of the period from 1750 to 1970 is based on only six cases from 1700 to 1799, followed by just eight cases from 1800 to 1830. The scanty source-base means that the eighteenth century is used solely to make unfounded generalisations which ostensibly differentiate it from the Victorian period.<sup>84</sup>

In order to discover the true diversity of gift-giving it is therefore vital for historians to look at court records in conjunction with letters and objects stored in museums and archives. This inserts lovers who did not enter the court system back into histories of gift-exchange, creating a more realistic and representative picture of courting behaviour. While texts such as *Domestic Dangers* and *Courtship and Constraint* have therefore gone a long way towards illuminating practices during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, little progress has been made for the following two-hundred years. The material culture of courtship during the long eighteenth century remains in the 'black hole' of research which Amanda Vickery described back in 1991.<sup>85</sup> This thesis aims to rectify the paucity of research about material culture and courtship during the long eighteenth century, treating love letters as *gifts* exchanged by lovers, which were touched, smelled and gazed at as embodiments of the sender.

In doing so, this thesis harnesses the continuing expansion of material culture into a major academic preoccupation. The foundations of the field were laid in the 1980s in the work of social anthropologists such as Igor Kopytoff and Arjun Appadurai, who explored the circulation and life histories of 'objects of economic

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<sup>84</sup> For further critique of Frost's arguments see Chapter 7, pp. 230, 236, 240, 246-7, 253.

<sup>85</sup> Vickery, 'Women of the Local Elite in Lancashire, 1750-c. 1825', PhD thesis, University of London, 1991, p. 10.

value’, termed ‘commodities.’<sup>86</sup> Many early texts analysing the social meanings of things were histories of consumption, such as Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John Plumb’s edited collection *The Birth of a Consumer Society: the Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (1982) and John Brewer and Roy Porter’s landmark collection *Consumption and the World of Goods* (1993). Subsequent works by Maxine Berg, Helen Clifford, Elizabeth Eger, Margot Finn and Lorna Weatherill have extended the field by analysing notions of luxury, consumer culture, desirable goods and financing the household.<sup>87</sup>

The study of material culture was bolstered by the founding of periodicals such as *Winterthur Portfolio* (1980), *Journal of Material Culture* (1996), *Visual Culture in Britain* (2000) and *West 86<sup>th</sup>* (2011). Scholars such as Richard Grassby and Karen Harvey have also published guides on how to approach alternative sources.<sup>88</sup> Eighteenth-Century research groups have begun to emerge focusing explicitly upon material culture, such as ‘Things: Material Cultures of the Long Eighteenth Century’ in Cambridge and ‘Domestic Subjects: The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857’ in London.<sup>89</sup> Conferences have drawn attention to new topics such as the transformation of objects, how everyday items shape knowledge production, material networks, and the agency of textiles.<sup>90</sup> The trend is also reflected in exhibitions such as ‘Threads of Feeling’ at the Foundling Museum and ‘Charmed Life: The Solace of Objects’ at the Wellcome Collection in London.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’ in *idem* (ed.) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (London, 1986), pp. 3-63 and Igor Kopytoff, ‘The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process’ in *ibid.*, pp. 64-94.

<sup>87</sup> Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds.), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999), Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke, 2002), Margot Finn, ‘Men’s Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution’, *Social History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 2000), pp. 133-55 and Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760*, second edition (London, 1996).

<sup>88</sup> Richard Grassby, ‘Material Culture and Cultural History’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Spring, 2005), pp. 591-603 and Karen Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London, 2009).

<sup>89</sup> See <http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/page/1046/programme-2011-12.htm> and [www.warwick.ac.uk/go/eastindiacompanyathome](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/go/eastindiacompanyathome)

<sup>90</sup> ‘Material Networks – Networked Materials’, Bard Graduate Center, New York, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011, ‘Knowledge, Print, Circulation and Reputation’, St John’s College, Cambridge, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2011, ‘Transforming Objects’, Northumbria University, 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May 2012, ‘Knowledge in a Box: How Mundane Things Shape Knowledge Production’, Kavala, Greece, 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 2012, ‘Texts and Textiles’, Jesus College, Cambridge, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

<sup>91</sup> See [www.threadsoffeeding.com](http://www.threadsoffeeding.com) and [www.wellcomecollection.org/miracles](http://www.wellcomecollection.org/miracles). In addition, the ‘Wives and Sweethearts’ exhibition at the National Army Museum from February-July 2011 made a rare

One of the most recent developments is the emerging historiography of gender and material culture, guided by collections such as Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe's *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective* (2000) and Amanda Vickery and John Styles' *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830* (2007). The most prominent areas of research to date have been women's wills, moveable wealth, shopping, dress, domestic crafts and cookery. The work of Amanda Vickery has proven decisive in challenging negative stereotypes of women's domestic crafts, demonstrating the value of handicrafts in enabling women to collaborate, escape from boredom and exhibit their domesticity and artistic flair.<sup>92</sup> Sara Pennell has ensured that smaller objects are not neglected, exploring how items such as pastry cutters, pots and cookery books were compiled, used and bequeathed by women.<sup>93</sup> This thesis engages with the historiography of gender and material culture by exploring the gendered dynamics of gift-exchange, and investigating how women's creation of textile gifts provided a way for them to formulate their emotions and identity.

Studying the material items exchanged by lovers presents us with a unique opportunity to discover hidden aspects of the past, and recreate the 'wordless experience' of people who left behind no written trace. As Angela McShane has argued, the 'material vocabulary' represented by objects allows historians to interpret particular goods as 'sites for the negotiation of obligations between public and private, subject and state.'<sup>94</sup> Objects will be used in this thesis to explicate the public and private dimensions of courtship and adultery, asking how the commission and exchange of gifts negotiated the balance of power between men and women. Both Marx and Freud have used the word 'fetish' to describe our relationship to material goods, meaning that artefacts are given new meanings by individuals and societies, 'who pass their own emotional needs over to the objects concerned.'<sup>95</sup>

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recognition of the importance of material objects in maintaining a romantic connection, displaying letters and gifts such as portrait miniatures exchanged by soldiers and their lovers. See <http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/wives-sweethearts>

<sup>92</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London, 2009), Chapter 9, pp. 231-56. Also see Chapter 10, pp. 257-90.

<sup>93</sup> Sara Pennell, 'Mundane Materiality, or, Should Small Things Still Be Forgotten?' in Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, pp. 173-91.

<sup>94</sup> Angela McShane, 'Subjects and Objects: Material Expressions of Love and Loyalty in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (October, 2009), p. 874.

<sup>95</sup> Susan M. Pearce, 'Introduction' in *idem* (ed.), *Museum Studies in Material Culture* (Leicester, 1989), p. 7.

Material objects such as love tokens and letters therefore provide evidence firstly through their own inherent qualities, and secondly by the properties bestowed on them as signifiers of cultural and social values.<sup>96</sup> This thesis uses material culture as a source in the belief that objects reflect and shape the emotions and values of the people who create, interact with and exchange them.

Marcia Pointon stresses the importance of the physical properties of tokens, which were tangible items carried around by lovers as ‘tactile objects to be held, viewed and shown.’<sup>97</sup> She uses the example of Sophie von La Roche (1730-1807), a German novelist who visited the British Museum in 1786. Sophie touched a Roman urn and pressed the dust between her fingers, imagining the woman who once looked in the mirror she held. This process of physically handling objects triggered ‘a desire to empathise and an ability to imagine the past.’<sup>98</sup> Clara Tuite takes this argument further to describe love as a ‘complex multimedia event’, as the material tokens exchanged by lovers represent ‘intricate material nestings’ of their relationship. Tuite comes to this conclusion using the adulterous affair of Lady Caroline Lamb (1785-1828) and Lord Byron (1788-1824) in 1812. In one of Lamb’s letters, she folded pubic hairs into a note covered in hearts, crosses, and ciphers, which was pressed into a miniature portrait of Byron set inside a locket. In this sense, gifts can be treated as ‘media’, as they represented a ‘symbolically generalised media of interchange’ between lovers.<sup>99</sup>

Studying material culture creates a number of interchanges between the historical discipline, ‘popular history’, heritage, English literature and anthropology. Recent research about tokens has been heavily influenced by anthropological works, interpreting gift-giving as an act of exchange which establishes ‘a relationship between the parties involved.’<sup>100</sup> Marcel Mauss’ celebrated work *The Gift* (1954) was first published as an essay in *L’Année Sociologique* (1923-4), and has since been adopted by historians as the principal authority on gift exchange. Mauss’ study

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<sup>96</sup> Peter Gathercole, ‘The Fetishism of Artefacts’ in *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>97</sup> Marcia Pointon, “‘Surrounded with Brilliants’: Miniature Portraits in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England’, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (March, 2001), p. 68.

<sup>98</sup> Pointon, ‘Materializing Mourning: Hair, Jewellery and the Body’ in Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley (eds.), *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (Oxford, 1999), p. 41.

<sup>99</sup> Clara Tuite, ‘Tainted Love and Romantic Literary Celebrity’, *English Literary History*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (2007), p. 60.

<sup>100</sup> Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York, 1983), p. xv.

focuses on primitive and archaic societies, particularly tribes such as the Trobriand and Iroquois. He explains the significance of the ‘relationship’ created by gift-exchange, which is more than purely material, as things ‘have values which are emotional as well as material; indeed in some cases the values are entirely emotional.’<sup>101</sup> Anthropologists such as Joshua Bell have extended Mauss’ arguments in describing how objects collect *us* as much as we trap or delineate them. They form part of the meshwork of human life, and we are incapable of living without them or avoiding their influence. Ultimately, these items ‘materialize temporally-situated ways of *being* in the world.’<sup>102</sup>

Natalie Zemon Davis’ *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (2000) draws upon anthropological discourses to study the social, spiritual and practical meanings of the gift. This includes the giving of ‘bad gifts’ and what happened when gift-exchange went wrong. Gift-giving could so easily encounter problems because reciprocity was not assured, and so gifts had the potential to cause ‘bitter quarrels, humiliation and unresolved conflict’ when individuals did not reciprocate appropriately.<sup>103</sup> Whilst gift bestowal was informed by ideal expectations about the nature, receipt and exchange of items, it was also shaped by the ‘repeated practices and rhythms of actual exchange.’<sup>104</sup> Clara Tuite has similarly emphasised the mobility of the gift as an item which was circulated around wide networks of family and kin. Its circulation demonstrates ‘the function of the gift not as a thing but as an event and a social performance’, and the necessity of considering material objects in relation to the social networks in which they circulated.<sup>105</sup>

One of the most popular ‘gifts’ exchanged by lovers was the letter, which is studied in the fourth part of this literature review. Letter-writing has only recently been approached from the realm of material culture, in the work of Michael Findlay, Dena Goodman, Nigel Hall, Leonie Hannan, Cynthia Lowenthal and Susan

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<sup>101</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London, 1954; 1970), p. 63.

<sup>102</sup> Joshua Bell, ‘The Materialities, Transformations and Moral Obligations of Intersecting Histories’, ‘Material Networks’ conference. See *idem*, ‘Intersecting Histories: Materiality and the Social Transformation in the Purari Delta of Papua New Guinea’, PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2006 and ‘The Gulf of Papua’ in Philippe Peltier and Floriane Morin (eds.) *Shadows of New Guinea: Art from the Great Island of Oceania in the Barbier-Mueller Collections* (Geneva, 2006), pp. 194-217.

<sup>103</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 15-16.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>105</sup> Tuite, ‘Tainted Love’, p. 65.

Whyman.<sup>106</sup> Hall has attributed this oversight to the ‘very everydayness of such artifacts,’ meaning that paper, inkwells and quill pens have been largely taken for granted by historians. Hall and Whyman both reconstruct the imagined process of writing a letter, as writers began by finding a space to write, before shaping the nib of their pen, cutting their paper, writing a date, an appropriate address, and finally the letter itself. They may have checked their work for errors, and sprinkled over a mixture to prevent the ink from spreading. The missive would then have been folded and sealed with wax (or later inserted into an envelope).<sup>107</sup> Recognising the materiality of this act adds a vital extra dimension to studies of epistolary exchanges, as each letter ‘is suffused with the imprint of the writer: the penmanship itself – scrawls, exclamations, and underlinings – reveals emotions and...displays character.’<sup>108</sup> This thesis aims to insert the materiality of letter-writing back into romantic correspondences by emphasising the integral role played by touching, smelling, carrying and kissing letters in engendering a romantic connection.

Letters acquired new significance during a period where literacy, letter-writing and practical knowledge of ‘letteracy’ became increasingly widespread.<sup>109</sup> Estimates of literacy during this period vary widely, based firstly on estimates of an individual’s ability to read printed texts and handwriting, and secondly to sign their name rather than simply leaving a ‘mark.’ Signatures become easier to trace as evidence of literacy after 1754, as the Hardwicke Marriage Act required the signatures of both parties, the minister, and two witnesses for a valid marriage to take place.<sup>110</sup> As a rough guide, by 1720 the literacy rate was around 45% for men and 25% for women, increasing to 48% for women in London.<sup>111</sup> While statistics

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<sup>106</sup> See Michael Findlay, *Western Writing Implements in the Age of the Quill Pen* (Carlisle, 1990), Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (London, 2009), Nigel Hall, ‘The Materiality of Letter Writing: A Nineteenth Century Perspective’ in *idem* and David Barton (eds.) *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, Vol. 9 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 83-108, Leonie Hannan, ‘Women, Letter-Writing and the Life of the Mind in England, c. 1650-1750’, PhD thesis, University of London, 2009, Cynthia Lowenthal, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (London, 1994) and Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800* (Oxford, 2009). Also see Antonia Brodie’s MA dissertation ‘Correspondence Culture: The Materiality and Practice of Letter-Writing in England, 1650-1720’, V&A / RCA, 2002.

<sup>107</sup> See Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 19-23 and Hall, ‘Materiality of Letter Writing’, pp. 91-102.

<sup>108</sup> Lowenthal, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 15.

<sup>109</sup> Term coined by Eve Tavor Bannet in *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688-1820* (Cambridge, 2005), p. xvii.

<sup>110</sup> Lemmings, ‘Marriage’, p. 346.

<sup>111</sup> Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), p. 10 and Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), esp. pp. 176-8.

mask regional variation and periods of acceleration and regression, the ability to read and write increased unsteadily between *c.* 1730 and 1830. By 1840 the literacy rate had risen to around 67% for men and just over 50% for women.<sup>112</sup>

These statistics are necessarily vague because literacy is not a historical ‘fact’, but can only be studied as a matter of degree. Specific figures can be misleading, as the growth of literacy was ‘irregular and halting, rather than steady and progressive.’ They unhelpfully mask periods of rapid progress or stagnation, and fail to account for social, occupational and geographical variations.<sup>113</sup> Gradations between the ability to sign your name, read and write are also overlooked. Literacy between *c.* 1730 and 1830 can consequently be understood as a widening ‘spectrum’ or upwards increasing ‘curve’, in which even the narrow definition of literacy as ‘reading and writing’ shades into an extensive range of competencies.<sup>114</sup> Susan Whyman has helpfully introduced the term ‘epistolary literacy’ to analyse ‘the literacy of particular people in specific situations’, considering specific features such as spelling and grammar alongside broader issues such as why people wrote and the impact this had upon writers and their families.<sup>115</sup>

The dominant historical narrative emphasises the significance of letter-writing for courting couples, because it was the most private and direct way that they had of communicating with one another. Such an assumption has led many historians to argue that the spread of literacy and rise of literate culture automatically granted lovers greater confidentiality in their exchanges.<sup>116</sup> The picture is complicated by Elizabeth S. Cohen, who disputes unquestioning scholarly acceptance of the privacy of letters. She uses evidence from seventeenth-century Rome to argue that privacy ‘depended on the possession of both wealth and human capital, which remained very unequally distributed.’ Private communication was therefore a luxury which many could not afford.<sup>117</sup> Poverty and illiteracy forced many individuals to ask friends and

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<sup>112</sup> Roger Schofield, ‘Dimensions of Illiteracy in England 1750-1850’ in Harvey J. Graff (ed.) *Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 206-8.

<sup>113</sup> Cressy, ‘Literacy in Context: Meaning and Measurement in Early Modern England’ in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 314.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>115</sup> Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, *Sociability and Power*, p. 10.

<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth S. Cohen, ‘Between Oral and Written Culture: The Social Meaning of an Illustrated Love Letter’ in Barbara Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (eds.), *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honour of Natalie Zemon Davis* (Michigan, 1997), p. 188.



family members to read and write their letters, or pay a scribe (who was usually a man) to transcribe them in public, sacrificing their privacy to participate in the 'dangerous domain of written culture.'<sup>118</sup>

Scholars have questioned whether letter-writing provided a means of expression or constraint for eighteenth-century women. In *Women, Letters and the Novel* (1980), Ruth Perry argued that it was no coincidence that epistolary novels such as *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-8) came into vogue at a time when 'women's preoccupations began to have less to do with how they actually lived their lives and more to do with the fantasies of love and romance' they could expect 'if they kept themselves graceful and attractive.'<sup>119</sup> According to Perry, by assuming women were meant primarily for romantic attachment, 'society condemned them to it,' suggesting that romance was merely a convenient escape from the 'unreality' of women's meaningless domestic lives. She contentiously argued that 'there was not sufficient ballast in women's lives to keep their feet on the ground' and that there was 'little to give their lives meaning and stability.'<sup>120</sup> However, Perry fundamentally failed to recognise the crucial role of letters in developing a fledgling relationship, and their value in not simply fantasising about lovers, but rationalising women's feelings. Letter-writing thus empowered women by allowing them to determine the character of a relationship, rather than constraining them to the realms of the imagination. Women did not simply 'bend all efforts to the art of pleasing,' but also ensured that a prospective spouse would please them in return.<sup>121</sup>

More recently, scholars have described letter-writing as a gateway to female agency and authority. In her study of women as political patrons, Elaine Chalus finds that women made approximately 10% of patronage requests in Newcastle between 1754 and 1762. In writing to Members of Parliament, they harnessed their persuasive and epistolary skills to request support for themselves, their children, family members and others.<sup>122</sup> Susan Fitzmaurice also emphasises the skills required to write letters, which encouraged individuals 'to exploit the full rhetorical palette in

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>119</sup> Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (New York, 1980), p. 137.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 6, pp. 137-67, esp. pp. 144, 146-7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>122</sup> Elaine Chalus, "'To Serve my friends:': Women and Political Patronage in Eighteenth-Century England' in Vickery (ed.) *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 57-88.

order to construct the most persuasive, affecting, and subjective discourse possible.’<sup>123</sup> Susan Whyman uses detailed case studies of particular women to demonstrate the possibilities of letter-writing. While the cotton-trader’s wife Mary Robinson (1717-57) used letters to her husband Robert ‘first to express obedience, then to claim the right to do as she pleased’, the wheelwright’s wife Elizabeth Strutt (1729-74) used letters as a tool to examine her conduct.<sup>124</sup> As Dena Goodman notes, such activities demonstrate that ‘For women, letter writing was not simply a form of recreation or a second-best alternative to public writing; it was a crucial step in developing a consciousness of themselves as gendered subjects in the modern world.’<sup>125</sup>

Love letters formed a distinct genre within the culture of letters, with writers avidly taking up their pens to craft their own love stories. Love letters by eighteenth-century couples survive in their hundreds, carefully labelled, numbered and preserved by their owners. The high value of these treasured epistles makes their neglect in histories of eighteenth-century courtship all the more surprising. Historians such as Stone, Gowing, O’Hara and Frost have each cited love letters as evidence in church court cases, but not taken their enquiries further to question the specific properties of these letters. The exceptions are Clare Brant’s chapter ‘Writing as a Lover’ in *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (2006) and Fay Bound Alberti’s “‘Writing the Self?’” Love and the Letter in England c. 1660-1760’ in *Literature and History* (2001). Love letters in Scotland, France, America and Australasia have been the subject of additional scrutiny in the work of Ellen Rothman, Karen Lystra, Martyn Lyons, Nicole Eustace, Rebecca Earl and Katie Barclay.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Susan Fitzmaurice, *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2002), p. 236.

<sup>124</sup> Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 34-5, 99. For Elizabeth’s courtship letters to Jedediah Strutt see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>125</sup> Goodman, *Becoming a Woman*, p. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Ellen Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York, 1984), Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, 1989), Martyn Lyons, ‘Love Letters and Writing Practices: On *Écritures Intimes* in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1999), pp. 232-9, Nicole Eustace, “‘The Cornerstone of a Copious Work’”: Love and Power In Eighteenth-Century Courtship’, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Spring, 2001), pp. 517-46, Rebecca Earl, ‘Letters and Love in Colonial Spanish America’, *The Americas*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2005), pp. 17-46 and Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester, 2011).

Across chronological and geographical boundaries, historians are in broad agreement that love letters were among the most highly valued letters ever written. Brant describes how the rise of sensibility made romantic language ‘aggressively corporeal’ as ‘hearts, tears, sighs and kisses were exchanged through the medium of letters.’<sup>127</sup> Bound Alberti also presents letter-writing as ‘suggestive of the giving of the self’, as love letters ‘provided an imprint of the writer’s identity.’<sup>128</sup> Lystra’s study of nineteenth-century America concurs with Brant and Bound Alberti in positioning the letter as a sentimental artefact and part of the self, arguing that as romantic love grew more intense, couples were ‘more likely to anthropomorphize the letters of the loved one into the person of the absent lover.’<sup>129</sup> The value of the love letter thus arose from its perceived ability to absorb and transmit the identity of its writer.

Historians also agree that love letters constituted a meticulously crafted genre. Brant uses ‘Writing as a Lover’ as one of a number of personas which could be used by writers, as correspondents could also write as a parent, criminal, citizen, traveller, historian or Christian.<sup>130</sup> In his work on nineteenth-century Australasia, Lyons has presented love letters as ‘highly coded forms, obeying generally accepted conventions and applying and adapting unspoken formulas.’<sup>131</sup> Bound Alberti’s study of English letters also presents love letters as a ‘highly specific way of *shaping* as well as *reflecting* emotional experience.’ This is because their structure and expression depended on a number of conventions and beliefs about the nature of romantic love, which were historically and culturally contingent.<sup>132</sup> Bound Alberti argues that although love letters provide evidence of how contemporaries ‘performed and structured affect’ in the context of individual relationships, their content and structure were ‘no less crafted than church court depositions.’<sup>133</sup> The question of wider influences shaping the production of love letters is thus important to this thesis, such as how lovers used a multiplicity of sources from The Bible to epistolary novels to inspire their own missives.

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<sup>127</sup> Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 102.

<sup>128</sup> Bound, “‘Writing the Self?’ Love and the Letter in England c. 1660-1760”, *Literature and History*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), p. 10.

<sup>129</sup> Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 22-5.

<sup>130</sup> Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters*, Chapters 2 to 8 respectively.

<sup>131</sup> Lyons, ‘Love Letters’, p. 233.

<sup>132</sup> Bound, ‘Writing the Self?’, pp. 5, 15.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

While the relative value and careful construction of love letters remain virtually undisputed, the negotiation of power has proven an area of contention. In 1989, Lystra argued that women in nineteenth-century America used their letters to test suitors by orchestrating at least one ‘dramatic emotional crisis’ to gauge how they reacted.<sup>134</sup> Eustace has also argued that courtship ‘tipped the scales in women’s favour’ in nineteenth-century Philadelphia, as men were ‘at the mercy of the women they wooed.’<sup>135</sup> These formulations were overtly challenged in Barclay’s recent study of eighteenth-century Scotland, where she contentiously argued that ‘Love was something that men offered women and which women passively accepted.’ According to Barclay, women in Scotland ‘were not allowed to express emotion, until they finally accepted a proposal of marriage.’<sup>136</sup> With the work of Lystra, Eustace and Barclay in mind, this thesis will draw upon sixty-eight relationships in England between 1730 and 1830 to investigate how men and women used letters to test, challenge and negotiate their relationships.

The historiography of romantic love, courtship, gift-exchange and letter-writing outlined in this chapter reveals which themes have undergone the most debate and stimulated particular interest among historians, also highlighting potentially fruitful areas for further study. This thesis aims to introduce new considerations into the study of romantic love in the long eighteenth century by shifting focus towards material culture and emotion, asking how love was formulated and communicated in words and objects.

The chapter now outlines the sources used in this thesis as a whole, and the methodology which will be used to interpret them. In covering the century from c. 1730 to 1830, the thesis obviously cannot claim to study every single one of the thousands of exchanges between courting couples. Instead, it analyses a selection of letters and gifts exchanged by men and women from different social and geographical backgrounds in order to gain an overall impression of the nature of romantic love during these years. In attempting to collect material representing the full scope of this period, the earliest material objects studied are Giles Grendey’s walnut chairs from Fairfax House in York, created c. 1725 (Fig. 6). The latest object

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<sup>134</sup> Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 157-91.

<sup>135</sup> Eustace, ‘Love and Power’, pp. 527, 533.

<sup>136</sup> Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*, pp. 90-1.

is John Field's hair-work bracelet with silhouette in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, created c. 1810 (Fig. 13). The earliest letters were exchanged by the gentleman Knox Ward and Sarah Holt between 1729 and 1730,<sup>137</sup> while the latest were sent from an anonymous butler to a housekeeper in the same residence in Norfolk in 1830.<sup>138</sup>

These letters were selected primarily by visiting local archives, and isolating collections which were rich with correspondences between unmarried couples. This was a difficult task, as remarkably few collections are categorised using terms such as 'courtship', 'marriage' or 'love.' Instead, individual romances remain hidden within family records, such as the papers of the Whitbread family of Southill and the How family of Aspley Guise in the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives. Love letters were identified in these collections by researching marriages within a particular family and isolating letters around this date. In some instances courtship letters were falsely classified as being between a husband and wife, such as the letters of the politician Henry Goulburn and Jane Montagu at the Surrey History Centre. While the majority of their letters were written after their marriage on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1811, four lengthy epistles survive from their courtship, including one labelled 'Jane's first letter to me 1811.'<sup>139</sup> Other sources such as the Cobb manuscripts have proven problematic, as letters by Charlotte Mary Curwen are both classified separately and mixed in with her suitor Francis Cobb's replies.<sup>140</sup>

Manuscripts in online catalogues were identified by word-searching terms such as 'love-letter', 'love letter', 'before marriage', 'her future husband', 'his future wife', 'his/her lover', '[during] courtship', 'adultery', 'adulterous', 'affair', 'love', 'heart', 'marry' and 'dearest love', which problematically appear in a wide variety of general correspondences. This made it necessary to sift through countless family records in the hope of coming across love letters, which are immediately identifiable by the distinctive language studied in Chapters Three to Seven of this thesis. A

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<sup>137</sup> See *The whole proceedings on the tryal between Mrs. Sarah Holt, and Knox Ward, Esq; upon a promise of marriage* (London, 1730).

<sup>138</sup> Copy of love letter from a butler to a housekeeper, watermark 1830, BUL 13/5, 619 x 5, Norfolk Record Office (subsequently NRO).

<sup>139</sup> Letters between Henry and Jane Goulburn (*née* Montagu), 304/A4/Box 1 and 304/D/Box2, Surrey History Centre (subsequently SHC).

<sup>140</sup> The series EK/1453/C287, Bundle A contains seven letters by Charlotte, in addition to the letters classified under EK/1453/C2, East Kent Archive Centre (subsequently EKAC).

number of letters concerning courtships exchanged by friends and family members were also isolated to reveal the efforts made by wider kin to promote or thwart particular matches.<sup>141</sup>

The letters unearthed by this research are located in sixty-eight collections in twenty-eight different archives across England (see Appendix 1). They are spread across a wide geographical distance; situated in Bedfordshire, Birmingham, Cheshire, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Dover, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Liverpool, London, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Surrey, Sussex, Wiltshire and Yorkshire. Certain collections such as the Nicholson letters (1738-9) and Strutt letters (1748-55 and 1786-93) were split between two different record offices.<sup>142</sup> The sources referenced in this thesis therefore have a broad geographical range, permitting an analysis of geographical variations – if any – between declarations of love from Dover to North Yorkshire.

Within these sixty-eight collections, eight sets of letters have already been published. Three collections of adulterous letters would have been available to contemporaries; Lady Henrietta Grosvenor (1745-1828) and the Duke of Cumberland (1745-90) had their letters published after their infamous ‘criminal conversation’ trial in 1770, John King spitefully published his letters with Mary ‘Perdita’ Robinson in 1773, and Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805) had his letters to Emma Hamilton (1765-1815) published in 1814, perhaps by Emma herself.<sup>143</sup> The

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<sup>141</sup> For example the letters between Charles Hanbury-Williams and Henry Fox concerning the courtship of Richard Edgcumbe and Lady Diana West in 1750, CHW10902/52, fols. 55-64, Lewis Walpole Library (subsequently LWL) and letters between Mary Berry and Mrs. Damer concerning Mary’s relationship with General Charles O’Hara, in the British Library, Add Mss. 37727 and Lewis Melville (ed.) *The Berry Papers; being the correspondence hitherto unpublished of Mary and Agnes Berry (1763-1852)* (London, 1914).

<sup>142</sup> While Jedediah Strutt’s letters to Elizabeth Woollat are stored in the Derbyshire Record Office (subsequently DRO), DRO 5303/1-4, his son Joseph’s letters to Isabella Douglas are in the Birmingham City Archives (subsequently BCA), MS 3101/C/E/4/8/1-34 and MS 3101/C/E/5/16/1-11. Letters between James Nicholson and Elizabeth Seddon are split within the collection itself, with the majority in the John Rylands Library in Manchester (subsequently JRL), ref. GB133 Eng. MS 1041 (Box 1), and the rest in the Liverpool Record Office (subsequently LIRO), ref. 920 NIC/5.

<sup>143</sup> Anon, *The genuine copies of letters which passed between His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor*, fourth edition (London, 1770), *Letters from Perdita [the first signed M. H. R-] to a certain Israelite, and his answers to them* (London, 1781) and *The Letters of Lord Nelson to Lady Hamilton; With a Supplement of Interesting Letters, by Distinguished Characters*, Vols. I and II (London, 1814). Historians disagree whether Emma published the letters; Robert Wickson argues that Emma’s release from debtors’ prison and move to Calais between 1813 and 1814 ‘seemed to bear out the accusation’, whereas Warren R. Dawson states that ‘the evidence is

remaining five collections of courtship letters were published posthumously; between Charles O'Hara (c. 1740-1802) and Mary Berry (1763-1852), Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, John Eccles and Mary Hays, and John Keats and Fanny Brawne.<sup>144</sup> Every effort has been made to locate original manuscripts where possible; I was kindly granted permission to consult Mary Wollstonecraft's correspondence with William Godwin at the Bodleian Library, Mary Berry's correspondence with Charles O'Hara at the British Library, and some of Horatio Nelson's letters to Emma Hamilton at the British Library and National Maritime Museum.<sup>145</sup> The remaining correspondences survived in fragments, were dispersed throughout international collections, or did not survive at all.<sup>146</sup> These letters were supplemented with diaries kept by women such as the chaplain's daughter Anne Temple and tailor's daughter Sarah Hurst, whose diaries were first published by Susan C. Djabri in 2003. The manuscripts were then consulted in person at the Horsham Museum.<sup>147</sup>

Court cases involving love letters and tokens were selected after searching through records at Lambeth Palace Library, the London Metropolitan Archives and Borthwick Institute in York. This led me to isolate the breach of promise cases *Mendes Da Costa vs. Da Costa Villa Real* (1732-3) at the Court of Arches and *Mascall vs. Watson* (1743) at the Durham Consistory Court for further scrutiny. In addition were suits for divorce by means of adultery, *Mainwaring, Esq. vs.*

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quite contrary to such a possibility.' See Wickson, *Nelson's Love Letters to Lady Hamilton* (Ferndown, 2005), p. 110 and Dawson, *The Nelson Collection at Lloyd's* (London, 1932), p. v.

<sup>144</sup> Unfortunately the letters written by Gilbert Imlay and Fanny Brawne have not survived. See Melville, *The Berry Papers*, AF Wedd (ed.) *The Love-Letters of Mary Hays* (London, 1925), Harry Buxton Forman (ed.), *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* (London, 1878), Roger Ingpen (ed.), *The Love Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay* (London, 1908) and Ralph M. Wardle (ed.), *Godwin & Mary: Letters of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1967).

<sup>145</sup> Horatio Nelson's correspondence with Lady Emma Hamilton has been fragmented into many collections, chiefly Egerton 1614 and Add Mss. 34274 at the British Library (subsequently BL), the Phillipp-Croker Collection, CKR19/21-40, and Xeroxes of the Spiro Collection in New York, XAGC/8/1-106 at the National Maritime Museum (subsequently NMM). Certain collections have been published in Alfred Morrison, *The Hamilton & Nelson Papers*, Vols. I-II (privately published, 1893-4) and Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, Vols. I-VII (London, 1845-6; 1998).

<sup>146</sup> The first volume of Mary Hays' correspondence with John Eccles is in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle at the New York Public Library, while the largest proportion of John Keats' letters to Fanny Brawne are in the Harvard Keats Collection. Many of these have been digitized at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL.Hough:h000062>, while others have been lost, and are only available in Forman's text.

<sup>147</sup> Journal of Anne Temple, 72M92/5, Hampshire Record Office (subsequently HRO). Susan C. Djabri (ed.) *The Diaries of Sarah Hurst 1759-1762* (Stroud, 2009). All quotations are taken from the original diaries MS 3542-5, Horsham Museum (subsequently HM).

*Mainwaring* (1766) at the Durham Consistory Court, and *Cholmondeley vs. Cholmondeley* (1736) and *Cooke vs. Cooke* (1757) at the London Consistory Court. These cases were transcribed in full due to the rich evidence they provided about the primacy of material culture in making and breaking romantic relationships.

All of these relationships were between heterosexual couples; letters and diaries written by women desiring women, or men desiring men, were deliberately discounted. These include the diaries of the Yorkshire heiress Anne Lister (1791-1840), which vividly recreate her affairs with Eliza Raine, Marianna Lawton, Maria Barlow, Isabella Norcliffe and Ann Walker.<sup>148</sup> The decision to exclude all-male and all-female relationships was made at an early stage in this thesis, as romantic love is potentially an incredibly broad subject. In line with the boom in queer histories discussed above, potentially revealing future topics would be whether love letters between same-sex couples drew upon similar or different cultural tropes, and the distinctive features of the items they selected to shape their relationships.

The selection of sources consciously includes individuals of widely varying social rank. At the highest level are letters by noblemen such as John Kerr, Earl of Ancram (1794-1841). Genteel correspondents include naval heroes such as Admiral Pye (1708/9-85), gentlemen such as Samuel Whitbread II (1764-1815) and gentlewomen such as Mary Martin (c. 1751-1804). In addition are politicians, soldiers, clergymen and well-to-do businessmen such as the cotton-trader Joseph Strutt (1765-1844). As Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes have noted, although the key requirements for gentility were ‘land, lordship and local acknowledgement’, genteel status was often claimed in their absence. This was chiefly by ‘the professionals, crown servants and lawyers, doctors, teachers and academics, and, especially after the Reformation, the married clergy.’<sup>149</sup> The thesis also studies a number of professional writers, poets, publishers and essayists such as Mary Berry, William Godwin, Mary Hays, John Keats, Eleanor Anne Porden and Mary Wollstonecraft. Given the profession of these lovers, we would expect their letters to be filled with more literary-minded declarations than letters by writers outside of literary circles.

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<sup>148</sup> See Helena Whitbread (ed.) *‘I Know My Own Heart:’ The Diaries of Anne Lister 1791-1840* (London, 1988), *‘No Priest But Love:’ Excerpts from the Diaries of Anne Lister, 1824-1826* (Otley, 1992) and *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister (1791-1840)* (London, 2010).

<sup>149</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (London, 1994), p. 7.



Writers of the middling sort include moneylenders such as John King (c. 1753-1824) and women such as Anna Maria Bennett (d. 1808) who worked in shops.<sup>150</sup> Defining the ‘middling sort’ is problematic, as legal and fiscal definitions of social position are notably absent from contemporary literature, while economic, social, political and cultural criteria used by historians to define ‘sorts’ often overlap. There is a tension between regional and national definitions of class, while a person’s social status varied according to gender and could rise and fall during the course of the life-cycle.<sup>151</sup> The term is used here to refer to people ‘beneath the gentry but above the level of the labouring classes; most of them worked for a living, although a growing number lived wholly or partially on rental income and other investments.’<sup>152</sup> Jonathan Barry argues that individuals who worked were rarely employed by others, but traded ‘the products of their hands’ (such as yeomen, husbandmen farmers and artisans) or their ‘skills in business or the professions’ (including merchants, attorneys and apothecaries).<sup>153</sup> At the very lowest social level are the labouring classes. These include yeomen such as John Road and domestic servants such as the housekeeper ‘B.F’ of Lincoln who possessed very low levels of epistolary literacy.

The thesis also draws extensively upon material objects, which played a guiding role in how individuals thought, felt and interacted with one another. They require a distinct methodology of their own, making many historians uneasy to move away from the safe haven of written texts into the unknown realm of inanimate objects. Material culture studies utilise a number of distinctive approaches, which Giorgio Riello has termed ‘History *from* things’, ‘History *of* things’ and ‘History *and* things.’<sup>154</sup> Bernard Herman also creates a divide between ‘object-centred’ and ‘object-driven’ projects.<sup>155</sup> Herman’s ‘object-centred’ projects have recently been subdivided by Karen Harvey into projects focusing on the physical qualities of objects and those utilising art historical methods to explore ‘the emotional or

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<sup>150</sup> For further discussion of the ‘middling sort’ see Chapter 7, pp. 240-1.

<sup>151</sup> Jonathan Barry, ‘Introduction’ in *idem* and Christopher Brooks (eds.) *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 12-23.

<sup>152</sup> Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (London, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>153</sup> Barry, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> Giorgio Riello, ‘Things that Shape History: Material Culture and Historical Narratives’ in Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>155</sup> Herman also terms these ‘material culture’ and ‘material life.’ See Bernard L. Herman, *The Stolen House* (London, 1992), pp. 3-4.

psychological dimensions of material culture.’<sup>156</sup> This is exemplified by the work of Jules David Prown, who advocates a model proceeding from *description* of an artefact to *deduction* of the interaction between object and perceiver and finally *speculation* of questions leading from an object to external evidence.<sup>157</sup> Prown’s research owes much to the systematic model of artefact study proposed by Edward McClung Fleming in 1974, which was developed in the context of the early American decorative arts. It breaks down the basic properties of artefacts into five broad categories, which each lead to four separate lines of enquiry. These properties are its history (when and where it was made, for whom and why), material (what it is made of), construction (its manufacture and workmanship), design (its structure, form, style, ornament and iconography), and function (intended and unintended uses of the object).<sup>158</sup>

Continuing with Herman’s bi-partite model, this thesis adopts an ‘object-driven’ approach by utilizing ‘the evidence of material culture (including documentary accounts of objects) to reconstruct and interpret contextual circumstance.’<sup>159</sup> More specifically, it uses material objects from minute eye miniatures to robust pine cabinets as evidence of romantic love, courting practices, social relationships and gender identities. Nonetheless, this is not mutually exclusive from the work of Prown and McClung Fleming, continuing to consider the creation, cost, use and iconography of particular items.<sup>160</sup>

This thesis draws upon the established methodologies of material culture to interpret a range of artefacts stored in a number of different archives and museums. As material culture specialists will recognise, half the work is bringing relevant items together from a vast array of different locations. Museum collections consulted while writing this thesis include sources at the Birmingham Museum, British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum, Foundling Museum, Horsham Museum, London Museum of Optometry, Museum of London, National Army Museum, National Maritime Museum, Royal Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, Walker Gallery

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<sup>156</sup> Harvey, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

<sup>157</sup> JD Prown, ‘Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method’, *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1982), pp. 7-10.

<sup>158</sup> E. McClung Fleming, ‘Artifact Study: A Proposed Model’, *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 9 (1974), p. 156.

<sup>159</sup> Herman, *Stolen House*, p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> McClung Fleming, ‘Artifact Study’, pp. 156-7.

and Wellcome Collection in the United Kingdom. Sources abroad were located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Frick Collection in New York, Lewis Walpole Library in Connecticut, and Winterthur Museum and Library in Delaware. Additional items were sourced from country houses such as Fairfax House in York.

Certain objects such as the eye miniature in Figure 15 and pine cabinet in Figure 30 were selected for their outstanding craftsmanship. Others such as the hair-work bracelet in Figure 13 exemplify a particular type of object, with the coins in Figures 17 and 18 displaying the most coarse and exceptionally skilled engraving respectively. Items such as the chairs in Figure 6 are the sole surviving object of their kind. The ribbons bequeathed to foundlings in Figures 7-9 were chosen as their storage inside billet books has prevented their vibrant hues from fading. Taken together, this diverse collection of objects features textiles (ribbons and waistcoats), jewellery (hair-work bracelets, portrait miniatures and eye miniatures) furniture (walnut chairs and pine cabinets), printed material (puzzles, Valentine's cards, ballads, paintings and prints) and ephemera (engraved coins and moulded glass signets).

The structure of the thematic chapters is as follows. Chapter Two analyses the materiality of love by studying the gifts which courting couples gave to one another. These are divided into four broad categories: food, textiles, the body, reading and writing. Significantly, it re-inserts women into histories of gift-exchange, collating information from a wide range of sources including letters, ballads, novels, prints, court records and museums. By bringing the category of material culture to bear on courtship, it locates romantic relationships firmly within the physical world.

Chapters Three and Four analyse love letters written during courtship and adultery. The former studies the emotional experiences of love letters using a detailed analysis of seven courtships. It considers the routines of writing and delivering love letters, arguing that this was a quasi-public process. The chapter isolates the dominant traits of male and female letters, chiefly male sincerity and female virtue, modesty, self doubt and often religiosity. It emphasises the materiality of love letters, including their touch, feel and smell. Chapter Four approaches adulterous letters as a separate genre determined by their own

conventions. These include a heightened emphasis on secrecy, jealousy, and the continual worry of discovery. It also considers the use of material objects to summon lovers, sustain an affair, and conceal illicit letters.

Chapter Five analyses how the language of romantic love was shaped by three overarching discourses; religious doctrines, physical and medical notions of love, and literary tropes. These range throughout history from Galen's humoral system to comparatively modern ideas describing the 'electricity' of attraction. Crucially, it argues that notions of love were neither transhistorical nor unchanging, but evolved over time.

Chapters Six and Seven focus on the darker side of courtship, considering what happened when love went awry. Chapter Six outlines the cultural influence of archetypal heroines such as Armida, Queen Dido, and Ophelia. By using evidence from eight troubled relationships, it unravels a nuanced language of romantic breakdown. It also brings new questions to bear about the full range of emotions which were felt by men and women. Finally, Chapter Seven analyses the legal dimensions of romantic breakdown using eighty-one breach of promise cases under the common law. These reveal how men and women's participation in cases changed in accordance with prevailing gender norms. The chapter once again emphasises the material dimensions of courtship, as plaintiffs used a select number of emotionally invested objects in order to win their cases.

The thesis concludes by considering the unique insights offered by studying material culture, using the shared features of love letters to create a more nuanced definition of the genre. It evaluates the public and private dimensions of romantic relationships, exploring how masculinity and femininity were redefined concurrently over the century. Ultimately, this thesis will demonstrate how formulations of romantic love evolved over time, locating premarital and extramarital relationships firmly within the material world.

## Chapter Two

### ‘Many hearts did I see exchanged for fairings of cherry colour’d ribbon:’<sup>1</sup>

#### Courting Couples and the Material Expression of Affection

When the Harrow-educated army ensign Robert Garrett (1794-1869) began wooing the granddaughter of the Duke of Portland Charlotte Bentinck (1789-1819) in 1811, he charmed her with a variety of exotic tokens acquired during his time abroad. While serving in Spain and Portugal during the Peninsular Campaign he sent her an almanac and ‘a little box of trifles’ including some buttons, two bottles of jasmine and the ‘neatest & most genteel’ ring he could find of Portuguese manufacture. He was disappointed with the ‘silly’ ring, ‘every thing they make being so vulgar’ and was frustrated at not being able to find the sheet music and Spanish castanets she desired. Charlotte responded to these exotic presents with domestic gifts, sending him some violets, an English flower denoting virtue and faithfulness,<sup>2</sup> and a handmade purse and white hair-work handkerchief to demonstrate her esteem and domestic skill.<sup>3</sup>

The study of gifts exchanged by courting couples is central to our understanding of the material culture of love, as courtship was a key ‘transitional moment’ in the life-cycle marked by the transmission of objects.<sup>4</sup> Material objects determined how people related to one another by providing a key means of conceptualising and processing their emotions. They also played a vital role in preserving the identity of the giver, acting as an important site of memory for the recipient. As Ulinka Rublack has recently argued,

[H]umans create a sense of being not only in relation to other people, work, nature, space, or religion, but through creative exchange with the material world. Objects impart their qualities (say colour, or texture) to us and we

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Portland, c. 1740, MSS MO 295, Huntington Library, California (subsequently HLC).

<sup>2</sup> ‘A lover had, fond as the kissing breeze / That woos in spring the purple violet; / Faithful as holy truth; and as sincere’ in John Bidlake, *The sea: a poem. In two books* (London, 1796), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence of Robert Garrett and Charlotte Bentinck, R/U888/C11/1-62, EKAC. Violets were also sent from the gentlewoman Isabella Carr to Sir James Lowther, in Chapter 4, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Leora Auslander, ‘Beyond Words’, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 4 (October, 2005), pp. 1015-45.

relate to them emotionally and think that they represent our tastes, values, wishes, and spirituality, our connection with others and to our past.<sup>5</sup>

The study of material culture therefore provides historians with a way to access the emotional lives, subjectivity and identity of individuals in history. Interpreting the silent language of objects requires its own methodology, as outlined in Chapter One.<sup>6</sup> Items were not selected as romantic gifts at random, but formed part of a creative process where lovers chose particular symbolic objects and often went on to personalise them through engravings and embroidery. Such objects could then be touched, smelled and gazed upon to encourage the development of love.

The past five years have seen increasing numbers of historians reaching beyond disciplinary boundaries to collaborate with museums and curators. These include Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts' edited volume *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle* (2009) in conjunction with the John Soane Museum and Yale Centre for British Art, Sue Prichard's Victoria and Albert Museum publication *Quilts 1700-2010: Hidden Histories, Untold Stories* (2010) and John Styles' *Threads of Feeling: The London Foundling Hospital's Textile Tokens, 1740-1770* (2010) in association with the Foundling Museum. In turn, museum objects are increasingly becoming accessible to researchers and catalogued by time period, region and maker online.<sup>7</sup> This chapter combines museum objects with a range of manuscript and published sources to recognise the agency of love tokens during courtship, arguing that they played a guiding role in determining how couples thought, felt and interacted with one another.

One of the principal ways in which artefacts mediate social relations is through gift-exchange, as objects possess emotional as well as financial value for the individuals who give and receive them. Anthropologists such as Marcel Mauss have argued that objects possess personalities of their own, and 'have values which are emotional as well as material; indeed in some cases the values are entirely emotional.

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<sup>5</sup> Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 49-51.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.threadsoffeeling.com/>. The problems arising from digitising photographs of objects to create a 'flat' perspective were discussed by Margot Finn and John Styles at the British History in the Long Eighteenth Century Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research in London on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013. See <http://historyspot.org.uk/podcasts/british-history-long-18th-century/material-culture-panel-significance-things>

Our morality is not solely commercial.’<sup>8</sup> Mauss argues that the emotional value of the gift lies in the motives for exchange, for friendship or love, as ‘to give something is to give a part of oneself...while to receive something is to receive a part of someone’s spiritual essence.’<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu adds the notion of timing to Mauss’ model, as the exchange of gifts ‘is all a question of style’ based upon *how* it is given, and whether it is given hastily, late, by surprise or withheld.<sup>10</sup> Annette B. Weiner has re-inserted women into studies of ‘primitive’ societies by arguing that the creation and protection of ‘inalienable possessions’ such as sacred cloth provided women with ‘a domain of authority and power.’ ‘Inalienable possessions’ contain many similar qualities to love tokens; such objects ‘are imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners which are not easy to give away.’ Ideally they are kept from one generation to the next.<sup>11</sup> Weiner’s work finds a parallel in this chapter through women’s creation of textile gifts to betoken duty, virtue, affection and ownership.

During the early modern period, gift-exchange acted as the foremost ritual guiding couples from initial intimacy to matrimony. This in part explains why scholars of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries have dedicated assiduous attention to the meaning of gifts, particularly compared to eighteenth-century historians, who labour under the misapprehension that gift-giving was rendered redundant by Hardwicke’s Act.<sup>12</sup> In her leading study of gift-exchange during courtship in sixteenth-century Kent, Diana O’Hara has argued that the meaning of a particular gift was determined by the object itself, its symbolic and economic value, the occasion of giving, and the intentions of the giver.<sup>13</sup> In a society often dependent upon non-literate forms of communication, the exchange of gifts was a crucial form of language and an important socially recognised custom. Their purpose during courtship was publicly to ‘conduct the parties through these vulnerable times’ from

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<sup>8</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (London, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 6, 151. On the gendered dimensions of exchange also see Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (London, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> On gift-exchange see Chapter 1, pp. 31-4.

<sup>13</sup> O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 57. On the changing symbolism of objects also see Juana Green, ‘The Sempster’s Wares: Merchandising and Marrying in The Fair Maid of the Exchange (1607)’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Winter, 2000), pp. 1084-118.

its early stages to a formal betrothal, and finally a post-contractual period culminating in a church wedding.<sup>14</sup>

Before the Hardwicke Marriage Act came into force on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1754, the public exchange of gifts signified to the community that a couple was officially engaging in courtship. Gifts acted as an embodiment of couples' intentions, giving spurned lovers cause for breach of promise actions in the church or civil courts if they felt they had been treated unjustly. As Cressy has argued, the binding commitment represented by tokens was hard to deny, and men and women refuting contracts of marriage desperately tried to have gifts retrospectively robbed of their symbolism, arguing that they were merely given as 'trifles' or tokens of goodwill.<sup>15</sup> Hardwicke's Act changed the status of the gift as a legally-binding promise by ruling that no suit could be brought in the church courts to compel the performance of a contract *per verba de praesenti* or *per verba de futuro*. Conversely, marriage became a clearly defined legal event which took place in church.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, this did not mean that practices of gift-exchange transformed to the same extent or at the same time in the community, where social 'expectations of courting behaviour' were still largely defined by earlier practices. Tokens such as rings and locks of hair continued to signify a binding commitment and pledge of a suitor's love, even though this pledge could no longer be used to enforce a marriage in court. As Heather Smith has rightly argued, just as today, men and women continued to demand security from their relationships, 'even though they were not necessarily technically married.'<sup>17</sup>

With this in mind, one central question for this chapter is the issue of *obligation* – which gifts could women accept without being obliged to marry a man? The hierarchy of objects is of fundamental importance in determining which particular items were weighted towards matrimony. This can be answered in part by asking at what stage in a relationship they were given, who they were given by, their relative financial value, and whether they were exchanged in public or private. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) sheds some light on this issue, as a number of

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<sup>14</sup> O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, pp. 63-4, 75.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 7 and Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 264-5.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Heather Smith, 'Women and Marriage in the Eighteenth Century: Evidence from the Church Courts, 1730-1780', PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 2000, pp. 18, 39.



gifts were given to Pamela by her employer Mr. B. After the death of his mother, Pamela writes that,

he has given me a Suit of my late Lady's Cloaths, and half a Dozen of her Shifts, and Six fine Handkerchiefs, and Three of her Cambrick Aprons, and Four Holland ones... You will be full of Fears, I warrant now, of some Design upon me, till I tell you, that he was with Mrs. *Jervis* when he gave them me; and he gave her a Mort [*sic*] of good things at the same Time, and bid her wear them in Remembrance of her good Friend, my Lady, his Mother.<sup>18</sup>

It was considered acceptable for Pamela to keep these gifts as they were given in the presence of Mrs. *Jervis*, who also accepted gifts in memory of their mistress.

However when Mr. B attempted to give Pamela additional items such as stockings while they were alone in the intimate space of the closet, she was 'inwardly asham'd to take the Stockens; for Mrs. *Jervis* was not there: If she had, it would have been nothing. I believe I receiv'd them very awkwardly.'<sup>19</sup> In the second volume of the novel, Pamela divested herself of all of Mr. B's gifts before leaving his service. These included 'a great Parcel of Gold, and fine Cloaths [*sic*] and Rings, and an Estate of I can't tell what a Year.'<sup>20</sup> Her concern to leave his gifts behind demonstrates the power of objects in emotionally binding two people together, and the inherent obligation of accepting particular items such as rings.

This chapter is divided into four sections, categorising the objects studied into thematic groups to illuminate the material, emotional and symbolic properties of particular items. The recurrence of certain gifts allows me to clearly challenge Loreen Giese's argument that the context of giving was more important than the objects themselves.<sup>21</sup> The first category, 'Food', considers the role of edible gifts such as gingerbread, cakes and oysters in expressing initial romantic interest, and later concern for a loved one. Secondly, 'Textiles' analyses the dichotomy between 'fairings' such as ribbons purchased by men and handmade gifts created by women. In doing so it prioritises the role of embroidered icons and symbolic colours in the transmission of identity and emotion. Thirdly, 'The Body' considers the role of

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (Oxford, 1740; 2001), Vol. I, Letter 6, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, L7, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 236.

<sup>21</sup> Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, pp. 84, 130-43.

garters, gloves, rings, hair and miniatures in mediating romantic relations, chiefly through senses such as touch, smell and sight. The fourth category 'Reading and Writing' studies the role of tokens as *aide-mémoires* in fuelling the creation of love letters, alongside gifts such as books and seal matrixes.

The chapter does not claim to provide an exhaustive study of every single object exchanged by lovers between c. 1730 and 1830; this would be impossible as unusual gifts such as collars for a lady's pug dog were deeply individual and unique to particular couples.<sup>22</sup> Instead, it seeks to unearth the significance of selected popular gifts. These were chosen as they demonstrate the types of tokens available to lovers of widely varying social backgrounds, from thrifty slices of gingerbread to expensive pearl-framed eye miniatures. They also shed light on key issues such as the expression of emotion, identity and obligation using material objects, and themes such as gender difference, symbolism and change over time, both within a single relationship and over the century. The selection of objects is in part determined by items chosen for display by museums, as well as the survival of particular goods. Certain objects commonly cited as love tokens were not mentioned by the couples studied in Appendix One. These include bobbins, staybusks, love spoons, fans, scent bottles, sheet music, musical instruments, Valentine's Cards and works of art. Objects were collated from a wide range of museums, archives and galleries, plus textual representations of gifts in poetry, songs, novels, letters and diaries, allowing me to fully recreate the emotional and material dimensions of exchange.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the exchange of food as a gift. Edible courtship gifts have been overlooked by social historians and material culture specialists alike, as they were inevitably eaten soon after the moment of exchange. However this does not mean that edible gifts did not have an important role to play in engendering a romantic connection. They have been selected to begin this chapter as smaller items such as gingerbread, cakes and nuts were frequently given from men to women to express initial romantic interest, marking their first foray into the material world of courtship. In a letter to her fellow bluestocking Elizabeth Carter

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<sup>22</sup> Mentioned in a letter from Mary Martin to Isaac Rebow, October 1<sup>st</sup> 1771, A12691/39, Box 1, Vol. I, Essex Record Office (subsequently ERO).

(1717-1806) in c. 1740, Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) described a visit to the Northfleet fair in Kent with some friends. When they arrived,

every Phillis and corydon were at a fair in the town...under another booth for the pleasure of bold british youths was admiral Vernon in gingerbread. indeed he appear'd in many shapes there...I was a little concerned to see him lying in passive gingerbread upon a stall with Spanish nuts, but the politicians of our age are wonderful in reconciling the interests of nations.<sup>23</sup>

Montagu's letter suggests that gingerbread was widely available at fairs in towns, which were frequented by large numbers of courting couples.<sup>24</sup> The entry for 'fairing' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* records that they could be bought at fairs as early as 1574, where suitors purchased sweet treats such as cakes, sweets and gingerbread nuts.<sup>25</sup> Large flat gingerbread cakes could also be bought from mobile sellers outside sites such as the Pantheon on Oxford Street, as displayed in the engraving in Figure 3. The seller waves his produce in the air while shouting to attract customers, presumably keeping his produce warm in the covered mobile cart.<sup>26</sup> Hot spiced gingerbread was a seasonal gift as while these oblong cakes could be purchased for a halfpenny in winter, sellers would switch to trading currant-filled pastries such as Banbury cakes in the summer. Their low price made them an ideal gift for men to distribute among women who attracted their attention, while women in turn could consume them without being under any great obligation to the giver.

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<sup>23</sup> Montagu to Cavendish, c. 1740, MSS MO 295, HLC.

<sup>24</sup> When a committee debated holding a fair at Wandsworth in 1771, the key booths they discussed creating were for toys, ribbons and gingerbread, QS2/6/1771/Mid/27-28, SHC. The rector Edward Leathes praised the selection of cheap pickles and preserves available at the Bury Fair on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1782, BOL 2/58/2/21, 739 x 9, NRO.

<sup>25</sup> 'Fairing, *n.*', Oxford English Dictionary Online (subsequently OEDO), <http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/67719>. Heather Smith has argued that fairs provided a social arena for plebeian courtship, and were famous for their debauchery. See *idem*, 'Women and Marriage', p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Songbooks recorded the cries of these sellers, proclaiming, 'Come boys and girls, men and maids; widows and wives; / The best penny laid out, you ever spent in your lives.' This song described a whole world of gingerbread, where 'in gingerbread coaches, we've gingerbread lords, / And gingerbread soldiers, with gingerbread swords', *The skylark. Being an elegant collection of the best and newest songs in the English language* (London, 1800), pp. 210-12. The song was previously published in 1790 and 1796.



**Fig. 3 – William Edwards after WM Craig, *Hot spiced gingerbread*, London, 1804, engraving, 20 x 27cm, Museum of London, 001132.**

Later in a relationship, men could also send women food as a sign of their deepening commitment. Between 1789 and 1790, the chaplain Edward Peach sent a number of delicious dishes to the widow Elizabeth Leathes to demonstrate his fondness for her. On 10th May 1790 he begged for her ‘acceptance of Half Dozen Pidgeons and a Brace of Cucumbers taken and cut this Morning which Mr Andrew will be so kind as to convey to you.’<sup>27</sup> In another letter he sent Elizabeth ‘two Fowls & a Duck’, asking that ‘if it will not be unpleasant and inconvenient to you I will with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction to myself partake of the Duck with you at three o’ Clock.’ The production of such large quantities of game demonstrated Edward’s wealth to Elizabeth, and his ability to provide for her in his desired role of husband.<sup>28</sup> It portrayed him as an able sportsman, with his aptitude for shooting

<sup>27</sup> Edward Peach to Elizabeth Leathes, Sundridge, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1790, BOL 2/140/2, NRO. For further examples see letters from John Lovell to Sarah Harvey, where he describes sending a basket of cakes to try and soften the disapproval of her Aunt, Bath, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1757, 161/102/2/10, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives (subsequently WSA).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Temple Coffee House, Thursday Morning, BOL 2/140/2/1. Charles Pratt also dined at Elizabeth Jeffreys’ house during their courtship, with her mother preparing a pig for the family. Jeffreys to Pratt, undated, U840/C9/9, Centre for Kentish Studies (subsequently CKS). In a similar vein, Isaac Martin Rebow sent a ‘Bounty’ of edible gifts to Mary Martin during their courtship, including wood pigeons and a fine cut of venison which she used to host a ‘Grand Dinner’ for her parents. However she was unsure whether to disclose the gift to his mother, as this would reveal their correspondence and in turn their courtship, January 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/2-3, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

revealing his genteel pretensions. These edible gifts also facilitated physical contact between a couple by providing an excuse for them to dine together. Upon arriving at Elizabeth's house, Edward had the perfect opportunity to demonstrate his gentility, delicacy and self-control at the dinner table.<sup>29</sup>



**Fig. 4 – Mother and daughter selling oysters from baskets on their heads, Plate 10 from *The Twelve Cries of London*, 1760, 20 x 27cm, Museum of London, 008704.**

**Fig. 5 – Thomas Rowlandson, Extract from *Sports of a Country Fair: Part the Second*, London, 1810, hand-coloured etching, plate mark 24.1 x 35.1cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 810.10.05.02.**

In a later gift sent in October 1790, Edward made the decision that ‘Shell Fish in general being esteem’d very nutritious I thought a Barrell of Oysters no ways improper for you at this time; hope you have received them safe and good.’<sup>30</sup> Due to their nutritious qualities, oysters allowed men to demonstrate their concern in maintaining a woman’s healthy disposition.<sup>31</sup> Oysters could readily be purchased from fishmongers, markets, fairs and street sellers, as depicted in Figures 4 and 5. While the mother and daughter in Figure 4 carry oysters in baskets on their heads,

<sup>29</sup> On table manners and appetite see Stephen Mennell ‘On the Civilizing of Appetite’ in Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (eds.), *Food and Culture: A Reader* (London, 2007), pp. 325-9 and *idem*, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Peach to Leathes, Norwich, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1790, BOL 2/140/2/35, NRO. Edward also took his advice a step further to recommend particular dishes that Elizabeth should eat, advising her ‘to have part of a Neck of Mutton made into a Broth, & some not done too much, that you may eat with a Turnip or two’, Sundridge, October 17<sup>th</sup> 1790, BOL 2/140/2/36.

<sup>31</sup> Oysters had a long history as a medicinal food, reaching back as far as the Romans, and were variously assigned to healing invalids, treating tuberculosis, catarrh, stomach ache, anaemia, and improving the complexion. See Drew Smith, *Oyster: A World History* (Stroud, 2010), pp. 37-9.

the couple in Figure 5 shuck oysters for revellers at a country fair. They were sent by numerous suitors studied in this thesis, with Colonel Isaac Rebow of the East Essex Militia sending a barrel to his sweetheart Mary Martin in 1772.<sup>32</sup> In the spring of 1791, the cotton-trader Joseph Strutt sent Isabella Douglas several barrels of oysters in an attempt to restore her to health.<sup>33</sup> In April he enquired whether they had been of use, asking,

I have not heard lately whether your Oysters came regularly & whether you have enough of them – if they do not, or are not good, & you still prefer them, I desire I may know that I may order you some immediately from London; remember you are no longer to treat me with ceremony on this score.<sup>34</sup>

Joseph's request that Isabella treat him without 'ceremony' foreshadows his role as her husband, as he wished to provide repeated gifts of food to care for his future wife. However Joseph was disappointed to receive a letter from Charlotte in May complaining that they were no good, insisting in a letter to Isabella that 'there is no substitute for them equal to flesh meat & that you do not like – you must however eat all you can if you mean ever to be well.'<sup>35</sup> These exchanges demonstrate how by giving food as a gift, men could express concern for their sweethearts when they fell ill, practising playing the role of caring spouse. They also illuminate how the nature of food as a gift changed over the course of a relationship, changing from a speculative opening gift to a symbol of a man's deepening affection.

The second section of this chapter analyses textile gifts such as ribbons, waistcoats, handkerchiefs and neckcloths. Just as edible gifts such as cakes and gingerbread were often purchased from fairs, ribbons were popular 'fairings' given from men to women in the early stages of courtship.<sup>36</sup> Their masculine character was disseminated in ballads such as 'Faint Heart never won fair Lady' (c. 1682-92). It

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<sup>32</sup> Martin to Rebow, February 6<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/5, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

<sup>33</sup> 'I have sent you a few Oysters part of a barrel which came to us on Saturday – there are none fit to eat in Derby – if yours do not come to morrow, or they are not good, Charlotte who I trust will continue to give me daily information of your health, will I hope let me know.' Strutt to Douglas, Derby, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1791, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/23, BCA.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, April 17<sup>th</sup> 1791, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/24.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8<sup>th</sup> 1791, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/25.

<sup>36</sup> The use of textiles to attract a spouse is a further pertinent issue beyond the realms of this chapter. See John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 2007), pp. 310-14.

advised bachelors that ribbons, rings and sweet treats were the quickest way to a woman's heart:

Win her with Fairings and sweetening Treats,  
Lasses are soonest o'ercome this way;  
Ribbons and Rings will work most strange feats,  
and bring you into favour and play.<sup>37</sup>

The ballad is typical in suggesting that gift-giving was solely a male ritual, characterising female passivity as an obstacle to be 'o'ercome' by 'sweetening treats' offered by the male seducer. The activities of the masculine wooer are depicted in the fine needlepoint embroidery adorning four walnut chairs created by the British cabinetmaker Giles Grendey (1693-1780) in *c.* 1725 (Fig. 6). They depict the four stages of courtship, where at each stage the woman sits beneath a tree, judging her suitor while he reads her poetry, dresses in fashionable clothing and plays the flute in order to woo her. The same dichotomy between female passivity and male seduction is described in letters between bachelors, which characterise courtship as an exhilarating sport and a test of their luck and skill.<sup>38</sup> Such sources actively downplay the role of women during courtship, instead emphasising the inherent opportunities it provided for masculine status and display.

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<sup>37</sup> 'Faint Heart never won fair Lady: Or, Good Advice to Batchelors How to Court and Obtain a Young Lass', *c.* 1682-92, Pepys Ballads 3.21, English Broadside Ballad Archive (subsequently EBBA).

<sup>38</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 56. Also see Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (London, 2013), pp. 186-7.



**Fig. 6 – Giles Grendey, walnut chairs with needlepoint depiction of the four stages of courtship, London, c. 1725, seat 46cm (D) x 55cm (W front) x 48cm (W back), chair 105cm (H), by permission of Fairfax House, York.**

Ribbons provided an important means of publicising a new relationship, as they were highly visible and could be used to tie up hair, decorate hats and hang mementoes around individuals' necks. The bright spectrum of colours is displayed in a selection of ribbons left with infants at the London Foundling Hospital, where mothers brought along colourful fabrics to identify their children in case they were ever in a position to return. In the absence of a token, a piece of the child or mother's clothing was cut by clerks. When a female infant was admitted on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1743, clerks cut a bunch of vibrant yellow, blue, green and pink ribbons to identify her (Fig. 9). Fifteen years later on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1758, an infant girl was admitted with a broad pink ribbon left as a token, decorated with green squares and a brown stripe (Fig. 7).<sup>39</sup> Other more plain designs such as the blue ribbon left as a token in Figure 8 could be decorated with attractive scalloped borders. The display of ribbons in courting women's hair was described in songs at Ranelagh, where 'Colin meets Dolly, and they hold a dialogue together; he gives her a fairing to put in her hair, and she presents him with a nose-gay; and then they go together to church.'<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth

<sup>39</sup> This particular design was also left with foundling no. 10,315 on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1758, in a slightly different colour palette of pink and brown, A/FH/A/9/1/115, London Metropolitan Archives (subsequently LMA).

<sup>40</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (London, 1766; 1823), p. 292.



Montagu witnessed numerous suitors purchasing ribbons for their sweethearts at the Northfleet fair in c. 1740, noting ‘many hearts did I see exchanged for fairings of cherry colour’d ribbon.’<sup>41</sup> They could also be purchased from street sellers, or from haberdashers and milliners which attracted customers using elaborate window displays and trade cards advertising ‘All sorts of Fashionable Ribbons.’<sup>42</sup>

Ribbons were a characteristically feminine item, symbolising the frivolity of female consumers; in 1749 the heiress Elizabeth Jeffreys playfully reminded her suitor Charles Pratt of his maxim that ‘my own Brain...is Fill’d with Ribbons, Flowers, Stomachers, &c – for adorning my own Person.’<sup>43</sup> They were first used as gender markers in infancy, with 84% of ribbons cut by clerks or brought as tokens to the Foundling Hospital left with young girls. This suggests that both mothers and clerks considered them to be symbolically female.<sup>44</sup> Ribbons allowed servant girls to follow rapidly changing fashions, and accessories such as handkerchiefs, neckcloths, aprons, caps and ribbons constituted their second largest category of expenditure after garments. Whilst silk gowns remained the province of elites, smaller items such as silk ribbons made costly fabrics accessible to the poor.<sup>45</sup> The availability of silk ribbons to poorer couples highlights the appeal of the material properties of these items, as their smooth texture would have seemed particularly luxurious to individuals used to wearing coarser worsted or cotton textiles. Old Bailey depositions reveal the cost of ribbons, as the foundling Ann Roch was sent on errands for her mistress such as buying two yards of three-penny ribbon for 6*d.* in 1768, while pink silk ribbons were worth around sixpence a yard in 1780.<sup>46</sup> Ribbons in silk, satin, and taffeta were particularly expensive, and ‘Taffety Ribbon’ was sold for around a shilling a yard in 1702.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Montagu to Cavendish, c. 1740, MSS MO 295, HLC.

<sup>42</sup> Draft trade card of Matthew Pearson, haberdasher of Covent Garden, 1774, Heal 70.109, British Museum (subsequently BM). Also see ribbon sample book, c. 1826-84, 65 x 696, watermark ‘J. Green & Son, 1826,’ Winterthur Museum and Library (subsequently WLD).

<sup>43</sup> Jeffreys to Pratt, March 12<sup>th</sup> 1749, U840/C9/27, CKS. The frivolous display of ribbons led groups such as Quakers and Methodists to condemn their ‘superfluous’ use and discourage attendance at fairs. See Styles, *Dress of the People*, p. 318.

<sup>44</sup> Based on a study of 18 billet books between 1741 and 1760, containing on average 100 children per book: A/FH/A/9/1/1, 4, 6, 8, 20, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 112, 115, 140, 141, LMA.

<sup>45</sup> Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 284-6, 358.

<sup>46</sup> Trial of Bartholomew Fanton for highway robbery, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1768, t17681207-57, Charlotte Ware and Mary Wright for shoplifting, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1780, t17800913-82, Old Bailey Online (subsequently OBO).

<sup>47</sup> Trial of Sarah Morrison for grand larceny, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1702, t17021014-2, OBO.

The meaning of tokens such as ribbons was intensified by small unbreakable ‘love knots’ symbolising the everlasting bond between two people. These were often made in ribbons left with foundlings, representing an unbreakable bond which could not be diminished by the mother’s absence. The earliest recorded example of a ‘love-knott’ possessing mythical powers in maintaining a romantic union was in William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (1387).<sup>48</sup> It retained this mythical status as an emotionally charged gesture of love in the eighteenth century, where love knots were thought to intensify the meaning of any gift which was malleable enough to tie into a knot. In 1756, Samuel Johnson defined a ‘loveknot’ as ‘A complicated figure, by which affection interchanged is figured’, symbolising the transmission of affection from one individual to another.<sup>49</sup> ‘True lovers knots’ resembling a figure of eight remained a popular motif in jewellery from the late seventeenth century onwards, representing ‘a bond that could only be undone in death.’<sup>50</sup>



**Fig. 7 – Pink and brown ribbon left as a token for foundling no. 8,857, a female infant admitted on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1758, London Metropolitan Archives, A/FH/A/9/1/115.**

**Fig. 8 – Blue ribbon with scalloped edge left as a token for foundling no. 7,846, a female infant named Jane, on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1758, London Metropolitan Archives, A/FH/A/9/1/90.**

**Fig. 9 – A bunch of yellow, blue green and pink silk ribbons cut by clerks to identify foundling no. 170, a female infant admitted on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1743, London Metropolitan Archives, A/FH/A/9/1/3.**

<sup>48</sup> ‘Love-knot, n.’, OEDO, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/110583?redirectedFrom=loveknot>

<sup>49</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, second edition (London, 1756), Vol. II, p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Clare Phillips, *Jewels & Jewellery* (London, 2008), p. 52.

Colour also played a significant role in the transmission of affection, with the emotive power of blue granting it particular authority in the expression of romantic love. It was psychologically symbolic of the Virgin Mary, divine contemplation, piety and sincerity. The Roman God Jupiter was associated with the blue of the heavens, and also the pure colour white.<sup>51</sup> These associations were inherited from medieval Europe, where blue was exempt from the discriminatory colours used to distinguish prostitutes, lepers and Jews, and was upheld by Calvinists as one of the colours of nature.<sup>52</sup> The eighteenth century saw the emergence of blue as the colour of romance and melancholy, with the protagonist of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) wearing a blue coat the first time he danced with Charlotte, making such a strong emotional connection that he ‘could not possibly wear it any longer’ after they met.<sup>53</sup> In 1779, an exemplary letter from a sailor to his sweetheart in *The Accomplished Letter-Writer* pined, ‘I constantly dream of my dear Peggy. I wear my Half-Bit of Gold always at my Heart, tied to a blue Ribbon round my Neck; for True Blue, my dearest Love, is a Colour of Colours to me. Where, my dearest, do you put yours?’<sup>54</sup> The sailor’s choice of colour was part of a long association between blue and romance, which continued in paintings such as George Morland’s *Johnny Going to the Fair* (Fig. 10) and the song ‘O Dear What Can the Matter Be’:

O Dear! what can the matter be,  
 O! what can the matter be,  
 Johnny’s so long at the fair:

He promis’d he’d buy me a fairing should please me,  
 And then for a kiss, O! he vowed he would teaze me,  
 He promis’d he’d bring me a bunch of blue ribbons,  
 To tie up my bonny brown hair.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> John Ayto, *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase & Fable*, seventeenth edition (London, 2007), pp. 298, 756.

<sup>52</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: the History of a Colour* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 87, 92-3, 106-110.

<sup>53</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, September 6<sup>th</sup> 1772, Book 2, trans. Victor Lange in David E. Wellbery (ed.) *Goethe: The Collected Works*, Vol. 11 (Chichester, 1774; 1995), p. 56.

<sup>54</sup> *The accomplished letter-writer; or, universal correspondent* (London, 1779), p. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Chorus and first verse of ‘O Dear, What Can the Matter Be!’, *For 1794. The Apollo: being an elegant selection of approved modern songs, by the most esteemed writers* (Bath, 1794), pp. 210-11. It has been suggested that there were also variant forms of the rhyme in existence before the 1780s.

Shades of blue changed according to economic shifts, with locally-grown blue woad dyes gradually replaced with deeper and darker indigo blues. Indigo was shipped with increasing frequency from the American colonies in the second half of the century, especially South Carolina.<sup>56</sup>



**Fig. 10 – George Morland, *Johnny Going to the Fair*, Great Britain, late eighteenth century, oil on canvas, 45.7cm (H) x 34.3cm (W), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 541-1882.**

Nonetheless the pink, green, yellow and brown ribbons displayed in Figures 7-9 demonstrate that blue was not unrivalled as the colour of love. Eighteenth-century textiles came in a rainbow of colours, created using natural dyes such as fruit, bark and wood from alder, chestnut, oak and walnut trees (for grey, black and brown), or cochineal and madder (for scarlet and Turkey red).<sup>57</sup> Different colours were selected for their symbolic properties; green was the colour of Venus, the goddess of beauty and sensual love, and symbolised faith, gladness, immortality and the resurrection of the just. Yellow was the colour of Apollo and the sun, with

<sup>56</sup> Pastoreau, *Blue*, pp. 125-30.

<sup>57</sup> 'Anil' was first discovered in 1760 when Jean Hellot (1685-1765) distilled indigo in the presence of quicklime. However he did not understand its significance for dyeing. While 'Prussian Blue' was discovered by the painter Heinrich Diesbach in the 1700s, synthetic dyes did not become widely used for textiles until the mid-nineteenth century. See R. Chenciner, *Madder Red: A History of Luxury and Trade* (Richmond, 2000), pp. 55-6 and JH Hofenk de Graaff, *The Colourful Past: Origins, Chemistry and Identification of Natural Dyestuffs* (London, 2004).

Saint Peter wearing golden yellow robes. However it was also the colour of Judas Iscariot, and was used as a discriminatory shade in sumptuary laws.<sup>58</sup> Colours also possessed strong nationalist connotations; in December 1743, an article ‘On the Ladies wearing Yellow’ in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* reported with alarm that ‘divers of them had, deliberately, and with Malice prepense, distinguished themselves, by displaying in their Cloaths, Ribbons, Fans, Faces, &c. the FOREIGN WESTPHALIAN YELLOW, in direct and open Violation, and Contempt of the true BRITISH RED.’ While yellow symbolised the Prussian threat, honourable red derived from ‘the *Cheeks* of my Countrywomen, and the *Fields* of our slaughter’d Enemies.’<sup>59</sup>

While ‘fairings’ such as ribbons were commonly given from men to women early in a relationship, women could later reciprocate using handmade textile gifts to demonstrate their domestic accomplishment. Due to the personalised nature of these items, they would only have been given once marriage was guaranteed. They have been fundamentally overlooked by historians, who have focussed persistently on men’s gift-giving. As argued in Chapter One, while women produced men’s gifts in court in order to win their cases, it was not necessary for men to produce women’s tokens in their defence, obscuring them from the historical record. This leads to the misleading conclusion that most women did not give tokens, and that they were unimportant when they did.

However, studying romantic correspondences reveals that women also crafted a number of handmade textile gifts to give to their suitors. These were produced by women of all social backgrounds, as the connection between virtue and needlework transcended social boundaries.<sup>60</sup> Handmade gifts were particularly valued by men as they ‘demonstrated female duty’ and represented a significant

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<sup>58</sup> Ayto, *Brewer’s Dictionary*, p. 298. On the symbolism of colours in the domestic interior see Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 173-5, and for pink ribbons attacked as a sign of the ageing flirt, Vickery, ‘Mutton Dressed as Lamb? Fashioning Age in Georgian England’, *Journal of British Studies* (forthcoming, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol. 13, December 1743, pp. 658-9. The author visited a mercers and asked about demand for yellow, discovering that one woman of taste asked ‘how he could take it into his Head, that she would wear that *flaring, shocking* SASH COLOUR; and that many others had said, *None of your Yellows*’, p. 659.

<sup>60</sup> See James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, Sermon VI, ‘On Female Virtue, With Domestic and Elegant Accomplishments’ (London, 1766).

investment of a woman's time.<sup>61</sup> Women writing love letters consistently emphasised the time invested in embroidering gifts, while men in turn praised their dedication. The Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II hoped that Elizabeth Grey would drop all social commitments to commence producing gifts for him. As he wrote from Paris in May 1787, 'Pray work me a Purse. I think I see you, as soon as you have read the letter looking for the silk; or am I too vain? No I do not think I am. It will be ready by the time I get to Fallodon, will it not?'<sup>62</sup> His dutiful future wife made sure that the purse was ready two months later, with Samuel writing to thank her in July.<sup>63</sup> However he was still not content, sending her some white silk in November and asking that 'You will begin to work it, because I love to have You at all Moments employed for me.'<sup>64</sup> The London gentlewoman Mary Martin also emphasised the time invested in creating gifts for the MP Isaac Rebow between 1767 and 1772. Seven months before their marriage in January, Mary described how she had spent so long making a 'tolerably Pretty' waistcoat that she was forced to cut short her letters to him, worrying that 'y shape will be so Old Fashion'd by next summer, that it will not be fit for you to Wear.'<sup>65</sup>

As well as representing time invested in a man, handmade gifts personified the spirit of the giver, and had a woman's love embroidered into their very fabric.<sup>66</sup> Men repeatedly emphasised their emotional investment in these gifts; as Humphrey Senhouse III (1731-1813) wrote to his future wife Catherine Wood in September 1768, 'your Handkerchief is safe, and highly valued.'<sup>67</sup> After receiving his purse from Elizabeth Grey in 1787, Samuel Whitbread II wrote that 'I am anxious to have something more of your doing. let it be a Pocket book or any thing be it but something.'<sup>68</sup> In response, she created a number of gifts including a neckcloth and a

<sup>61</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 240. Also see Eustace, 'Love and Power', p. 525.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Whitbread II to Elizabeth Grey, Paris, May 16<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6548, No. 3, Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service (subsequently BLARS).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Geneva, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1787, No. 17, W1/6562.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, London, November 27<sup>th</sup> 1787, No. 5, W1/6586.

<sup>65</sup> Martin to Rebow, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1772, A12691/16, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO. Mary had previously promised on 16<sup>th</sup> June to continue with 'y Performance of a fix'd Task, which I have Vow'd to do every Day in a Certain Waistcoat', A12691/14. On 7<sup>th</sup> July Mary used it to escape a trip to Knightsbridge with her sister, 'by pleading hard how very backward [*sic*] I was in my Waistcoat', A12691/19.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa M. Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), p. 471.

<sup>67</sup> Humphrey Senhouse III to Catherine Wood, September 27<sup>th</sup> 1768, D/SEN 5/5/1/9/1/5, Cumbria Record Office (subsequently CRO).

<sup>68</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Francfort, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1787, W1/6574, No. 28, BLARS.

waistcoat for him, which he praised as ‘prettier than You can imagine.’<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth’s efforts were worthwhile, as when worn in public these items allowed women to metaphorically and publicly claim men through their dress. In July 1791, Isabella Douglas lamented that the Derbyshire cotton-trader Joseph Strutt wore nothing which she could work for him, as a public recognition of their relationship. She suggested that a neckcloth may be suitable, with Joseph dismissing most examples as ‘so very general that being quite particular...I have been compelled to lay them aside.’ The couple agreed that a personalised neckcloth would be a most suitable gift, and that he would be delighted to receive it ‘as a pledge of your esteem.’<sup>70</sup>

Men could show appreciation for women’s efforts by reciprocating with further supplies for needlework. Samuel Whitbread II sent Elizabeth Grey two tambour needles after receiving her waistcoat in November 1787,<sup>71</sup> while Joseph Strutt sent Isabella Douglas a new knotting machine, some tassels and silver rings as a sign of his gratitude. In addition were ‘twenty one yards of fine & beautiful Callicoe’ which he presumed would be enough to make three gowns – two for Isabella and one for her sister. He hoped they would ‘all like them & long wear [*sic*] with health & pleasure.’<sup>72</sup> The materials available would have varied according to social rank, with elaborate silk garments restricted to wealthy elites. They also changed over time, with cotton textiles first imported from India in the late seventeenth century, before the domination of pure cotton gowns in the final decades of the eighteenth century, and the emergence of expensive white muslins for elite women in the 1780s. When Joseph sent this calico as a gift to Isabella in 1792, she would have valued the fabric for its superior and ‘beautiful’ appearance.<sup>73</sup> Needlework gifts rewarded women for the hours devoted to their suitors, encouraging them to continue their efforts in anticipation of marriage.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, London, November 27<sup>th</sup> 1787, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1788.

<sup>70</sup> Described in letter from Strutt to Douglas, Brighton, July 31<sup>st</sup> 1791, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/28, BCA.

<sup>71</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, London, November 27<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6588, No. 5, BLARS.

<sup>72</sup> Strutt to Douglas, Derby, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1792, MS3101/C/E/4/8/30, BCA.

<sup>73</sup> Styles, *Dress of the People*, pp. 109-13, 126-7.



**Fig. 11 – Detail of men’s champagne ribbed silk waistcoat embroidered with roses, ribbons and sequins, 1775-85, Charles Paget Wade Collection, Snowhill Manor, National Trust Collections Online, 1349012, © National Trust / Richard Blakey.**

**Fig. 12 – Detail of men’s cream silk tabby waistcoat embroidered with acorns and oak leaves, 1780-90, Charles Paget Wade Collection, Snowhill Manor, National Trust Collections Online, 1349025, © National Trust / Richard Blakey.**

The popularity of particular icons in embroidery changed over time, with the increase in botanical over Biblical scenes during the eighteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Individual flowers were selected by women as they typified particular qualities such as love, loss, luck, purity, fertility and femininity. In 1784, *The young ladies school of arts* advised ladies about the meaning of roses, with ‘the white being the emblem of purity and love, and the red of beauty and grace’ while the lily was ‘an emblem of purity and chastity; and the ensign of the blessed Virgin; also the ornament royal and princely flower in the crown of King Solomon; representing love with perfect charity.’<sup>75</sup> While it is almost impossible to locate surviving courtship gifts without identifying labels sewn into the garment, equivalent examples reveal the popularity of particular motifs. Figure 11 is a detail of a ribbed silk waistcoat created between 1775 and 1785, embroidered with garlands of pink roses interspersed with twirling ribbons. While red roses were described above as symbolising beauty and grace, ribbons were widely viewed as courtship gifts. The expensive silk would have been

<sup>74</sup> Popular figures in the seventeenth century include the Virtues, Senses, Elements, Seasons, and brave Biblical women such as Esther and Deborah. See Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London, 1996) and Ruth Geuter, ‘Reconstructing the Context of Seventeenth-century English Figurative Embroideries’ in Donald and Hurcombe, *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective*, pp. 97-111.

<sup>75</sup> Hannah Robertson, *The young ladies school of arts* (York, 1784), pp. 28-9.



accessible to gentlewomen such as Mary Martin, while the simple embroidery is likely to have been undertaken at home rather than by a professional. The waistcoat in Figure 12 is more elaborate, and is decorated with acorns and naturalistic oak leaves. The symbolism of ‘insignificant’ acorns was crafted in fables where they became ‘so large and stately a tree, with branches of such prodigious strength.’<sup>76</sup> Sewing acorns onto a waistcoat therefore wished a man strength and good health. Oak leaves were also symbolic of monarchy, publicly declaring the wearer’s political allegiance.<sup>77</sup> They demonstrate the potential of embroidery to convey particular emotional messages, constituting a materialisation of love, identity and domestic skill.

The third section of this chapter focuses on gifts related to the human body, symbolising the impending physical union between two people. Garters connect these two categories as they were practical textile gifts used to hold up a woman’s stockings, but were also physically suggestive of the inside of her leg. The bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu witnessed courting couples purchasing garters on her visit to the Northfleet fair in c. 1740, describing how ‘in one booth were nymphs and swains buying garters with amorous poesies; some only with the humble request, “when these you see, remember me” others a poetical and more familiar “be true to me as I’m to thee.”’<sup>78</sup> The wearing of garters emblazoned with the message ‘remember me’ would have encouraged women to think of their suitors when undressing, and associate them with the bare skin beneath their petticoats. These erotic overtones made garters a particularly intimate gift, which were used to keep the memory of a relationship alive, subsuming the identity of giver and gift into a single object.<sup>79</sup> Many women would also have used the ribbons they received as fairings to tie their stockings below the knee, continuing to provide a source of erotic identification with a lover.

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<sup>76</sup> Fable XV, ‘The Atheist and the Acorn’ in *Dodsley’s select fables of Esop and other fabulists* (Dublin, 1763), p. 52.

<sup>77</sup> On the importance of clothing as a mark of allegiance at the royal court see Hannah Greig, ‘Dressing for Court: Sartorial Politics & Fashion News in the Age of Mary Delany’ in Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (eds.) *Mrs. Delany & Her Circle* (London, 2009), pp. 80-93, esp. 88-91.

<sup>78</sup> Montagu to Cavendish, c. 1740, MSS MO 295, HLC.

<sup>79</sup> For the ritual of ‘seizing the garters’ after the marriage ceremony see Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, pp. 63, 138.

While garters were symbolic of a woman's leg, decorative gloves given from men to women were suggestive of the ancient ritual of winning a lady's hand. The symbolism of gloves arose from their association with handfast (where betrothal was completed by a handclasp) or the challenge of the gauntlet.<sup>80</sup> Diana O'Hara has found that the glove was the most common textile exchanged during courtship in sixteenth-century Canterbury, which was given 37 times out of a total of 403 transactions.<sup>81</sup> Gloves could be purchased from haberdashers, milliners, fairs and street-sellers who also sold gifts such as ribbons.<sup>82</sup> During his tour of Europe in 1787, Samuel Whitbread II promised to send his sweetheart Elizabeth Grey 'some Gloves...for which Montpellier is famous, that you may remember the Town.'<sup>83</sup> A lady's hand was symbolic of her affections as a whole, with Samuel desiring Elizabeth to tell the whole world the 'destination of your Hand' nine days before their wedding in 1788.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Antony Hamond wrote to his sweetheart Mary Ann Musters in c. 1828 that he would 'get home on Thursday & on Monday hope to again kiss the hand of my pretendue.'<sup>85</sup> The glove was therefore a morally imbued gift, undermining Giese's argument that a toothpick would be equally important if given and received in a particular way.<sup>86</sup> In 1794, the protagonist of the poem *Lines Sent to a Young Lady, With a Pair of Gloves, on St. Valentine's Day* sent his love rival a glove to initiate a duel for the lady Delia, demonstrating its symbolic power:

Brimful of anger, not of love,  
The champion sends his foe a glove;  
But I that have a double share  
Of the soft passion – send a pair.<sup>87</sup>

The most symbolically important gift adorning a lady's hand was the ring, which served as a mark of ownership, and a visible advertisement of her engaged or married status.<sup>88</sup> These extraordinarily powerful tokens publicly announced a union

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<sup>80</sup> O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 84.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> Therle Hughes, *English Domestic Needlework 1660-1860* (London, 1961), p. 208.

<sup>83</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Montpellier, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1787, W1/6561, No. 16, BLARS.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, London, January 17<sup>th</sup> 1788, W1/6608, No. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Hamond to Musters, undated, c. 1828, HMN 5/95/1, NRO.

<sup>86</sup> Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, pp. 84, 134-5.

<sup>87</sup> *The political farrago: being a miscellaneous assemblage of epigrams and other jeux d'esprit* (London, 1794), Vol. II, p. 48.

<sup>88</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 343.

whether the wearer intended to or not, with rings given by adulterous lovers invoked as evidence in suits for divorce by means of adultery.<sup>89</sup> Before the Hardwicke Marriage Act, the solemnity of ring-giving alone could signify the mutual consent and contract of both parties, when endorsed by local custom.<sup>90</sup> Nonetheless, after 1754, rings continued to signify a public promise of marriage, even though contracts *per verba de praesenti* or *per verba de futuro* were no longer enforced by the church courts. Before her marriage to Samuel Whitbread II in 1788, Elizabeth Grey wore a ring he had given her as a public declaration of their love. As he asked in 1787, ‘pray does the Pearl Ring maintain it’s [*sic*] rightful place. I trust it does.’<sup>91</sup> At the highest social level, noblemen such as John, first Earl Spencer (1734-83) could afford to lavish their future wives with expensive jewel-encrusted rings. Georgiana Poyntz (1737-1814) described her tears and sighs anticipating his proposal during an excursion to Wimbledon Park in 1755:

We both behav’d Vastly well & tho I was ready to dye ten times with stifling sighs & tears which were ready to burst I Put on as Chearfull a face as possible.

However just before her coach was due to leave she was pleased to report that,

he gave me a ring for a keep sake it is a very Pretty one...in the Middle is a ruby round that a row of small Brilliants & round that another row of small rubys There is a Motto round the ring & another Motto engraved upon the Back part of the setting in small letters which I shew to no lady nor should I have found it out my self [*sic*] if I had not been shewn it The Motto round the Ring is Mon Coeur est tout a Toi the other is Gardez le tien pour moi.<sup>92</sup>

Their impending marriage was publicly confirmed by the exchange of the ring, with the motto privately reassuring Georgiana that she had his heart. It provided a

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<sup>89</sup> *Cholmondeley vs. Cholmondeley*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1736, DL/C/270, fol. 278 and *Cooke vs. Cooke*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1757, DLJC/202, fol. 112, LMA.

<sup>90</sup> O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, p. 62. While eighteenth-century women wore wedding rings, and often engagement rings from the mid-nineteenth century, men did not begin wearing wedding rings until the outbreak of the First World War in the twentieth century.

<sup>91</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, London, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1787, W1/6601, No. 18, BLARS. The pearl was symbolic of natural perfection and the goddess Venus. It was displaced by the diamond as the most popular gem during the second half of the eighteenth century. See Pointon, *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery* (London, 2009), pp. 36, 86, 88-9, 107-24.

<sup>92</sup> Georgiana Poyntz to Theodora Cowper, 1755, Althorp collection, Add Mss. 75691/1, f. 122, BL.

material point of contact between the couple during their separation, with the Earl making Georgiana ‘promise not to open it till I came to London.’<sup>93</sup> Rings have remained the central emblem of the betrothed couple until the present day, showing remarkable continuity in the face of legal and cultural changes. English folk traditions such as placing the wedding ring upon the fourth finger of the left hand have continued unchanged, deriving from the belief that a ‘a certain vein...runs from thence as far as the heart.’<sup>94</sup>

While gifts such as rings, garters and gloves were suggestive of a woman’s hands, fingers or legs, the exchange of hair allowed individuals to physically give part of the body which would outlast their human lives, as ‘bodily trace becomes transcendent corporeality.’<sup>95</sup> Hair was perceived as the eternal gift, which acted as a symbol of immortal love and affection. The enduring power of hair was perpetuated in the poetry of John Donne (1572-1631), where skeletons of a ‘loving couple’ wear a ‘bracelet of bright hair’ in their grave.<sup>96</sup> These symbolic properties made hair the second item in addition to rings which guaranteed marriage. This view was disseminated in novels; in Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) Margaret Dashwood was sure that Willoughby and Marianne ‘will be married very soon, for he has got a lock of her hair...he took up her scissors and cut off a long lock of hair, for it was all tumbled down her back; and he kissed it, and folded it up in a piece of white paper, and put it into his pocket-book.’<sup>97</sup> It was also repeatedly mentioned in courtship letters. The Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II sent several instalments of hair to Elizabeth Grey in 1787, writing that ‘I send you the remaining hair next letter, which will not be long coming.’<sup>98</sup> He promised to stop his continual

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* In her following letter Georgiana described receiving a brooch: ‘Spencer has given me a very pretty I don’t know what to Call it to fasten my Riding Dress Shirt with...the top is two doves a Cooing & the Motto on the back part Imitons les en amitie’, undated, Add Mss. 75691/2. She took the time to produce small coloured ink drawings of each of these pieces, stitching the second onto her letter with blue thread, demonstrating her emotional investment in them.

<sup>94</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 342.

<sup>95</sup> Pointon, ‘Materializing Mourning’, p. 46.

<sup>96</sup> John Donne, ‘The Relic’ in *A complete edition of the poets of Great Britain*, Vol. IV (London, 1792), p. 37. Hair was also used in Donne’s poem ‘The Funeral’ (c. 1635), *ibid.*, p. 36. Hair appeared in eighteenth-century songs such as ‘The Token. By Mr. Dibdin’ where the sailor Jack carries a piece of broken gold, braided hair and a snuffbox as tokens of love from his sweetheart. *The Hampshire Syren: or, Songster’s Miscellany* (Southampton, 1794), pp. 12-13.

<sup>97</sup> Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (London, 1811; 2000), pp. 43-4. Also see passages on lockets containing hair or made from plaited hair given as love tokens in Georgiana Cavendish, *The Sylph*, third edition (London, 1779), Vol. I, Letter IX, p. 101 and Vol. II, Letter XXVII, pp. 42-3.

<sup>98</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, London, November 29<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6586, No. 3, BLARS.

requests for her hair the following year, describing how ‘The hair I have got safe & thank You for...I will not desire any more hair, nor quite thin your flowing locks.’<sup>99</sup> This transaction was essential in enabling the couple to literally keep a material fragment of one another during their separation. While hair used in mourning jewellery was usually cut from the body of the dead, hair exchanged as a love token possessed a special efficacy as part of the living body of the lover.



**Fig. 13 – John Field, *Silhouette of an Unknown Man*, watercolour on ivory set in a bracelet of woven hair, England, c. 1810, 3.2cm (H) x 2.1cm (W), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.169-1922.**

Hair was regularly woven into braids and plaits to create delicate hair-work jewellery, with Elizabeth Leathes receiving a ring with her suitor’s initials set in hair in 1772, and Charlotte Mary Curwen receiving another in 1805.<sup>100</sup> It is likely that most pieces were commissioned from professionals, as manuals of instruction did not appear until the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>101</sup> Such pieces allowed individuals to carry a fragment of the absent lover on their own body, in the form of rings, lockets, pins and watch chains.<sup>102</sup> The bracelet in Figure 13 is made from plaited hair, possibly taken from the man depicted in silhouette in the centre. Such silhouettes were

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Bedwell Park, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1788, W1/6603, No. 20. Similar expressions were widespread, with the Duke of Cumberland writing to Lady Grosvenor during their scandalous affair that ‘I then prayed for you *my dearest love kissed* [sic] *your dearest little Hair*’ in *The genuine copies of letters*, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Reading to Leathes, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1772, BOL 2/4/16, NRO, and Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 4<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/8, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>101</sup> This shift is not recognised in Pointon, *Brilliant Effects*, where she states that ‘Craft manuals were published recommending how hair could be assembled, teased and delicately organised into weeping willow trees and Prince of Wales feathers’ without locating them in a particular period, p. 304. Manuals include W. Martin, *The Hair Worker’s Manual* (London, c. 1840s) and W. Halford and C. Young, *A Jewellers’ Book of Patterns in Hair Work* (London, c. 1850).

<sup>102</sup> In 1831, the author Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849) described a multiplicity of hair-work pieces worn by a friend, including ‘a trefoil pin with his aunt’s hair, and the sleeve-buttons with his mother’s and sister’s hair; and I have added a locket to hang to his watch-chain, with a bit, very scarce, of my own hair.’ Edgeworth to Harriet Edgeworth Butler, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1831, British and Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries Database (subsequently BIWLD).

introduced in the 1770s as a cheaper alternative to portrait miniatures, making hair-work tokens featuring portraits accessible to less wealthy individuals.<sup>103</sup> The hair is deliberately woven to emphasise the man in the centre, and encourage its owner to fondly indulge in memories of him. Upon first seeing the bracelet, viewers may initially assume that it is made from leather, as the corporeal nature of his hair has been ‘ingeniously disguised.’ The concealment of hair was a standard feature of nineteenth-century jewellery, compared to seventeenth-century examples which were ‘readily recognisable as hair.’<sup>104</sup> The overwhelming volume of hair-work tokens in the early nineteenth century illustrates the shifting importance of various objects in stirring the emotions, while retaining the central place of objects in the key rituals of the life-cycle.

Miniature portraits allowed couples to carry the image of their beloved with them, and gaze upon them to deepen their love. As the tailor’s daughter Sarah Hurst wrote of her suitor Henry Smith in 1759, ‘I oft gaze on his lifeless image.’<sup>105</sup> William Ward’s mezzotint *The Pledge of Love* (1788) depicts a fashionable gentlewoman seated beneath a tree, holding a letter in her hand (Fig. 14). She is completely absorbed in the process of looking at a miniature suspended on a ribbon around her neck. The inscription reads,

The lovely Fair with rapture views  
This token of their love  
Then all her promises renews  
And hopes he’ll constant prove.<sup>106</sup>

Individuals thus directed their romantic longing towards representations of loved ones, demonstrating the cultural importance given to gazing at objects sent by lovers. Certain gifts such as scent bottles were inscribed with messages reading ‘Think of Me’ to encourage individuals to gaze at tokens while thinking about their

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<sup>103</sup> Philips, *Jewels*, p. 67.

<sup>104</sup> Pointon, *Brilliant Effects*, p. 304.

<sup>105</sup> Diary of Hurst, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM. On 13<sup>th</sup> May she also showed Henry’s picture to her Uncle George. She looked forward to presenting Henry with her own portrait, as ‘I fancy it would [*sic*] give him pleasure’, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1759, MS 3542.

<sup>106</sup> A similar example can be found in George Morland’s mezzotint ‘Appointment’ depicting a young woman pointing to a watch in her hand, described as ‘the soft Summons of her Love’, 1792, LWL, 792.07.00.01.

relationship, whilst others were painted with phrases such as ‘Who opens This / Must have a Kiss’ and ‘Esteem the Giver,’ demonstrating the role of objects in encouraging the development of intimacy.<sup>107</sup> Marius Kwint cites the pagan belief that the souls of the dead remained trapped within objects until someone they knew came to deliver them. The sensations created by gazing at objects thus allowed lovers to access the ‘essence’ or ‘soul’ of the absent.<sup>108</sup> Lovers were expected to gaze at silhouettes and portraits at length while remembering their beloved’s physical qualities, imagining the ‘rapture’ of being with them, and renewing the ‘promises’ which brought them together.



**Fig. 14 – William Ward after George Morland, *The Pledge of Love*, London, 1788, mezzotint, 38 x 27.5cm, British Museum, London, AN189747001, © The Trustees of the British Museum.**

<sup>107</sup> Georgian enamelled scent bottle with rustic lovers, 1765 - 1770, BI448, Georgian enamelled patch box, 1800 – 1899, BI613, Georgian or Victorian yellow enamel oval patch box, 1800-1899, BI613, Georgian enamelled patch box, 1765 – 1785 BI606, Black Country Living Museum.

<sup>108</sup> Kwint, ‘Introduction’ in *idem et al* (eds.) *Material Memories*, p. 2.



**Fig. 15 – Anonymous, *Eye Miniature*, England, c. 1790-1820, watercolour on ivory with pearls and diamonds, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P.56-1977.**

The eye was consequently a vitally important part of the body in transmitting feelings of love.<sup>109</sup> As Ovid noted in his *Art of Love*, ‘your eyes confess your mutual fires; / (For eyes have tongues, and glances tell desires).’<sup>110</sup> Courting couples described their eyes as ‘betraying’ their true emotions, with the heiress Elizabeth Jeffreys writing to her suitor Charles Pratt in 1748 that ‘I cou’d not command my Eyes from disclosing the trouble of my Heart, they are, as you have told me often, very tell tale.’<sup>111</sup> James Nelthorpe also wrote to Abigail Way (d. 1793) that he was charmed by ‘the sight of those Conquering Eyes’ in 1765 and believed that ‘my Eyes have declared the real sentiments of my Heart.’<sup>112</sup> This prioritising of the eye as the central means of gauging love was embedded in material culture through the creation of eye miniatures, which reproduced only an individual’s eye and sometimes an eyebrow or tear, surrounded by precious stones such as pearls, diamonds or rubies (Fig. 15). They allowed lovers to directly gaze at one another’s eyes, with the added intrigue of preserving the subject’s anonymity, joining lovers with the secret of who they were looking at. From the 1780s, eye miniatures grew in popularity as fashionable love tokens for both men and women, especially between 1790 and 1810, testifying to the fleeting fashions for certain items. Figure 15 is an eye miniature by an anonymous British artist, set into a gold brooch. The eye cries tears of diamonds, representing the sorrow of separation, with the combination of

<sup>109</sup> The notion of the all-seeing ‘eye of heaven’ [*sic*] was first invoked by Spenser in 1590, and repeated in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in 1603. See ‘Eye, *n*<sup>1</sup>’, OEDO, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67296?rskey=zr0OSi&result=1&isAdvanced=false>

<sup>110</sup> Ovid, *The Art of Love* (London, 1813), p. 24.

<sup>111</sup> Jeffreys to Pratt, February 28<sup>th</sup> 1748, U840/C9/11, CKS.

<sup>112</sup> James Nelthorpe to Abigail Way, March 1765, SPK 1/3/2, East Sussex Record Office (subsequently ESRO). For a discussion of the ordering and controlling function given to ‘seeing’ in Western culture see Pointon, ‘Materializing Mourning’, p. 53 and for gazing as a ‘socialized manner of seeing’, *Brilliant Effects*, p. 298.



diamonds and pearls proclaiming the purity of virtuous love.<sup>113</sup> The eye does not look directly at the viewer, but averts its gaze, suggesting that the sitter was either absorbed in their own emotions, or was too modest to stare brazenly at the recipient. It provides evidence of ‘the game of fixed and self-conscious looking’ during courtship, as suitors were obliged to ‘focus intently’ and think deeply about the object to grasp its true meaning.<sup>114</sup> By gazing intently and sending longing looks at miniatures, the eye provided a way for love to enter the body.

In addition to gazing at tokens, individuals physically handled gifts sent by lovers. French naturalists such as Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-88) argued that the sense of touch was vital to human experience as it allowed individuals to distinguish between themselves and the outside world.<sup>115</sup> Touch was therefore crucial in fostering the development of love, creating new forms of behaviour among individuals who surrounded themselves with romantic gifts. The ritualised process of touching is satirised in Isaac Cruikshank’s etching *The Illustrious Lover* (Fig. 16). It ridicules the Duke of Cumberland, who isolates himself with a chest full of ‘Keepsakes’ to celebrate his love for Mrs. Powell.<sup>116</sup> His distracted monologue describes how,

I talk in my sleep, in short I act the part of a Fool – O the dear Plant. the dear the ever dear Pink cotton – my Charmer, my dearest dear, my adored my Celestial, I have Invoked Cupid, Mercury, Mars, Saturn, Venus, & all the Deities to Sanctify [sic] our heaven born love.

The text prioritises the role of smell in the experience of love, with the Duke declaring that ‘I shall adore the Papers the Ink, the very grease of your hand, which like a Dog I can by Instinct smell.’ He holds a red cotton ribbon belonging to Mrs.

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<sup>113</sup> On the manifold connotations of diamonds and pearls see *ibid.*, pp. 43-4, 86-9, 107-24.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 297-8 and “‘Surrounded with Brilliants,’” p. 63.

<sup>115</sup> This was by recognising that ‘the presence of the objects is not necessary to the existence of our sensations.’ If humans ‘are desirous of knowing ourselves, we must cultivate this sense, by which alone we are enabled to form a dispassionate judgment concerning our nature and condition.’ Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Natural history, general and particular*, Vol. II (Edinburgh, 1780), pp. 353-7. For the historiography of touch see Elizabeth D. Harvey, ‘Introduction: The “Sense of All Senses”’ in *idem* (ed.) *Sensible Flesh: on Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 1-21.

<sup>116</sup> For his earlier affair with Lord Grosvenor’s wife Henrietta see Chapter 4. Cruikshank’s etching is also discussed in Chapter 3, p. 118.

Powell to his mouth, using its scent to fuel his fantasies about her.<sup>117</sup> The primacy of the ribbon also underlines the Duke's effeminacy, as ribbons would usually have been given as 'fairings' from men to women. The most outwardly masculine feature of this ritual is his arousal, as the phallic watering can in his lap spouts water all over the plant on the table, fuelling his erotic desire. He pants, 'O that lovely loose dress – allways [sic] be loose...I shall never forget what I then saw.' It reinforces the haptic power of objects in stirring loving thoughts, acting as material sites of romantic emotion.<sup>118</sup>



**Fig. 16 – Isaac Cruikshank, *The Illustrious Lover, or the D. of Cumberland done over*, London, 1804, coloured etching with watercolour, Wellcome Library, London, 12198i.**

The immense value of love objects was said to resemble that of holy relics such as the four nails or 'true cross', as they were revered as treasures by their owners. Samuel Johnson conflated religious and secular relics in his definition of the term in 1756, as 'That which is kept in memory of another, with a kind of religious

<sup>117</sup> Kwint has used Marcel Proust's *A le Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) to argue that touching and tasting objects fills individuals with a 'precious essence.' *Idem*, 'Introduction', p. 3

<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Vickery has argued that love tokens were treated as material proof of the kind thoughts of others, prompting pleasant memories of the giver and the moment of giving. See *idem*, *Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 188.

veneration.’<sup>119</sup> In 1791, a commentary of rituals surrounding holy reliquaries in Mecca was published, including a silver case containing a black stone reported to have fallen to earth with Adam. The reliquary was ‘exceedingly respected, and piously kissed by all devout pilgrims’, just as letters and tokens were kissed as a ‘sacred Chalice’ by lovers.<sup>120</sup> While relics provided a bridge between heaven and earth, love tokens acted as means of contact between absent loved ones. Byron recognised these parallels in his poem *The Pledge of Love* in 1806:

This band, which bound thy yellow hair,  
 Is mine, sweet girl! thy pledge of love;  
 It claims my warmest, dearest care,  
 Like relics left of saints above.<sup>121</sup>

Engraved coins were often worn as magical amulets by prostitutes, who tied them around their necks to protect them from danger.<sup>122</sup> The use of coins to shield against evil demonstrates how individuals imbued objects with supernatural powers, endeavouring to keep them in close contact with the body. ‘Love coins’ were carried around in lovers’ pockets and brought out whenever they felt the pang of separation (Figs. 17 and 18). These were not coins as such, but hand-crafted portable tokens given from men to women. It is possible that George Rawling and Ann Maddison both owned versions of the engraved halfpenny in Figure 17, creating a material point of connection between the couple. By featuring their names on either side of the coin, they created a tangible object to connect their lives for future posterity. Such objects elucidate how the majority of tokens were ephemeral in nature, and rarely had any financial worth beyond their emotional properties. They were created by smoothing over one or both sides of a copper (c. 1750) or bronze (c. 1800) halfpenny, and engraving or pin-pricking symbols onto the blank face. While amateur designs such as George and Ann’s coin in Figure 17 were probably executed

<sup>119</sup> Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 512.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Alāi Ibn Abi Bakr, Burhan al-Dāin, al-Marghāinanāi, *The hedāya, or guide; a commentary on the Mussulman laws*, trans. Charles Hamilton (London, 1791), Vol. I, p. lviii, and John Keats to Fanny Brawne, undated, c. 1<sup>st</sup> March 1820, Letter XXII in Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, p. 65. Also see Chapter 3, pp. 118-9.

<sup>121</sup> Byron, *The Pledge of Love* in *The Poetical Love-Token. By the editor of the “Forget-Me-Not”* (London, 1850), p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> Sir Arthur Griffiths, *Parliamentary Committee Papers for 1836* in Timothy Millett, ‘Leaden Hearts’ in *idem* and Michele Fields (eds.) *Convict Love Tokens: the Leaden Hearts the Convicts Left Behind* (Kent Town, 1998), p. 10.

by lovers themselves, the majority were produced by professionals, or in imitation of professional work.



**Fig. 17 – ‘Engraved Georgian Halfpenny Love Token: George Rawling 1787 / Ann Maddison 1787’, no. 908, Lockdales Auction House, Auction #72, Exonumia; Tokens & Medallions, May 31st 2009.**

**Fig. 18 – Copper halfpenny with inscription and a sailor holding a woman’s hand, late eighteenth century, 2.7cm (D), © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, MEC1666.**

These pre-made gifts raise the question of whether tokens produced by craftsmen were any less heartfelt? While less time was certainly invested in their creation, a suitor would still have selected his favoured image, and could feasibly have spent longer shopping than he would have done carving. Pre-made coins were also more physically appealing due to the additional skill of their creator. This was unquestionably the view of sailors and convicts transported to Van Diemen’s Land, who commissioned ‘Leaden Hearts’ upon conviction to leave with their wives and sweethearts.<sup>123</sup> Such coins are dominated by the icon of the ship sailing into the distance as the key emblem of maritime separation. In Figure 18, a sailor and his sweetheart bid farewell beneath a tree, the icon of the life-cycle, as the ship waits in the background for him to depart. The inscription on the reverse reads, ‘Faithful my love / Sincere my heart / Shall never Rove / till death us Part’ above two wounded hearts pierced by arrows. The intricate craftsmanship of the coin suggests that pre-made objects retained the ability to convey poignant emotional messages despite not being crafted by suitors themselves.

The final section of this chapter analyses the role of literary and epistolary gifts in creating an emotional and intellectual union between two people. Certain

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

books were imbued with particular emotional messages, with Mary Wollstonecraft sending William Godwin the final volume of Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) in July 1796. Mary's romantic gift encouraged William to 'dwell on your own feelings' in his letters, much like the novel's hero Saint-Preux and his predecessor Peter Abelard.<sup>124</sup> Four months later in November 1796 Mary requested a comedy by her love-rival Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) as a 'pretty mark of attention...to rouse my torpid spirits, chez vous.'<sup>125</sup> The request brazenly asserted her dominance over William's affections, compared to a woman she had chided as 'Mrs. Perfection' three months earlier.<sup>126</sup> Mary's request to read the text at William's house ('chez vous') also demonstrates how books provided the perfect excuse for literate couples to spend time together. On New Year's Eve 1796, Mary invited William into her home to read George Farquhar's (1677/8-1707) Restoration play *The Constant Couple; or, A Trip to the Jubilee* (1700).<sup>127</sup> Mary's choice of play reflects the teasing tone of her letters, with Farquhar's brazen heroine Lady Lurewell pitting her five suitors against one another. Perusing the play together on the eve of the New Year would have provided an intimate scenario in which Mary and William could spend time alone.

Books also allowed lovers to gauge one another's reactions to particular texts and share their intellectual concerns.<sup>128</sup> The Derbyshire cotton-trader Joseph Strutt regularly sent books to his sweetheart Isabella Douglas in an effort to improve her intellectual capabilities before marriage. He made sure to read books such as Plutarch's *Lives* (1517) and Goldsmith's *History of Rome* (1769) before sending them to her, highlighting 'a few sentiments that exactly meet my Ideas – I have marked two, which all who think at all must surely approve.'<sup>129</sup> The exchange of personally marked books allowed Joseph to impress upon Isabella the ideas which were most important to him. Joseph repeatedly stressed the 'serious' importance of improving her mind, making the purpose and obligation of these gifts very clear:

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<sup>124</sup> Wollstonecraft to Godwin, July 1<sup>st</sup> 1796, No. 1, MS Abinger c40, fols. 1-2, Bodleian Library (subsequently BLO). For a further discussion of the novel see Chapter 5, pp. 181-2.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18<sup>th</sup> 1796, No. 66, fols. 95-6.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1796, No. 5, fol. 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1796, No. 86, fol. 126.

<sup>128</sup> On books as gifts in sixteenth-century France see Zemon Davis, *The Gift*, esp. pp. 76-9.

<sup>129</sup> Strutt to Douglas, Derby, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1788, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/11, BCA. For a further example see letters from Whitbread II to Grey, where he advised her to 'look at my Marks', Bordeaux, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6555, No. 10, BLARS.

With respect to the books I shall only say that you will find in them much entertainment & if you please much instruction. The improvement of your mind at this time is of the most serious importance – you have every advantage that time & opportunity can give you, & it will be your own fault if you do not employ them to a useful purpose – I trust & hope you will.<sup>130</sup>

The sending of books also allowed Joseph to show support for Isabella's intellectual pretensions, providing common topics for them to discuss.<sup>131</sup> In 1786, she sent Joseph her 'favourite' Plutarch (the fifth volume of *Lives*) and asked him to procure the sixth when possible. She also described her reaction to controversial new texts such as Thomas Paine's seditious *Rights of Man* (1791) and *Thoughts on the Peace* (1783), while retaining a deferential tone by admitting that 'my testimony can add but little to the fame that author has so deservedly acquired.'<sup>132</sup> Isabella was active in the process of exchange, sending Joseph several books of her own while also recommending others, helping to create a close intellectual union before marriage.<sup>133</sup> She was free to do so as books could also be exchanged between friends and family members, and did not have the same status as rings or hair, which publicly announced that marriage was imminent.

Letters were not simply used to request and praise the arrival of particular goods, but were written while physically touching and smelling objects such as hair. As Marius Kwint has noted, particular objects helped to 'furnish recollection' by 'bringing back experiences which otherwise would have remained dormant, repressed or forgotten.'<sup>134</sup> The couples studied in this thesis repeatedly mentioned gazing at or touching objects while reading and writing letters. In 1759, the tailor's

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<sup>130</sup> Strutt to Douglas, Sandy Brooke, August 10<sup>th</sup> 1789, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/18, BCA.

<sup>131</sup> He promised that 'any other book or any thing else you want do not scruple one moment to ask me for, if it can be procured you shall have it', Strutt to Douglas, Derby, November 16<sup>th</sup> 1790, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/21.

<sup>132</sup> Douglas to Strutt, Sandy Brooke, December 19<sup>th</sup> 1791, MS 3101/C/E/5/16/9. Other books promised by Joseph include a new *History of France*. Isabella's aim was to make progress 'in Historical reading, which I think is an indispensable requisite, & if it is not commenced at an early period it will be late before one can be well informed on the subject. I wish to proceed in it 'till I have a pretty clear Idea of all nations in general, & of our own in particular.'

<sup>133</sup> As she noted in 1791, 'I have been reading an account of the Pelon Islands, a very interesting & entertaining book, also an English translation of Vaillant's travels into the interior parts of africa - if you should meet with this I will venture to recommend it to your perusal – the style is good, but the chief thing I admire it for is the pleasing account it gives of the natives of that savage country', Sandy Brooke, February 10<sup>th</sup> 1791, MS 3101/C/E/5/16/6.

<sup>134</sup> Kwint, 'Introduction', p. 2.

daughter Sarah Hurst described writing ‘some verses on looking at my D<sup>r</sup> Smiths picture.’<sup>135</sup> Others used tokens as a material embodiment of the absent writer. The Justice of the Peace Anthony Hamond (1805-69) described the process of reading letters from Mary Ann Musters (1806-1900) in c. 1828: ‘If I am cold and wet I do not open them [until I] am comfortably settled in the great chair I am writing in & then I devour them, I am sure I shall wear out that dear Lock of hair If I stay much longer from you.’<sup>136</sup> The extract suggests that Anthony handled Mary Ann’s hair while reading her letters to create the sensation that the two were together, allowing the tactile distance between them to be bridged.

Small ephemeral tokens such as signets also functioned as embodiments of the absent. They were used to set hot wax to seal a person’s letters, and were often engraved with either a bust of the sender, their initials, or pertinent symbolic images.<sup>137</sup> The images they selected allowed writers to convey something of their personality in their missives, with seals given as love tokens depicting carefully chosen romantic scenes. Their specificity suggests that certain seals may solely have been used in the creation of love letters, helping to formulate a shared bond between a couple. The seals in Figures 19 and 20 are minute 1-2cm translucent glass keepsakes which were compact, durable and lightweight, enabling the owners to carry them around in their pockets. They are overtly romantic, depicting two hearts above the ‘Altar of Love’ to signify a loving marriage, and a faithful dog below the message ‘*Toujours Fidele*’ to represent the writer’s steadfast personality. Signets were practical and portable gifts which could be kept by individuals as part of larger assortments of love tokens (see Fig. 16). They reinforce both the central role of letter-writing in maintaining a romantic connection, and the popularity of ephemeral goods which could be carried around by couples. The seals used by celebrities were of particular interest to the public, and in 1783 the *Morning Herald* jovially reported that ‘the *Perdita* frequently seals her letters to her intimate friends with an

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<sup>135</sup> Diary of Hurst, September 16<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM.

<sup>136</sup> Anthony Hamond to Mary Ann Musters, HMN 5/95/4, undated, c. 1828, NRO. He also described how ‘I will read a chapter [of The Bible] say a prayer for my dear Mary Ann kiss her dear lock of hair and wish [*sic*] good night...and will also give her a little advice not to fidget herself & to take a quiet ride every day’, HMN 5/95/1.

<sup>137</sup> A ‘seal’ was defined by Johnson as ‘A stamp engraved with a particular impression, which is fixed upon the wax that closes letters, or affixed as a testimony’, *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 615. On engraved seals and heart-shaped inkwells as romantic gifts in eighteenth-century France see Goodman, *Becoming a Woman*, pp. 170-1, 181-4.

*impression* of her own *bust*', which would have been 'killed' when melted in wax 'as the *symbol* of the beauty whom it represents.'<sup>138</sup> Particular icons were therefore seen to directly represent writers' personalities, and were depicted on the reverse of an envelope or letter in order to conjure fond memories of the writer.



**Fig. 19 – Blue signet depicting the ‘Altar of Love’, possibly from Birmingham, 1750-1850, moulded glass, 1.5cm (H) x 1.3cm (W) x 0.4cm (D), Birmingham Museums, 1998F571, © The Birmingham Museums Trust.**

**Fig. 20 – Purple signet with dog and inscription ‘TOUJOURS FIDELE’, possibly from Birmingham, 1750-1850, moulded glass, 1.7cm (H) x 1.3cm (W) x 0.6cm (D), Birmingham Museums, 1934F103.10, © The Birmingham Museums Trust.**

To conclude, the practices of gift-exchange analysed in this chapter have demonstrated that far from losing their importance after Hardwicke’s Act in 1753, love tokens continued to play a vital role in mediating romantic relationships. They were used as a means of publicity, to protect individuals from harm, stimulate remembering of the absent, and hasten the development of intimacy. Gifts also represented time, thought and care invested in a loved one. The two key items carrying the obligation of marriage were hair (whether incorporated into jewellery or a simple strand) and a ring. These items betokened marriage in their own right, undermining Giese’s prioritising of context above object in rituals of exchange.<sup>139</sup> The types of gift changed over the course of a relationship, as smaller items such as ribbons gave way to important symbolically weighted objects. Transformations also took place within particular categories of gift, demonstrated by the shift from men’s gingerbread cakes as initial tokens to oysters later in a relationship. Women were

<sup>138</sup> *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1783, Issue 802, British Newspaper Database (subsequently BND).

<sup>139</sup> Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, pp. 84, 130-43.



only permitted to participate in the economy of courtship during its final stages, producing items such as embroidered handkerchiefs and waistcoats to demonstrate their virtue and domestic skill. Nonetheless, items such as books could be sent freely, as they were not personalised to the same degree and in no way obliged a woman to marry the recipient.

Further gender dichotomies exist in the types of gift given, as while men purchased items such as rings from craftsmen, gifts given by women remained steadfastly handmade. These items often had little financial value, and were of greater symbolic than material worth. They exerted a lasting influence upon the development of a relationship through the way in which they were handled, gazed at and obsessed over by lovers. In this way, the exchange of gifts introduced new ways of behaving for courting couples, as their behaviour was mediated through the persona or 'mask' of the lover. It was this private practice of obsessing over love tokens which undeniably marked a person out as being 'in love', as cruelly satirised by Cruikshank. Reflecting back on his life in 1819, John Keats wrote in disbelief about 'the time when even a bit of ribband was a matter of interest with me.'<sup>140</sup> In addition to the objects analysed in this chapter, love letters were one of the most frequently exchanged and highly valued items within the material culture of love. The creation, exchange and use of love letters during courtship is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>140</sup> Keats to Brawne, Letter III, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1819 in Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, p. 15.

### Chapter Three

#### 'I opened, I read, and I was delighted:'<sup>1</sup> the Emotional Experiences of Love Letters

When the Derbyshire cotton-trader Joseph Strutt (1765-1844) sat down to write a letter to his beloved Isabella Douglas (1769-1802) on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1787, he was perturbed by a multitude of emotions. An unusual melancholy had hung upon him all day as his mind was harassed by concerns about Isabella's health. She was the constant subject of his thoughts, which made time drag during their separation. He finally managed to withdraw from company to devote an hour to her at five o' clock, and was anxious to make the next post to Ashbourne. He closed the door to his darkened chamber, sat at his writing desk to collect his wandering thoughts, and picked up his pen.

Sitting down to write a love letter was a hugely symbolic moment for eighteenth-century lovers, as letters provided a direct way to create emotional intimacy between two individuals who were sometimes hundreds of miles apart.<sup>2</sup> In this way, the love letter was an inherently paradoxical genre, as it relied on the distance between lovers in order to create intimacy between them. When Charlotte Mary Curwen parted from the banker and brewer Francis Cobb in 1805, 'the thoughts of my being separated from you for 12 months almost overwhelmed me,' but their trial was made bearable by the continual exchange of letters.<sup>3</sup> The rituals of exchange allowed couples to gain 'a more intimate knowledge of each other's feelings' which could even surpass an equal number of personal meetings.<sup>4</sup> Letter-writing therefore paved the way to increasing intimacy between a couple, forming an important stage of courtship in its own right. In this way, love letters played an irreplaceable role on the path to matrimony, and were highly valued and carefully preserved, making them one of the key surviving genres of eighteenth-century

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<sup>1</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Bordeaux, June 19<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6556, No. 11, BLARS.

<sup>2</sup> For example Samuel Whitbread II and Elizabeth Grey conversed between Falloodon, France and Switzerland, Robert Garrett and Charlotte Bentinck corresponded between Margate, Spain and Portugal, and Eleanor Anne Porden and John Franklin corresponded between Hastings and the Atlantic Ocean during his attempt to cross the Northwest Passage in North America.

<sup>3</sup> Curwen to Cobb, January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/2, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>4</sup> Porden to Franklin, Hastings, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1822, typescript of lost original, D3311/8/1/21, DRO. Others such as Mary Martin disagreed, describing how she would rather hear important news 'from your own Mouth, instead of your Pen', January 10<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/3, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

letters. They were exchanged in their hundreds as a relationship progressed, usually coming to an end once a couple moved into the marital home. The sovereignty of the love letter was powerful yet short-lived, as once the physical distance between lovers had been overcome, the letter was largely deprived of its fêted position.



**Fig. 21 – *A Receipt for Courtship*, London, 1805, hand-coloured stipple and line etching, 20.6 x 24.4cm, Courtesy of the Winterthur Library, Wilmington, DE, museum purchase 1969.2790.**

The purpose of courtship letters as vessels for romantic love was ridiculed in the etching *A Receipt for Courtship* in 1805 (Fig. 21), where a gallant gentleman offers a love letter to his sweetheart, and she tentatively accepts it. The letter is held cautiously between their fingers and thumbs, granting it the status of a precious artefact as it passes between them. The text satirises the role of love letters in encouraging the development of intimacy, through ‘Two or three messages sent in a day’, using verses ‘writ all in rhyme’ and ‘Two or three oaths’ employed by lovers to prove ‘how much they endure.’ It cruelly concludes that ‘Two or three months keeping strict to these rules’ could ‘never fail making a couple of fools.’ The print portrays love letters as material *proof* of love, with the letter acting as a materialisation of the man’s affections. The notion of love letters as a ‘receipt’ demonstrates their importance in providing tangible evidence of a man’s approaches, should the seated lady be forced to prove the intensity of their relationship in the

church or civil courts. This was certainly the view of Lord Edgcumbe and his family when his son Richard (1716-61) began courting the promiscuous Lady Diana West (1731-66), eldest daughter of the 'odious' Lord De La Warr (1693-1766) in September 1750. The family were outraged at his unwise choice of spouse, proclaiming that Diana's father was 'in the right to marry those Girls when & how He can, for by God they'll fuck with any body.' Significantly for this chapter, the family's main concern was whether they were exchanging love letters, asking one another, 'I beg to know whether you are sure there is a Correspondence still kept up; Sir from That, & what Engagements may be therein taken, arise at my Fears.'<sup>5</sup> The exchange of love letters was therefore a sure sign of a forthcoming engagement, and made an attachment between a doting couple infinitely more difficult to end.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter draws upon the correspondences of eighteen unmarried couples, from which seven relationships have been selected for detailed scrutiny.<sup>7</sup> These are firstly the linen merchant James Nicholson and Elizabeth Seddon (*m.* 1740), secondly the Exeter physician George Gibbs and Ann Vicary (*m.* 1747), thirdly the wheelwright Jedediah Strutt and Elizabeth Woollat (*m.* 1755), fourthly Colonel Isaac Martin Rebow and Mary Martin (*m.* 1772), fifth the cotton-trader Joseph Strutt and Isabella Douglas (*m.* 1793), sixth the Margate brewer Francis Cobb and Charlotte Mary Curwen (*m.* 1805), and finally the soldier Robert Garrett and Charlotte Bentinck (*m.* 1814). These couples were deliberately selected to span the period from *c.* 1730 to 1830 as evenly as possible, with the earliest courtship beginning in 1738 and the latest in 1811. They include the letters of Jedediah Strutt from 1748 to 1755

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<sup>5</sup> Fox to Hanbury-Williams, September 25<sup>th</sup>-October 6<sup>th</sup> 1750, CHW10902/52, fols. 55-8, LWL. The family of the Bedfordshire gentleman Richard How II were similarly concerned whether or not a romantic correspondence was kept up between Richard and his cousin Elizabeth, with her father Harry writing to Richard's father that 'I always entertained Him as a Gentleman of strict Honor & Honesty; do not believe there is any Correspondance [*sic*], carried on between them, that could any ways be disagreeable, to either of us', January 28<sup>th</sup> 1757, BLARS. Unfortunately Elizabeth's father was mistaken and she was already corresponding at length with her suitor.

<sup>6</sup> As the anonymous 'GML' wrote to a 'Lovely Girl' in 1775, 'If I am so happy as to receive a Billet from your fair hand, by the bearer of this; - I have a proposal to make to you', FEL 616, 554 x 1, NRO. Also see Chapter 6, pp. 224-5.

<sup>7</sup> Additional couples used to provide context are Charles Pratt and Elizabeth Jeffreys (1745-9), John Lovell and Sarah Harvey (1756-8), Richard How II and Elizabeth Johnson (*c.* 1747-57), John Eccles and Mary Hays (1777-80), John Fawdington and Jane Jefferson (1786-7), Samuel Whitbread II and Elizabeth Grey (1786-8), Gilbert Imlay and Mary Wollstonecraft (1793-6), William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (1796-7), John Keats and Fanny Brawne (1819-21), Eleanor Anne Porden and John Franklin (1821-3) and Thomas Cobb and Miss Torre (1827). For further details see Appendix 1 and 2.

and his son Joseph from 1786 to 1792, demonstrating the evolution of romantic language within a single family. The relationships encompass regions from Devon to Derbyshire and religious denominations from Anglicans to Dissenters. They have intentionally been drawn from a wide social spectrum, with the men working as wheelwrights, physicians, bankers, brewers, soldiers and Members of Parliament, and women as domestic servants, gentlewomen and daughters of the nobility. Priority was given to sources featuring both sides of a correspondence, or those with corroborating sources such as memoirs, family and business letters. These are complemented by proposals of marriage, novels, conduct literature, dictionaries, newspaper reports and contemporary prints, to provide further evidence about the languages and customs of romantic love.

The chapter is divided into four sections, first looking at the routines of writing and delivering love letters, and the emotions of expectation, apprehension and dejection they elicited. It challenges preconceptions of love letters as essentially private by characterising eighteenth-century letter-writing as a quasi-public process.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the chapter focuses on stylistic features of letters such as their structure, length and handwriting, asking how they varied according to region and over time. Thirdly, it analyses differences between male and female letters, which were governed by entirely different epistolary conventions. These encompass masculine sincerity and feminine modesty, virtue, self-doubt and often religiosity. The final section analyses the value of love letters as *gifts* exchanged by lovers, which were treasured possessions possessing the power to transcend death itself.

The sending and receipt of love letters was by no means a straightforward task, and lovers separated by long distances were often forced to rely on intermediaries to deliver their letters. The lengths to which couples such as the soldier Robert Garrett (1794-1869) and Lord Edward Bentinck's daughter Charlotte (1789-1819) went to deliver their missives reveals the intrinsic value of love letters as vessels of romantic emotion. Delivery often depended on Robert's acquaintances in the army sailing to England and delivering letters on his behalf, which could be either quick or protracted depending on the prevailing winds.<sup>9</sup> Robert seized the

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<sup>8</sup> For example see Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 3, 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Robert was pleased in his second surviving letter to Charlotte that she should have 'received one if not both letters I have written, as the wind has been fair for England.' Garrett to Bentinck, Lisbon,

opportunity to write a letter the second one arose, writing from Lisbon on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1811 that ‘An opportunity my dearest Miss Bentinck, offering it itself [*sic*], of sending this to England by an officer of the 83 of course I did not let it slip.’<sup>10</sup> The couple also utilised the postal system, with Robert urging Charlotte to send letters and tokens to him separately: ‘Should you send a parcel do not enclose a letter, but send it by the post, as the parcel may be detained at Lisbon some time.’<sup>11</sup> By describing his impatience to receive letters and gifts as soon as possible, Robert openly declared his emotional investment in their relationship. In regaling Charlotte with his efforts to write and deliver letters, these exertions became a metaphor for his commitment. He promised to write whenever possible, asking Charlotte to do the same. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1811, Robert pledged to ‘lose no opportunity [*sic*] of writing to you...anything new worth hearing pray let me know.’<sup>12</sup>

The remaining six couples relied on the Post Office to deliver letters across far shorter distances, and by the mid-eighteenth century most market towns had a daily postal service.<sup>13</sup> This infrastructure provided courting couples with easy access to postal routes, and regular correspondents became ‘known at the post office’ by continually collecting their mail.<sup>14</sup> Writers such as the physician George Gibbs (c. 1718-94) adhered to a clear timetable in writing to catch specific posts from Exeter to Exmouth in the 1740s, repeatedly reminding Ann Vicary (1721-c. 1800/3) when to expect his letters. When George feared that his work ‘will keep me in Town’ he promised Ann that ‘a Letter by Monday’s Post shall inform thee.’<sup>15</sup> In the 1770s, writers such as the gentlewoman Mary Martin (c. 1751-1804) portrayed the precise

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April 26<sup>th</sup> 1811, R/U888/C11/7, EKAC. However in his next letter, ‘The wind of late has not been fair from England’, meaning that her letters had been delayed, Mealhada, Sorda, May 20<sup>th</sup> 1811, R/U888/C11/8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, April 26<sup>th</sup> 1811, R/U888/C11/7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20<sup>th</sup> 1811, R/U888/C11/8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Strutt and Isabella Douglas corresponded between Ashbourne and Derby, George Gibbs and Ann Vicary between the market towns of Exeter and Exmouth, Charlotte Mary Curwen and Francis Cobb between the market town of Margate and Fenstanton in Huntingdonshire, which was three miles from the market town of St Ives. When unable to visit her nearest Post Office, Charlotte recorded that ‘my letters all go to our Friend Smith’s’, Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/2, Bundle A, EKAC. On the creation and expansion of the Post Office see Whyman, *The Pen and the People*, Chapter 2, pp. 46-71, esp. pp. 53-8.

<sup>14</sup> Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/2, Bundle A.

<sup>15</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, 1740s, MS 11021/1/17, LMA. Nonetheless this did not prevent him from writing at whim. On 10<sup>th</sup> [-] 1744, George described how ‘I believe we settled it for me to write thee by Saturday’s Post; but I can never willingly neglect any thing that I think may give thee Pleasure’, MS 11021/1/8.

timing required to catch a particular post as a source of great anxiety. While this certainly may have been the case, characterising the production of love letters as a deeply stressful experience allowed Mary to emphasise her devotion by presenting it as a trial which she had to endure in order to communicate with her lover. The catching of the post thus became a challenge which she was willing to overcome for love. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1772 she described how ‘I was forc’d to scratch off as fast as I cou’d make my Pen go, & of Course cou’d not attempt to Read y least bit of it over.’<sup>16</sup> Mary used a similar strategy throughout her correspondence with Isaac Rebow. Four days later on 7<sup>th</sup> January she wrote that ‘I shall not have much ~~time~~ Opportunity to Write tomorrow’, erasing the word ‘time’ as this carried the unfavourable implication that she did not have time for Isaac in her daily routine.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the word ‘opportunity’ signified that this was unavoidable and beyond her control. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1772, Mary dramatised the theatrical scenario of keeping the postman waiting ‘till his Patience was quite Exhausted, & he hurried me so, that I knew not what I did’, causing her to leave ‘three Blank sides’ of expensive paper. Worst of all, Mary recorded that the melodrama of catching the last post had ‘given me a Wrinkle.’<sup>18</sup>

While it is unlikely that the stress of writing genuinely caused a wrinkle to form on Mary’s brow, it is significant that she expressed her devotion to Isaac Rebow in terms of physical damage to her body. By narrating the melodrama of writing within her letters, and dramatising her struggle to finish on time, Mary was signalling her deep emotional investment in their relationship.<sup>19</sup> The trials of love were not only worth writing for, but they were worth the experience of bodily symptoms to prove a person’s devotion. The physical symptoms of love were also described by other suitors in the final decades of the century, reflecting the growing influence of sensibility.<sup>20</sup> The cotton-trader Joseph Strutt expressed his desire in the 1780s through tangible symptoms such as physical chills and trembling. He described the ‘chilling coldness’ he experienced while handling one of Isabella’s

<sup>16</sup> Martin to Rebow, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1772, A12691/2, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

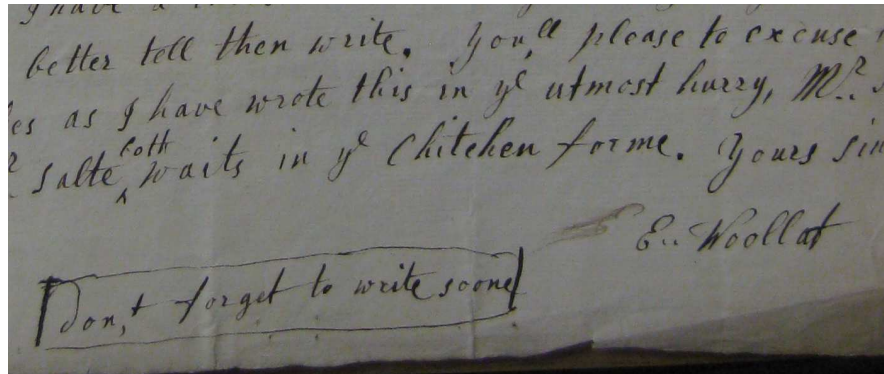
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/3, Box 1, Vol. II.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1772, A12691/16, Box 1, Vol. II. She continued, ‘I Scrambled on yesterday Morning as fast as I cou’d, & thought I had got forward so nicely, that I shou’d finish my Letter with Ease, in y Evening, but behold, before I had Din’d, Miss May, & a Miss that is with her, came & frustrated all my good Intentions.’

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 43 and Chapter 5, pp. 173-7.

letters in 1788, and was alarmed that ‘my hands trembled as I rec<sup>d</sup> it...I could not open it for half an hour – my suspense increased my anxiety.’<sup>21</sup> At this point in his relationship, Joseph was concerned that Isabella was angry with him for his unkind words in previous letters. His description of physical suffering at Isabella’s hands therefore provided him with a way to undeniably illustrate that he was not callous and unfeeling as she perceived, as his trembling body ‘betrayed’ his true feelings.



**Fig. 22 – Conclusion of letter from Elizabeth Woollat to Jedediah Strutt, London, August 10<sup>th</sup> 1755, Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, D5303/4/8.**

Writers further translated their devotion into epistolary form by describing the constant state of suspense caused by waiting for fresh reports from lovers. When desperate for news on whether Ann Vicary’s father approved of their union, George Gibbs entreated her, ‘prythee my dear do write her [Miss Tripe] by that post that I may be deliverd of this Suspence; which I hate of all things in the World.’<sup>22</sup> In the following decade, the domestic servant Elizabeth Woollat pleaded with Jedediah Strutt ‘don’t forget to write soone’ (Fig. 22). The phrase was framed by a large black box, making her desire for further epistles the dominating feature of her letter.<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth’s son Joseph later courted Isabella Douglas for seven years, and in 1791 Isabella asked, ‘Is it possible that expectation can enhance the value of your letters my dearest friend? & can it be that the sweet emotions of gratitude for attentive kindness are a less powerful principle in my breast than fearful apprehensiveness?’<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1788, MS3101/C/E/4/8/11, BCA.

<sup>22</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, June 1740s, MS/11021/1, LMA. He also described waiting for her letters ‘with the utmost Impatience’, MS/11021/1/25.

<sup>23</sup> Woollat to Jed. Strutt, London, August 10<sup>th</sup> 1755, D5303/4/8, DRO.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas to Jos. Strutt, Sandy Brooke, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1791, MS3101/C/E/5/16/7, BCA.



Such apprehension could only be alleviated by the receipt of a letter or token, or a physical meeting with a lover, which could cure their ailments in a second. As Charlotte Mary Curwen wrote to Francis Cobb in January 1805, ‘my anxious mind is waiting with longing expectation to know how you faired...If I could but see you for a moment.’<sup>25</sup> The continuation of these protestations across the century demonstrates the enduring power of ‘suspense’ in communicating a writer’s love.

The heightened emotions of suspense and anxiety made it a particularly heinous crime when long-awaited letters were not sent, and the letters of lovers evinced overpowering feelings of dejection and disappointment.<sup>26</sup> This gave rise to antithetical assurances in love letters that writers would *never* disappoint one another. When the banker and brewer Francis Cobb travelled to Rochester in August 1805, he wrote to Charlotte Mary Curwen the second he arrived in order to prove his commitment. He began his epistle by describing how, ‘That you may not in any wise be disappointed, My Dearest Love, I will begin here, at Rochester, while they are preparing me a little Eggd wine with a Toast.’<sup>27</sup> His letter suggested that Francis was committed to his beloved, and that he would not miss the smallest opportunity to correspond with her. Charlotte was equally keen to avoid disappointing him, writing on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1805 that ‘you will not be uneasy if you should not hear from me, on the regular appointed days...you may depend upon me, my dear Love, not to disappoint you if I can help it.’<sup>28</sup> Writers thus described their overwhelming disappointment to prove their commitment when a lover failed to write, and emphasised how important the *avoidance* of disappointment was when they did.

Discussion of the emotions elicited by the production and receipt of love letters brings us to the issue of whether this was essentially a public or private process? In her study of nineteenth-century America, Karen Lystra argued that ‘total privacy was the foundation of romantic expression and romantic relationships were

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<sup>25</sup> Curwen to Cobb, January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/2, Bundle A, EKAC. A similar harassment of mind was described by men waiting for replies to proposals of marriage. As Francis’ third son Thomas wrote to Miss Torre on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1827, ‘a state of certainty (however painful it may be) appears to me infinitely preferable to that torture of suspense which now harasses my mind...I wait anxiously by most anxiously for a reply to the present’, Margate, R/U11/C39, EKAC.

<sup>26</sup> George Gibbs reassured his sweetheart in 1747 that ‘if you should have had no Opportunity of writing, the Expectations of seeing thee so soon will lessen the Disappointment.’ Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1746, MS/11021/1/27, LMA.

<sup>27</sup> Cobb to Curwen, Canterbury, August 1<sup>st</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/5, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>28</sup> Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 4<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/8, Bundle A.

guarded by a deliberate wall of secrecy.’<sup>29</sup> However in their research into customs in America, Europe and Australasia, Nicole Eustace, Katie Barclay and Martyn Lyons have described how writers colluded in the circulation of their missives, specifying when particular passages were *not* to be shared.<sup>30</sup> The English courtships analysed in this chapter were by no means conducted in isolation. Privacy was a matter of degree rather than an absolute fact; threats to personal privacy include the opening of letters by post office clerks, the use of scribes or friends to write letters for illiterate lovers, the circulation of letters with or without the writer’s permission, the potential to publicly reveal a secret correspondence either deliberately or accidentally, and the presence of a spouse in the home during the production of adulterous letters.<sup>31</sup>

Lawrence Klein has urged historians not to rely uncritically upon the binary opposition between public and private, as it ‘does not adequately explain the complexities of discourse, let alone those of human experience in practice.’<sup>32</sup> The gap between theoretical norms and actual behaviours is critical to our understanding of the nature of romantic correspondence, as while love letters may have been an intensely private genre in theory, this did not translate into practice. For individuals writing love letters, ‘privacy’ generally meant a solitary space where they could gather their thoughts and compose their letters without interference from others.<sup>33</sup> Yet this kind of physical privacy was extraordinarily difficult for men such as Joseph Strutt to achieve due to the demanding routines of work. Joseph rarely benefited from an hour to himself, lamenting in March 1787 that ‘I no sooner sit down to write to you than I am called off to other business.’<sup>34</sup> The issue continued throughout his courtship, and during a period of sickness in March 1788 he complained that ‘my time & my thoughts have been so much employed, that except upon my pillow, I

<sup>29</sup> Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> See Lyons, ‘Love Letters’, p. 234, 236, Eustace, ‘Love and Power’, pp. 517-8, 529-31 and Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>31</sup> On the use of scribes see Cressy, *Literacy*, p. 10, for the interception of post see Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 48-51, and on privacy, letter-writing and the self see Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (London, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Fall, 1995), p. 98. Also see Nicole Castan, ‘The Public and the Private’ in Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (eds.) *A History of Private Life*, Vol. III, *Passions of the Renaissance*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 403-45.

<sup>33</sup> For the development of the ‘private’ domestic sphere see Christoph Heyl, ‘We are not at Home: Protecting Domestic Privacy in Post-Fire Middle-Class London’, *London Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2002), pp. 12-33.

<sup>34</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, June 18<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/4, BCA.

have scarcely found a moment to think even of you.’<sup>35</sup> By December of the same year, Joseph had ‘scarcely had any time which I could call my own.’<sup>36</sup>

The degree of seclusion available to writers varied according to social rank, and the types of relationship individuals were involved in. Adulterers were regularly interrupted by their spouses, and forced to abandon their letters to prevent their duplicity being discovered. The letters of adulterous women such as the Lincoln housekeeper ‘B.F’ are consumed with fears that their spouses would discover their deception, compounded by the fact that they were often forced to write during fraught periods such as when their spouses were at home. As she worried in c. 1816, ‘W is in the hous out of anny imploy that cant last long’, and could have discovered her clandestine correspondence at any point.<sup>37</sup> Access to a solitary space in which to compose love letters was also a luxury which individuals such as servants could not afford.<sup>38</sup> The romantic correspondences analysed in this chapter reveal that while writers certainly sought a solitary space in which they could craft their missives without interruption, this was not always obtainable due to a writer’s work or the illicit status of a relationship.

In addition to the quasi-public nature of their composition, many writers were complicit in the circulation of their love letters among friends and family.<sup>39</sup> Figure 23 depicts two fashionably-dressed women strolling in the garden of a country house while gossiping about a love letter one has received. Far from keeping her romantic exploits a secret, the recipient is eager to discuss them with a friend, even bringing a letter along to show her. The sharing of love letters naturally changed the purpose of the letter, having an inevitable effect upon the way writers expressed themselves. As Rosemary O’Day has argued, the writer of a letter was taking up a position and presenting a particular image of themselves to the recipient. The image which they chose to project would naturally have been shaped by their intended audience, be it one individual or their entire family.<sup>40</sup> Whilst arranging their wedding in 1805, Charlotte Mary Curwen read Francis Cobb’s letters aloud to her Aunt Barber to

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1788, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/10.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Derby, December 13<sup>th</sup> 1788, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/15.

<sup>37</sup> ‘B.F’ to William Pratt, c. 1816, DE1184/8, Leicestershire Record Office (subsequently LERO).

<sup>38</sup> For the limited personal privacy of servants see Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 27, 39-41.

<sup>39</sup> A similar point is made in Lyons, ‘Love Letters’, p. 234.

<sup>40</sup> Rosemary O’Day, ‘Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters’ in James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women’s Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 129.

convince her of his ‘tenderness’, as ‘Aunt B’ worried that Francis would keep Charlotte from her as a companion. Charlotte gleefully reported back that ‘though she made no remarks, I evidently saw, that she was very much pleased at what you had written.’<sup>41</sup> The sharing of his letters prompted Francis to write lengthy descriptions of Aunt Barber’s virtues which appear to be directly addressed to her:

I have a real regard for your Aunt, independently of my Connexion [*sic*] with you, and that I shall certainly have a great pleasure, as far as in me lies, in Contributing, and Contriving for her happiness and comfort – and you may therefore, assure her, as from my own lips, that I shall be truly glad to see her with you, whenever the Lords time may be, that I shall be favord in making you my life...you owe her, more than you will Ever be able to make her returns.<sup>42</sup>

While Francis and Charlotte were happy to share certain sentiments with Aunt Barber, others were kept more closely guarded and deliberately withheld from their letters. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1805 Charlotte described how ‘I have so much which I could talk about which I cannot write’, entreating him to come and visit her in person.<sup>43</sup> Six years later, Lord Edward Bentinck’s daughter Charlotte circulated Robert Garrett’s letters around their family and friends until many of them fell to pieces.<sup>44</sup> Knowing that Charlotte’s family disapproved of their relationship, Robert used his letters to ingratiate himself to them, jesting that ‘Your mother I dare say is as funny & full of her drole remarks as ever.’<sup>45</sup> These couples recognised that love letters would be viewed by wider individuals than the named recipient, using this to their advantage by reading or sending carefully constructed missives to chosen family members. The sharing of letters meant that their most private thoughts could

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<sup>41</sup> Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 7<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/3, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>42</sup> Cobb to Curwen, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/10, Bundle A.

<sup>43</sup> Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/6, Bundle A.

<sup>44</sup> Introduction to R/U888/C14, EKAC. For further examples see letters from Elizabeth Jeffreys to Charles Pratt, which describe how Charles’ letters were read aloud to her Aunt. Elizabeth praised how ‘she is excessively pleas’d with your maner of writing. if you dont chuse she shou’d hear any part of them I wont read any, but I thought there was nothing in the begining [*sic*] but what she knew about’, August 4<sup>th</sup> 1747, U840/C9/10, CKS. John Lovell’s letters to Sarah Harvey were also sent unsealed to allow her Aunt to read them first, ‘in great Hopes that it may effectually dissipate all her Doubts concerning me’, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1757, 161/101, WSA.

<sup>45</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, near Ciudad Rodrigo, August 16<sup>th</sup> 1811 and Camp near Alfayates, June 10<sup>th</sup> 1812, R/U888/C11/13, 30, EKAC.

sometimes not be put to paper, and were deliberately held back from their semi-public readership.



**Fig. 23 – *The Love Letter*, London, 1785, etching with roulette, plate mark 35.2 x 25.2cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 785.10.11.01.**

The second section of this chapter focuses upon stylistic features such as the layout, length and handwriting of love letters, asking how they varied according to region and over time. Even in romantic missives, writers used a clear structure to organise their thoughts in a logical way. When they did not, individuals were well aware of what they *should* have been doing. As the Yorkshire bridle-maker John Fawdington (c. 1757-1817) jested with his sweetheart in c. 1786:

When I begun this letter I thought it shoud [*sic*] not be a very long one so that I woud begin (according to the example set me by a Certain amiable Female Correspondent of mine) about half way down the first side, keep my Lines at a Convenient Distance, so that they were only just within Sight of one

another, the Interval between every Word about an Inch & a half, & so just turn over the ~~other side~~ Leaf for the sake of writing both sides.<sup>46</sup>

However by the end of his letter John was cramming hurried thoughts on to the top of his first page, recognising that ‘this foolish Pen of mine...had not got three Lines Plac’d in that Manner, before it tired of such Formality.’<sup>47</sup> John’s capitulation demonstrates that while writers may have been aware of certain rules, this does not mean they were followed. After a strenuous day planting hyacinths in 1772, the gentlewoman Mary Martin was acutely aware of how this distorted her letters. She jested, ‘Don’t fancy now from y pretty steady Hand I write, & y evenness [*sic*] of y Lines, that was a little Topsy last Night...y Digging, &c. &c. has made my Hands, Arms, & Shoulders, so immoderately stiff, that I really can hardly move them at all to day.’ Later in the same letter, Mary noted that ‘Since I wrote y foregoing my Sister has added to y steadiness of my Hand prodigiously, for she has Frighten’d me almost out of my Senses by taking some of her Stuff (as she Calls it) which has had so violent an Effect, ~~that~~ & made her so Extremely Ill, for several Hours.’<sup>48</sup> In 1805, the brewer Francis Cobb also described feeling self-conscious about dropping a large blot of ink on to the page where he intended to compose a love letter. Nonetheless he decided to use it anyway, informing Charlotte that ‘I have made a sad blot My Charley ’ere I begin, but that shall not prevent my using the paper.’<sup>49</sup> These examples illuminate how particular writers deviated from the ‘ideal’ love letter depending upon their day to day activities, plus the physical and material realities of writing. While a blot of ink or wayward organisation may have departed from the recommended style, these features made love letters more visceral by providing an imprint of a writer’s identity and mood at the moment of writing.

The opening and closing phrases of love letters were broadly similar, placing epistles within a clear structural framework. Writers invariably began by thanking one another for previous letters and the information they contained. The standardised nature of epistles is demonstrated by a comparison of the opening sentences of

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<sup>46</sup> John Fawdington to Jane Jefferson, c. 1786, Z. 640/2, North Yorkshire Record Office (subsequently NYRO).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Martin to Rebow, February 18<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/7, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

<sup>49</sup> Cobb to Curwen, January 28<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/4 (i), Bundle A, EKAC.

courtship letters by George Gibbs in the 1740s, Joseph Strutt in 1787 and Robert Garrett in 1811:

It gave me the sincerest Pleasure to hear by thy obliging Letter that my dear Maid had a little recovered her Spirits after the sad Farewell I had taken of her in the Morning.<sup>50</sup>

Thanks, ten thousand thanks my ever charming Friend for your last Letter, I have read it over & over again, nay I have read it so often that I can almost repeat it.<sup>51</sup>

Nothing has occurred since writing last except my receiving a treasure of a letter from my dearest Charlotte dated Nun-Appleton May 31<sup>st</sup> which delighted me much to find you gave so good an account of your dear self.<sup>52</sup>

The phrases illuminate how men consistently opened their epistles by thanking their sweethearts for writing, praising the value of their letters, and expressing pleasure that they were in good health. The conclusions of love letters were equally standardised, repeating affectionate phrases such as ‘Ever yours’, ‘Ever Most affectionate’ and ‘w<sup>th</sup> greatest Truth’ while asking one another to ‘Give my Service’ to members of their family.<sup>53</sup> These reveal broad similarities across letters by different writers, again confirming that the language of love was by no means innate. Writers were well aware of what was expected from their love letters, leading them to structure them accordingly. Such features also illuminate an additional paradox of the genre. The love letter provided an individualised means of emotional expression within a clear structural framework, a feature which is shared with numerous sources in the history of emotions and literature more generally.<sup>54</sup>

A further emotive feature of love letters was their length, as they were expected to be extensive enough to prove a writer’s sincerity. When Francis Cobb

<sup>50</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, 1740s, MS/11021/1/9, LMA.

<sup>51</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, October 7<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/7, BCA.

<sup>52</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, Burlada near Pamplona, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1813, R/U888/C11/55, EKAC.

<sup>53</sup> For example see letters from Gibbs to Vicary in the 1740s, which conclude ‘w<sup>th</sup> greatest Truth’, ‘With the truest affection’, ‘My service to all’, ‘Unalterably yours’ and ‘intirely thine’, MS/11021/1/1, 4, 13, 16, 25, LMA. Joseph Strutt’s conclusions in the 1780s are remarkably similar, writing ‘most irrevocably yours’, ‘most sincerely & most affectionately yours’ and ‘your truly affectionate’, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/2, 3, 6, BCA.

<sup>54</sup> On the paradoxical nature of love letters also see Lyons, ‘Love Letters’, pp. 233.

wrote a lengthy letter to Charlotte Mary Curwen in 1805, she thanked him ‘for writing so much as you have done’, as this represented time invested in Charlotte and their relationship.<sup>55</sup> Notes of one paragraph or less could be potentially dangerous, as the lack of time invested in their creation could undermine a suitor’s affections.<sup>56</sup> Joseph Strutt was consumed with nerves that ‘If you measure my affection by the length of my Letters, my dearest girl, or judge of it by their frequency, you may possibly form as wrong an opinion in the first instance, as you assuredly do in the latter.’<sup>57</sup> Leaving blank paper at the bottom of a page was a particularly heinous crime – not to mention an expensive one – as writers had the space but not the sentiments to complete their missive. George Gibbs was often compelled to apologise ‘for the clean Paper that I shall leave at the Bottom of my Letter’ to reassure Ann Vicary of his sincerity.<sup>58</sup> The most desirable approach was that adopted by the gentlewoman Mary Martin, whose letters increased significantly in length throughout her decade-long courtship with Isaac Rebow. Her longest in 1772 was a verbose eleven pages long, with Mary jesting that he should forgive her for the ‘curious short Epistle.’<sup>59</sup> She consistently used up to three postscripts, creating the impression that she was unable to tear herself away from the page.<sup>60</sup> Mary’s earlier omission of three blank sides of paper had become an affectionate joke between the couple, and after her eleven-page letter followed by three postscripts in 1772 she jested, ‘Well I do think you will not Talk any more of y

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<sup>55</sup> Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/6, Bundle A, EKAC. Mary Martin used the length or brevity of courtship letters as a measure of the success of her relationship in the 1770s. She worried on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1772 at ‘being able to send you above a Dozen Lines, for it was too Cold to venture to set [*sic*] in y Bed Chamber’, A12691/2, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO. However in her following letter she described how she would have ‘been Contented with Half a Dozen Lines (if you had told me y Cause)’ as Isaac Rebow had a headache, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/3. In June, Mary noted, ‘It is very lucky my Dear Mr Rebow that you promis’d to be Satisfied with a very short Letter this Week, for I cou’d not Write o’ Wednesday because I was very queer in y Morning’, June 12<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/13.

<sup>56</sup> For example Mary Wollstonecraft castigated her philandering lover Gilbert Imlay for his lacklustre letters in 1795, writing, ‘I just now received one of your hasty *notes*; for business so entirely occupiess you, that you have not time, or sufficient command of thought, to write letters. Beware!’ Ingen, *Love Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, Letter XXXII, Paris, January 9<sup>th</sup> 1795, p. 73.

<sup>57</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, June 18<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/4, BCA.

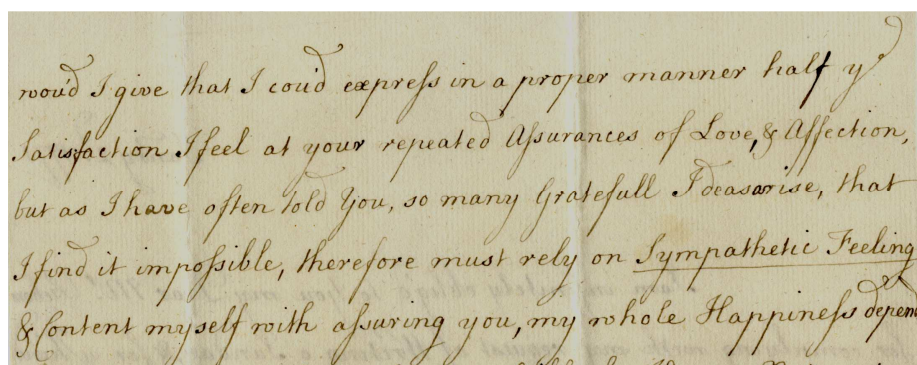
<sup>58</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1746, MS/11021/1/21, LMA. He also wrote self-satisfied notes on 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July 1746 that ‘I can never conclude till I have filld up all my paper’ and ‘I cannot leave off writing to thee till all my Paper is fill’d up’, MS11012/1/26-7, LMA.

<sup>59</sup> Martin to Rebow, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1772, A12691/16, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

<sup>60</sup> See Bound, ‘Writing the Self?’, p. 9. On the length of love letters also see Lyons, ‘Love Letters’, pp. 235-6.



Three Blank sides for fear I shou'd send you a whole Quire of Paper next time, wrote full.'<sup>61</sup>



**Fig. 24 – Letter from Mary Martin to Isaac Rebow, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1771, Washington State University Library, WSU MASC Cage 134.**

Love letters were deeply individual items, and even a person's handwriting had the power to evoke a strong emotional response. The handwriting of the domestic servant Elizabeth Woollat was painstakingly produced in a heavy hand, with each letter standing separate from the next (Fig. 22). However the care she took in constructing her letters demonstrated her affection and desire to improve to Jedediah Strutt. In contrast, the handwriting of the gentlewoman Mary Martin was confidently embellished and italicised, using bold flourishes to decorate the letters 'y' and 'd' (Fig. 24). Mary's ornamented style acted as a symbol of her literacy, education, and ease at writing. Handwriting directly reflected an individual's personality, acting as an extension of the self, much like the love tokens analysed in Chapter Two of this thesis.<sup>62</sup> As the romantic poet John Keats wrote to his friend Charles Brown about Fanny Brawne in 1820, 'I am afraid to write to her – to receive a letter from her – to see her handwriting would break my heart.'<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, the brewer Francis Cobb viewed his handwriting as a sign of his own mortality after the death of his three wives, reporting in February 1831 that 'By the good hand of my God upon me, I am still spared, and have the opportunity of again shewing my hand-

<sup>61</sup> Martin to Rebow, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1772, *op. cit.* For a further example see letter from Porden to Franklin on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1822, where she added a separate page of postscripts, D3311/8/1/14 (ii), DRO.

<sup>62</sup> On the 'precious' status of handwriting see Whyman, *Pen and the People*, p. 88, Bound, 'Writing the Self?', p. 10 and on objects as an extension of the self see Chapter 2, pp. 53-5, 76-8, 86-8.

<sup>63</sup> *The Examiner*, London, February 9<sup>th</sup> 1878, Issue 3,654, p. 3.

writing here at the commencement of the month in which it pleased the Lord to give me birth.’<sup>64</sup>

Given the individualised characteristics of love letters outlined above, we would expect to find some regional variation in expressions of love. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* delighted in printing ‘Singular and Extraordinary’ pieces ridiculing rural suitors. In 1743, it reproduced an ‘Authentic Copy’ of a love letter from a ‘Welchman’ to his sweetheart. He repined,

I dooa dream efery Night that there is some Body doa looak to teake you away from me, and I pul you one way, and the dooa pul you another way, and at last my thinks I dooa loase you quite.<sup>65</sup>

English couples were also subject to derision, with the magazine printing an exchange between a farmer and his sweetheart in 1746 entitled ‘EXMOOR COURTSHIP, Or, A Suitoring Discourse, in the Devonshire Dialect and Mode.’ This second precious example used phonetic spelling to present the pair as coarse yokels:

*M.J* Come, be quiet; - be quiet, ees zay, a grabbling o’ wone’s tetties. – Eees won’t ha’ ma tetties a grabbedd zo; ner ees won’t be zo mullad and foulad. – Stand aside; come, gi’ o’er.

*A.J* Lock, lock! How skittish we be now! Yow weren’t so skittish wey *Kester Hosegood* up to *Daraty Vuzz’s* up-zetting. – No, no, yow weren’t zo skittish than, ner zo squeamish nether.<sup>66</sup>

Compared to the faintly ridiculous Welshman, the Devonshire couple were derided as uncouth country folk, using almost unrecognisable language as they ‘grabbed’ with one another’s ‘tetties.’ However while spoken expressions of love would certainly have sounded different according to regional accents, written forms were far more standardised. The courtship of the Derbyshire wheelwright Jedediah Strutt in the 1740s provides an equivalent example of this rural couple, as he was the son

<sup>64</sup> William Francis Cobb, *Memoir of the Late Francis Cobb, Esq. of Margate* (Maidstone, 1835), p. 90.

<sup>65</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine*, March 1743, Vol. 13, p. 150.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1746, Vol. 16, pp. 297-300, at p. 298.

of a small farmer and maltster and a yeoman's daughter. However his language is unrecognisable from the example above, demonstrating in-depth knowledge of romantic modes of expression.<sup>67</sup> It would therefore be almost impossible to geographically locate the writers studied in this chapter according to their language. This may have been because they were drawing upon a recognised range of popular texts, as outlined in Chapter Five.<sup>68</sup>

The distinguishing features of love letters changed over time, in accordance with wider movements such as sensibility, chivalry and romanticism.<sup>69</sup> While writing this thesis, it was initially incredibly difficult to isolate love letters produced in the 1730s and 1740s. This was partly due to their scarcity, as letters were preserved in greater numbers from mid-century, with a boom in romantic epistles in the 1780s (See Appendix 1). The upsurge may have been because of the spread of literacy, or the rise of romanticism inspiring increasing numbers of lovers to write. It may also have occurred because love letters came to be viewed as objects worth preserving, particularly among early Victorians such as the children of Joseph Strutt and Isabella Douglas, and Charlotte Mary Curwen and Francis Cobb, who courted in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>70</sup> Moreover letters written in the 1730s are defined by noticeably different concerns to those produced in the 1820s. The changing interpretation of what it meant to write a love letter means that our definition must necessarily change over time.

Upon first inspection, the letters of the linen merchant James Nicholson and Elizabeth Seddon in the 1730s may not be viewed as 'love letters' according to the standards of the emotionalised language of the 1780s. Instead, the couple used their letters to discuss important topics such as human nature, and assess their intellectual compatibility before marriage. As Elizabeth wrote in July 1738:

Thus I have given you a ruff Draught of my notions of Self Love, according to my own Sentiments, and wt authors I have Consulted upon it as I have had oppertunity [*sic*]...this I do freely give you as my opinion in it that we ought

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<sup>67</sup> For example see his musings about love later in this chapter at p. 111.

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 162-6, 169-70, 177-91.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> See Appendix 1, pp. 282-3.

Carefully to Examine the original Spring of that desire, which we Shu'd perhaps too often find to be pride.<sup>71</sup>

These epistles allowed the couple to discuss issues which were of great importance to them, influenced by their Unitarian religious beliefs. The absence of melodramatic declarations of love does not mean that they are not love letters, as they facilitated the emergence of a romantic bond between the two writers. However, the nature of the love letter changed over time, as they abandoned their previously 'plain' modes of expression. As *A Dictionary of Love* argued in 1776,

Love itself, having lost its plain unsophisticate [*sic*] nature, and being now reduced into an art, has, like other arts, had recourse to particular words and expressions; of which it no more behoves lovers to be ignorant, than for seamen to be unacquainted with the terms of navigation.<sup>72</sup>

The extract demonstrates how the 'plain' language utilised by Elizabeth and James had become unfashionable in light of wider cultural shifts. By the time the soldier Robert Garrett began writing love letters to Charlotte Bentinck in the early nineteenth century, his language was far more ardent. In the wake of epistolary novels, sensibility and romanticism, the love letter had adopted the melodramatic lexicon which we would expect to find today. As Robert gushed in 1813, 'nothing can be too good for such a love as you are.'<sup>73</sup>

The tenor of epistles also changed over the course of a relationship, as love letters recorded and reinforced a couple's growing commitment. Nonetheless the ritual destruction of letters makes it difficult to ascertain when exactly a couple considered themselves to be 'engaged.' The physician George Gibbs first mentioned searching for a marital home in his eighth surviving letter to Ann Vicary in 1744.<sup>74</sup> By his eleventh surviving letter George was making frequent social visits to the Vicary household, noting that 'I was at your House this morning.'<sup>75</sup> By his sixteenth letter on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1745 George was bold enough to *hint* at marriage in 'anticipating

<sup>71</sup> Seddon to Nicholson, July 24<sup>th</sup> 1738, GBB 133 Eng. MS 1041/2 (Box 1), JRL.

<sup>72</sup> *A Dictionary of Love* (London, 1776), p. iv.

<sup>73</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, Borlada near Pamplona, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1813, R/U888/C11/55, EKAC.

<sup>74</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, 10<sup>th</sup> [-] 1744, MS 11021/1/8, LMA.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, Exeter, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1744, MS 11021/1/11.

that which, I hope, is yet to come.’<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless an engagement or marriage was never directly discussed in writing. Later in the century, it took the soldier Robert Garrett over a year of love letters to single out Charlotte Bentinck as my lady among the fashionables.’<sup>77</sup> By 1813, he hoped that ‘We shall soon curtail our courtship by changing our conditions as the country people call it.’<sup>78</sup> George and Robert were thus emboldened to hint at marriage more confidently as their courtships progressed towards the altar. However notions of an engagement or union were never discussed in explicit terms due to the sharing of letters and the perceived risks of a failed relationship for a woman’s reputation.<sup>79</sup>

The third section of this chapter addresses differences in the language employed by men and women, as the gendered dimensions of courtship made male and female epistles diametrically different. Due to their traditional role as the instigators of courtship, one of the key tropes of men’s love letters was their sincerity. Men throughout the eighteenth century were keen to emphasise the honesty, sincerity and openness of their suit, assuring women that their affection was ‘grounded upon the truest foundation of sincere affection’ and was ‘not to be diminished with any dishonour.’<sup>80</sup> In the 1740s, George Gibbs was proud to declare that ‘I have behaved with all the Openness & Sincerity from the Beginning of this affair, which I think it demands.’<sup>81</sup> Later in 1787, Joseph Strutt declared that ‘I love sincerity & seldom speak or write what I do not mean.’<sup>82</sup> Such overwhelming emphasis was placed upon sincerity because courtship was a momentous period in the build up to marriage, causing female anxiety about dishonest lovers who could potentially break an engagement, damage their reputation and even publish the sacred thoughts within their letters.<sup>83</sup>

Once a correspondence had been established for a number of years, men could use their letters to discuss their professional activities at length with their future wives. In the third year of his courtship with Ann Vicary in c. 1746, the

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, Exeter, July 5<sup>th</sup> 1745, MS 11021/1/16.

<sup>77</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, Camp between Rueda & For de Sillas, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1812, R/U888/C11/32.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, Castello Melhor, March 27<sup>th</sup> 1813, R/U888/C11/43.

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter 6, pp. 226-7.

<sup>80</sup> ‘JH’ to Catherine Wood, January 1763, D/SEN 5/5/1/9/1/1, CRO.

<sup>81</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, 1740s, MS/11021/1/1, LMA.

<sup>82</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/8, BCA.

<sup>83</sup> See note 79 above.

physician George Gibbs regaled Ann Vicary with tales of disputes at the Exeter County Hospital ‘to determine whether the number of Surgeons is to be reduced to three; or whether it shall remain in y<sup>e</sup> Choice of the Committee either to let the matter rest where it is at present, or to recommend a fourth Surgeon to the General Court in any future Times when they think proper.’<sup>84</sup> Three years into his courtship with Charlotte Bentinck, the soldier Robert Garrett provided her with detailed accounts of military manoeuvres to distribute amongst his family. On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1813 Robert dramatised the Siege of Pamplona during the Peninsular Campaign:

Gen<sup>l</sup> O’Donnell with about 14,000 Spaniards relieved the 3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> divisions in blockading Pamplona. During the time we were there we kept the garrison in very good order not allowing them to come out to cut the corn, even under cover of the guns of the town. They tried it four or five times but always found it to be a losing game, that at last they desisted.<sup>85</sup>

These detailed descriptions of a man’s line of work demonstrate how the dynamics of a correspondence shifted over time. Three years into their courtships, George and Robert used their letters to inform women about their daily routines, the progress of their careers, and their prospects for the future.<sup>86</sup> When talking at length about the routines of work, a man consciously informed a woman that he was a success professionally, also making her his confidante, foreshadowing her role as his wife.

Throughout the period of courtship, men’s love letters were largely unconstrained by conventions of modesty, allowing them to ruminate at length about the complexities of their emotions. The second surviving letter from George Gibbs to Ann Vicary on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1744 was a lengthy manifesto of ‘serious Reflections’ about love. He described how,

There is my Dear, a certain Pleasure that attends over the anxieties of a reasonable & undissembled Passion, which I shoud think but ill exchanged for those trifling amusements which the World generally make their

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<sup>84</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, June 1740s, MS11021/1/25, LMA. Also see MS11021/1/17, 21.

<sup>85</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, Camp near Roncesvalles, July 21<sup>st</sup> 1813, R/U888/C11/56, EKAC.

<sup>86</sup> For a further example see letters from Charles Pratt to Elizabeth Jeffreys, where he repeatedly dramatised life on the court circuit, describing how ‘I must descend again to y<sup>e</sup> business of y<sup>e</sup> Circuit & prepare to Go into Court for y<sup>e</sup> Trumpet sounds & I am in y<sup>e</sup> first Cause w<sup>ch</sup> is an assault & Battery’, Pratt to Jeffreys, July 7<sup>th</sup> 1749, U840/C/1/20, CKS.

Happiness to depend on...indeed if a man be necessarily affected by the Judgment he passes on his own Conduct, this Reflection must undoubtedly give him some Satisfaction.<sup>87</sup>

These reflections allowed George to portray himself as a reasonable man of solid judgement and exemplary conduct. They also showcased his intellect and thoughtful nature to his future wife. The wheelwright Jedediah Strutt was equally reflective in his letters to Elizabeth Woollat in 1755. He mused that ‘Love has long since been ~~the~~ my darling passion tho’ it was not till lately that I had any taste for Connubial pleasures...[it] is the subject of all my thoughts...at present I know of nothing worthy the name of Love that is not intended that way.’<sup>88</sup> These extracts underscore the purpose of courtship letters in providing men with a space to rationalise their thoughts about love and marriage, presenting themselves as rational, intellectually capable and sincere to their sweethearts.

In contrast, women’s letters were more reserved about their emotions.<sup>89</sup> Female virtue was one of the pillars of conduct literature, with John Gregory praising how ‘conscious virtue’ could ‘awe the most shameless and abandoned of men’, and John Moir arguing that ‘the most splendid accomplishments are...eligible only as auxiliaries to virtue.’<sup>90</sup> The critical importance of virtue was repeatedly pressed upon women by their suitors. In a letter to Elizabeth Seddon in 1738, James Nicholson praised their relationship and outlined how the ideal ‘friend’ should exhibit ‘Constancy and faithfulness, knowledge & Discretion, a Chearfull Wenness [*sic*] of Temper, together with a Continued series of virtuous actions... [friendship] absolutely refuses any Commerce with vice, & it is virtue alone y<sup>t</sup> begins & improves it.’<sup>91</sup> The letter acted as a thinly veiled manifesto for his expectations in a future wife. Joseph Strutt was equally keen to impress the importance of virtue upon his fiancée Isabella Douglas in 1788, arguing that ‘If I have enforced Virtue strongly, I have not enforced it too much – the word has a comprehensive meaning.’ He

<sup>87</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, September 8<sup>th</sup> 1744, MS 11021/1/2, LMA.

<sup>88</sup> Jed. Strutt to Woollat, Blackwell, June 28<sup>th</sup>, D5303/4/6, DRO.

<sup>89</sup> For similar formulations in eighteenth and nineteenth century America see Eustace, ‘Love and Power’, pp. 524-5 and Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, pp. 34-5, 42.

<sup>90</sup> John Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (London, 1774), pp. 35-6 and John Moir, *Female Tuition; or, An Address to Mothers, on the Education of Daughters*, second edition (London, 1786), p. 244.

<sup>91</sup> Nicholson to Seddon, Liverpool, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1738, 920 NIC/6/1/1, LIRO.

encouraged her to 'listen' to the instruction of virtue, '& you will be sure to meet the reward it will bestow --- Innocence, Modesty, Truth & Happiness.'<sup>92</sup>

Women's courtship letters were also defined by their modesty and the exhibition of self-doubt. As early as the sixteenth century, women used modesty as a rhetorical strategy to project an image of self-improvement and vulnerability.<sup>93</sup> Modesty remained a dominating theme of women's love letters throughout the eighteenth century, with Elizabeth Seddon repeatedly emphasising her unworthiness in letters to James Nicholson in 1738. During their ongoing debate about human nature in January, she admitted that the topic 'requires a more Eloquent pen than Mine to Set it forth.' Elizabeth again reminded James of her humility in July, where she described how 'to Define this Irregular Passion in all its parts...requires a wiser head to do it.' Later in November she realised that 'I frankly own I have proposed what I am very incapable of solveing', maintaining James's dominance in intellectual matters.<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth Woollat took a similarly deferential tone in her humble letters to Jedediah Strutt before their marriage in 1755, describing how 'I write to you more for my own sake then [*sic*] yours; less to make you thinke- I write well, then [*sic*] to learn from you to write better.'<sup>95</sup> By emphasising the need to improve her writing skills, Elizabeth presented herself as modest and self-effacing to her admirer. Her desire to learn was realised during their exchanges, as her epistolary literacy improved remarkably over the years. By 1755 she was using noticeably longer words such as 'Disconcerted', 'Inferiority' and 'Consciousness', and her spelling had improved enormously.<sup>96</sup> Conventions of female modesty persisted throughout the century; Elizabeth's son Joseph Strutt described the ideal pose as a

<sup>92</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, October 12<sup>th</sup> 1788, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/13, BCA.

<sup>93</sup> See Daybell, 'Female Literacy and the Social Conventions of Women's Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603' in *idem*, *Letter Writing*, pp. 62, 66.

<sup>94</sup> Seddon to Nicholson, Liverpool, January 27<sup>th</sup>, July 24<sup>th</sup> and November 18<sup>th</sup> 1738, GBB 133 Eng. MS 1041/1, 2, 8 (Box 1), JRL.

<sup>95</sup> Woollat to Jed. Strutt, undated, pre-1755, D5303/1/2 (iii), DRO. In what may be a fragment of the same letter she continues, 'I have wrote this letter in such a hurry y<sup>t</sup> I dare say you cant reed [*sic*] it, and I emagin [*sic*] you think to your self I wish I never had, had it, and I realy am in debate with myself wheather [*sic*] I shoud sent it or not', D5303/1/2 (ii).

<sup>96</sup> See Woollat to Jed. Strutt, London, February 15<sup>th</sup> 1755, D5303/4/2, DRO. The gentlewoman Mary Martin wrote polished and neat letters to her suitor Isaac Rebow, who praised her for her 'Knack of Epistolizing', July 1<sup>st</sup> 1772, A12691/18, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO. However she still repeatedly described her desire to improve, noting, 'O! what wou'd I give that I cou'd properly express my Sentiments on y Occasion...I am every Day, more & more sensible, that I have not "y Pen of a ready Writer," therefore must Content myself, with Assuring you, it is my fervent Wish, & shall be my most earnest Study, & I think (see how Vain you make me) I shall in all probability succeed', May 5<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/12, Box 1, Vol. II.



'bashful Modesty' in 1787, which he had 'often & so strongly recommended' to his sweetheart Isabella.<sup>97</sup>

In contrast to men's emotionally expressive letters, women's epistles were more guarded. As John Gregory advised, 'The men will complain of your reserve. They will assure you that a franker behaviour would make you more amiable. But trust me, they are not sincere when they tell you so.'<sup>98</sup> The gentleman's daughter Ann Vicary was initially hesitant to begin a romantic correspondence with the physician George Gibbs, as this confirmed that they would soon be married. When she finally acquiesced, he praised that 'you cant imagine how much you have obliged me by this Indulgence, & as you have at last broke thro' those little Objections which you had conceived to such a Correspondence, I may hope you will not refuse to give me the Pleasure of hearing from you oftener than at first you proposed.'<sup>99</sup> Several women showed further reticence as they were afraid of disappointing their suitors. The domestic servant Elizabeth Woollat was fearful of falling below Jedediah Strutt's expectations in a future wife. As she wrote in April 1755:

you Cannot suppose, in my presant [*sic*] situation I enjoy [*sic*] any great share of tranquillity, y<sup>e</sup> Constant fear I am in, of not answering (in every thing) your expectation renders the utmost caution necessary, I have often thought that the principal Cause of unhappiness in the married state, arises from the negligence of y<sup>e</sup> contracting parties, in not acquainting each other with the peculiar Turn of their Dispositions.<sup>100</sup>

Elizabeth may have felt genuine 'fear' at the challenge of impressing a man she admired, or this may have provided an additional way to demonstrate her feminine modesty and self-doubt to her future husband.<sup>101</sup> Women's reluctance to enter into

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<sup>97</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, October 7<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS3101/C/E/4/8/7, BCA. Richard Dixon adopted a similar tone in letters to Maria Cranmer in 1782, praising how 'You are a good Girl and always think and act with propriety', Buxton, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1782, 8215/7, SHC.

<sup>98</sup> Gregory, *A Father's Legacy*, p. 36.

<sup>99</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, 1740s, MS/11021/1/17, LMA.

<sup>100</sup> Woollat to Jed. Strutt, London, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1755, D5303/4/3, DRO.

<sup>101</sup> An additional example is provided by Isabella Douglas, who described how 'I am fearful I trespass on your time & patience', quoted in letter from Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/9, BCA.

the domain of romantic correspondence was reflected in their letters, which were more cautious, distanced and less openly emotional than men's.

One further stance recommended by John Gregory was female religiosity, arguing that 'men consider your religion as one of their principal securities for that female virtue in which they are most interested.'<sup>102</sup> However this approach was not adopted by all women, with only extremely pious women such as the Unitarian Elizabeth Seddon and Anglican Charlotte Mary Curwen allowing religious discourses to dominate their letters. Debating Christian maxims enabled these women to demonstrate their intellectual capabilities by discussing theological issues with their suitors. As Elizabeth noted in 1738, 'we may consider that true virtue and Practical religion never so flourishes in the Christian world as in that part that is under Persicution [*sic*]; which in my opinion shows that it is the plenty of spiritual food we injuy that Surfits [*sic*] us.'<sup>103</sup> Religiosity could also provide a source of power for women looking to cement their place in a new home. This was especially true for women such as Charlotte, whose suitor Francis Cobb had been married twice before. In 1805, she challenged him that if he did not allow her to educate his children with a bias agreeable to her views, she could not see their relationship progressing any further: 'I shall teach them the prayer book: as I believe it to be according to the scriptures, & if we are not agreed upon this point, my hands are tied therefore how can my affections be enlarged.'<sup>104</sup> Francis himself was deeply religious, making Charlotte's piousness a powerful tool in determining the dynamics of their new household.<sup>105</sup>

Charlotte's challenge to Francis' authority in 1805 demonstrates how courting women could wield a significant degree of power, delaying their marriage by asking 'for another half year to consider the matter.'<sup>106</sup> As Karen Lystra has noted

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<sup>102</sup> Gregory, *A Father's Legacy*, p. 23. Also see Wilkes, *Genteel and Moral Advice*, pp. 38-61, 68-70, *The Lady's Preceptor*, pp. 5-6 and Moir, *Female Tuition*, esp. p. 258.

<sup>103</sup> Seddon to Nicholson, Liverpool, September 28<sup>th</sup> 1738, GB 133 Eng. MS 1041/6 (Box 1), JRL.

<sup>104</sup> Curwen to Cobb, July 12<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/1, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>105</sup> Francis' son Thomas Cobb was also deeply moved by women's 'pious' language. When his proposal of marriage was rejected by Miss Torre in May 1827, he was nonetheless consoled 'that my earnest wishes though blasted have been denied in a tone & spirit which breathes so much of genuine pious feeling that I cannot be satisfied that the hand of the Lord is in this disappointment', Margate, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1827, R/U11/C40, EKAC.

<sup>106</sup> Curwen to Cobb, July 12<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/1, Bundle A, EKAC. For the strategies of courting women also see letters from Gibbs to Vicary, where he decries how 'we are to be convinc'd of your

in her study of nineteenth-century America, courting women frequently orchestrated ‘at least one dramatic emotional crisis’ to test their suitors’ love.<sup>107</sup> An earlier example can be found in the courtship of Joseph Strutt and Isabella Douglas in the 1780s. Two years into their courtship in May 1788 Isabella wrote to Joseph casting ‘doubts & suspicions’ over their relationship and subjecting him to ‘censure & reproach.’ However he appears to have rather enjoyed being reprimanded, describing how ‘I am almost tempted to sin again in order to be so chastised.’<sup>108</sup> The author Mary Wollstonecraft forced her suitor William Godwin to endure a far more dramatic crisis when in the early days of pregnancy in December 1796. William was distraught after she ‘wished we had never met; you wished you could cancel all that had passed between us... You wished all the kind things you had ever written me destroyed.’<sup>109</sup> However Mary’s letters reveal that she soon changed her mind, entreating him on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1797 that ‘You must have patience with me, for I am sick at heart – Dissatisfied [*sic*] with every body and every thing.’<sup>110</sup> The letters reveal no discernible cause for the disagreement, with Wollstonecraft’s biographer Ralph M. Wardle noting, ‘though Mary flared up at times, she was quick to forget her anger.’<sup>111</sup> William had evidently passed Mary’s test, and the couple were married on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1797. These examples demonstrate the degree of power which women could wield during courtship, finding an earlier English precedent for women’s romantic testing in America. The crises created by Isabella, Mary and Charlotte were a useful strategy in enabling them to discover the intensity of their suitors’ devotion, reminding them that a woman’s love was not to be taken for granted.

The final section of this chapter treats love letters as *gifts* exchanged by lovers, which retained the essence of the individuals who gave them. As Marcel Mauss notes, ‘Even when abandoned by the giver, it still forms a part of him. Through it he has a hold over the recipient.’<sup>112</sup> Before his marriage in 1755, the Derbyshire wheelwright Jedediah Strutt made a direct correlation between his letters and ‘thoughts’, pondering that ‘if every thought for you had been a Letter, millions

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Importance by being kept at a Distance, & treated with a contemptuous kind of Reserve’, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1744, MS/11021/1/3, LMA.

<sup>107</sup> Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p. 157.

<sup>108</sup> Described in letter from Strutt to Douglas, Derby, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1788, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/11, BCA.

<sup>109</sup> Godwin to Wollstonecraft, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1796, No. 87, MS Abinger c. 40, fol. 127, BLO.

<sup>110</sup> Wollstonecraft to Godwin, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1797, No. 89, *Ibid.*, fols. 129-30.

<sup>111</sup> Wardle, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography* (London, 1951), p. 272.

<sup>112</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 9.

perhaps wou'd not Compromize [*sic*] the sum.'<sup>113</sup> Others such as Elizabeth Seddon in the 1730s and Mary Martin in the 1760s repeatedly described their letters as 'favours', as if sent as a token by the writer.<sup>114</sup> The soldier Robert Garrett revealed his emotional investment in Charlotte Bentinck's letters in 1811 by describing them as 'so valuable a dear treasure', reminding her that 'nothing gives me greater delight, it is the only substitute I have...for not being with you.'<sup>115</sup> The behaviour of lovers was shaped around their letters, as they treated them as treasured possessions, claiming to read over them on a regular basis. In 1787, Joseph Strutt purported to have read one epistle from Isabella Douglas 'over & over again, nay I have read it so often that I can almost repeat it.'<sup>116</sup> Since sources such as diaries do not mention whether lovers actually re-read their letters *ad infinitum*, we cannot know if they did so on a regular basis, or if the re-reading of letters provided a fitting epistolary device with which to express a writer's love.

Since these highly valued letters were pored over and kept as treasured possessions, writers made fastidious efforts to keep their love letters neat and well-presented. The apothecary John Lovell re-wrote badly presented love letters to Sarah Harvey in 1756, describing how 'I was oblige [*sic*] to transcribe it anew, purposely to render it in some Measure fit to be introduc'd into your Presence.'<sup>117</sup> Individuals aimed to craft their letters in the neatest hand possible, as a tribute to the recipient (see Figs. 22 and 24). However, as John's rewritten letter suggests, this 'ideal' style was not always obtainable, with deviations in the appearance of letters revealing a writer's mood and situation at the moment of writing.<sup>118</sup> Writers purchased the best quality paper they could afford, with numerous writers studied in this thesis using the most expensive paper with gold gilding around the edges.<sup>119</sup> Others occasionally

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<sup>113</sup> Jed. Strutt to Woollat, undated, pre-1755, D5303/1/1, DRO.

<sup>114</sup> Seddon to Nicholson, Liverpool, August 7<sup>th</sup>, October 17<sup>th</sup> and November 18<sup>th</sup> 1738, GB133 Eng. MS 1041/3, 7-8 (Box 1), JRL. Martin to Rebow, September 18<sup>th</sup> 1768 and April 27<sup>th</sup> 1772, A12691/3, Box 1, Vol. I and A12691/11, Vol. II, ERO.

<sup>115</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, Mealhada, Sorda, and near Cuidad Rodrigo, May 20<sup>th</sup> 1811 and August 16<sup>th</sup> 1811, R/U888/C11/8, 13, EKAC.

<sup>116</sup> Jos. Strutt to Douglas, Derby, October 7<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/7, BCA.

<sup>117</sup> However 'instead of this Copy I very unfortunately sent you the Original.' Lovell to Harvey, Bath, December 4<sup>th</sup> 1756, 161/102/2, WSA.

<sup>118</sup> Eleanor Anne Porden's letters to John Franklin are littered with crossings out, such as one missive written from Berners Street on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1822, D3311/8/1/14 (i), DRO. The changes appear to have been designed to improve her language, as the word 'alarm' was replaced with 'terror', 'speculations' was replaced with 'disquisitions' and 'fury' was replaced with 'vengeance.'

<sup>119</sup> For example Richard How II, Elizabeth Jeffreys, Charles Pratt, Samuel Whitbread II, Admiral Horatio Nelson, Sir Gilbert Stirling and Eleanor Anne Porden.

used paper with a thick black border to mourn lost loved ones.<sup>120</sup> While we would expect gentlewomen such as Mary Martin to utilise smoother and whiter paper than wheelwrights such as Jedediah Strutt, the discolouring of letters over time makes it difficult for any clear distinction to be made. Nonetheless writers were aware of the variable quality of their paper and how this was perceived by recipients. They apologised when this fell below usual standards, with Mary Martin proclaiming ‘hang y Paper, & y Pens, for y former is so full of Hairs, & y latter so bad, that I cannot write y least Decent to night.’<sup>121</sup> Others complained of the low quality paper available while away from home, with the barrister Charles Pratt writing to his sweetheart from Cornwall that ‘You may guess, my dearest Love, the barbarity of this Country where I am at present by y<sup>e</sup> Colour of y<sup>e</sup> Paper.’<sup>122</sup>

The intrinsic value of love letters imbued them with the power to transcend death, and individuals frequently wrote love letters to be read posthumously in case some accident should befall them. The Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II wrote a letter to his sweetheart Elizabeth Grey should he die during his Grand Tour, promising, ‘If ever You receive this letter, which I hope will not be the case, You will with it receive all the letters that You will have written to me.’<sup>123</sup> The act of returning her letters ensured that she would be provided with a physical comfort after his death, as their love letters provided both an embodiment of their relationship, and of Samuel himself. Women such as Francis Cobb’s second wife Mary (*née* Blackburn) (1773-1802) made similar precautions should they die during childbirth. Mary’s letters allowed her affection to transcend death, and provide Francis with a way to resurrect their love as a means of comfort. In a letter written seven years before her death in 1802, she praised how, ‘A happier life, I verily believe, none ever knew. Your tenderness to me has been beyond example...I love you to my very heart, and have experienced all I could wish from you to make my life happy.’<sup>124</sup> The incalculable value of love letters was reflected on the Continent in works such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze’s *The Inconsolable Widow* (1762-3). The painting depicted a

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<sup>120</sup> For example letters from Porden to Franklin after the death of her father on October 19<sup>th</sup> and November 16<sup>th</sup> 1822, Berners Street, D3311/8/1/3, 16, DRO.

<sup>121</sup> Martin to Rebow, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1772, A12691/1, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

<sup>122</sup> Pratt to Jeffreys, Leskard, July 25<sup>th</sup> 1745, U840/C/1/2, CKS.

<sup>123</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Clarges Street, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6613, No. 30, BLARS.

<sup>124</sup> See transcript of Mary’s letters in Cobb, *Memoir*, pp. 42-5.

widow immersing herself in her husband's missives while touching a bust of his face, allowing her to resurrect his identity to assuage her grief.<sup>125</sup>

A central property enabling love letters to summon the presence of the absent was their smell, as they could carry a distinctive scent reminiscent of their writers. In 1747, *The London Magazine* serialised a tale entitled 'Adventures of a Quire of Paper', where a piece of paper comes alive to explain its story. After various incarnations as a thistle, flaxseed, cambric handkerchief and bandage, it eventually becomes a quire of expensive paper 'decorated with gilt edges.' The paper is then purchased by a man of fashion, who scents it with 'otto of roses' and sends it as a love letter.<sup>126</sup> The tale illuminates contemporary perceptions of courtship letters as gilded, scented emissaries of lovers. The Duke of Cumberland was depicted fantasising over letters to 'My Angel' while kissing and smelling a ribbon in Cruikshank's etching *The Illustrious Lover* in 1804 (Fig. 16).<sup>127</sup> The sweet smell of letters was repeatedly praised by suitors; in 1813, the soldier Robert Garrett was overwhelmed that Charlotte Bentinck's 'dear letters smell so nice and sweet that I fancy myself at Ramsgate again when I put them to my poor nose.'<sup>128</sup> Robert's account demonstrates how he touched and smelled Charlotte's letters as a material substitute for her, and the transporting properties of scent, as the 'sweet' smell of her letters made him feel instantly at home. The smell of love letters from the 1770s was dramatised in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853), where they created 'a faint, pleasant smell of Tonquin beans in the room. I had always noticed this scent about any of the things which had belonged to her mother; and many of the letters were addressed to her – yellow bundles of love-letters, sixty or seventy years old.'<sup>129</sup>

These sensory properties encouraged men to carry love letters around in their pockets, touching and kissing them as symbolic substitutes for women. While women may have done the same, the fetishistic connotations of kissing letters prevented them from acknowledging this in writing. Sigmund Freud argued that the use of objects as a symbolic substitute was a form of sexual fetishism which was

<sup>125</sup> Greuze, *The Inconsolable Widow*, oil on canvas, 40 x 32cm, P454, Wallace Collection (subsequently WAC).

<sup>126</sup> 'Adventures of a Quire of Paper' in *The London Magazine*, London, 1747, pp. 355-8, 395-8 and 448-50. Quotes at pp. 449-50.

<sup>127</sup> Also see Chapter 2, pp. 81-2.

<sup>128</sup> Garrett to Bentinck, Camp near Villa de Don Diego, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1813, R/U888/C11/51, EKAC.

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford* (New York, 1853), p. 90.

‘habitually present in normal love, especially in those stages of it in which the normal sexual aim seems unattainable or its fulfilment prevented.’<sup>130</sup> Men also described using their letters to provide a symbolic ‘portal’ between them and their sweethearts by placing them in direct contact with the body while they were asleep. The romantic poet John Keats slept with Fanny Brawne’s letters between his legs and under his pillow as a way to be closer to her in 1820. He also promised to ‘kiss your name and mine where your Lips have been – Lips! why should a poor prisoner as I am talk about such things?’<sup>131</sup> The physicality of these rapturous declarations is typical of early nineteenth-century love letters, especially produced by professional writers such as Keats. The kissing of love letters marked the fetishisation of the letter as an object because of its connection with a lover, in turn becoming a direct substitute for them.<sup>132</sup> Such behaviour may have been inspired by sentimental novels, which utilised men’s kissing of letters as a sign of their infatuation. In Fanny Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), Lord Orville kissed the letter consenting to his marriage to the novel’s heroine, while a besotted Werther wrote to Charlotte in Goethe’s *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) that he ‘quickly raised your letter to my lips’ after reading it.<sup>133</sup>

Love letters were repeatedly praised as a source of emotional enjoyment, causing pleasure, satisfaction and cheering thoughts. In the 1740s, the physician George Gibbs described how he experienced ‘no Pleasure, to be compared w<sup>th</sup> that which thy Letters give me.’<sup>134</sup> Similarly in 1772, the gentlewoman Mary Martin praised the ‘most infinite Satisfaction’ of receiving Isaac Rebow’s letters, which ‘gave me more Pleasure, than I can find Words to Express.’<sup>135</sup> Love letters were doubly enjoyable for writers due to the pleasure they brought to recipients. As George Gibbs noted in 1746, ‘I enjoy no Pleasure equal to that which arises from contributing to thy Satisfaction; Coud [*sic*] I therefore be so cruel...to refuse thee

<sup>130</sup> Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, ed. Angela Richards, trans. James Strachey, Vol. 7 (London, 1977), pp. 65-8, at p. 66. Also Tim Dant, ‘Fetishism and the Social Value of Objects’, *Sociological Review*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (1996), pp. 495-516.

<sup>131</sup> Keats to Brawne, 1820, Letters XII and XXII in Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, pp. 48, 65.

<sup>132</sup> Sarah Hurst recorded a strange incident of her *Aunt* requesting to kiss her love letters, in order to send good wishes to the sender; ‘M<sup>rs</sup> Wicker comes & desires to kiss my Harrys letter, I consent but think it a little odd’, October 20<sup>th</sup> 1759, Diary of Hurst, MS 3542, HM.

<sup>133</sup> Goethe, *Sorrows of Young Werther*, July 26<sup>th</sup> 1771, Book 1, p. 29 and Fanny Burney, *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* (Cambridge, 1778; 1996), p. 259.

<sup>134</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, 1740s, MS/11021/1/1, LMA.

<sup>135</sup> Martin to Rebow, January 10<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup> 1772, A12691/4, 12, 18, Box 1, Vol. II, ERO.

such as Trifle as a Letter?’<sup>136</sup> Samuel Whitbread II made a similar connection in 1787, writing to Elizabeth Grey that ‘I quit my occupation with regret, not only because it is pleasurable to me but because it, I know, conveys an equal pleasure to you. there is a good Boy.’<sup>137</sup> Charlotte Mary Curwen was also cheered to know that her letters pleased Francis Cobb in 1805, describing how ‘I feel much pleasur [*sic*] in being obliged to write to you this morning, & more particularly so, as I flatter myself, my letter will not be altogether unwelcome.’<sup>138</sup> The value placed upon letters by writers therefore had a reciprocal relationship with the importance they were granted by recipients.

The high value of love letters made them a powerful force in exacerbating or alleviating the agitation of love. The overwhelming emotional consequences of receiving a love letter were dramatised in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* (1818) where Anne Elliot received a love letter from Captain Wentworth:

Such a letter was not soon to be recovered from. Half an hour’s solitude and reflection might have tranquilized her; but the ten minutes only which now passed before she was interrupted, with all the restraints of her situation, could do nothing towards tranquillity. Every moment rather brought fresh agitation. It was overpowering happiness.<sup>139</sup>

The novel emphasised the importance of self-reflection in coping with the ‘overpowering’ impact of receiving letters. The sensation was not always pleasurable, with Charlotte Mary Curwen describing how her suitor’s doubts about their relationship had caused ‘palpitations’ of mind and body and she was ‘obliged to take brandy before I could hold my pen at all, to write.’<sup>140</sup> Nonetheless love letters also provided a balm or ‘cordial’ for this agitation, diffusing a ‘placid serenity’ to writers’ spirits.<sup>141</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1805, Charlotte praised how love letters had provided ‘a cordial to my spirits, & I think I got some good from it.’<sup>142</sup> Two weeks later she again celebrated their medicinal properties as ‘a cordial to my dejected

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<sup>136</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, Exeter, July 5<sup>th</sup> 1746, MS/11021/1/23, LMA.

<sup>137</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Basle, August 8<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6568, No. 22, BLARS.

<sup>138</sup> Curwen to Cobb, January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/2, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>139</sup> Austen, *Persuasion* (London, 1818; 2008), p. 199.

<sup>140</sup> Curwen to Cobb, October 18<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/5, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>141</sup> Hays to Eccles, August 9<sup>th</sup> 1779, in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 41.

<sup>142</sup> Curwen to Cobb, Fenstanton, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C287/6, Bundle A.



mind.<sup>143</sup> Whilst doubting letters could cause immense agitation, reassuring letters possessed important ‘healing powers’ in lifting depressed spirits and calming the mind. Other forms of correspondence had the same therapeutic qualities, acting as a means of catharsis and self-justification.<sup>144</sup>

To conclude, this chapter has demonstrated how the exchange of love letters was an intensely emotional experience, from the angst of their creation, to the joy brought about by their sweet scent. Lovers translated their devotion onto paper by describing the anxiety of catching the post, the suspense of waiting for a delivery, and the dejection when promised letters failed to arrive. Such raptures do not represent unmediated expressions of a ‘transhistorical’ romantic love, but linguistic strategies which were deliberately employed to present writers in a particular light. Love letters were by no means produced in isolation, but were shaped by their quasi-public readership and lack of physical privacy.

The majority of epistles followed a standardised structure, beginning with thanks for previous missives, and concluding with practised affectionate phrases. Love letters were therefore a deeply paradoxical genre, producing individual expression within a standardised framework. While love letters did not represent a formal engagement, they certainly foreshadowed an impending marriage. In this sense, marriage was not a single moment but a lengthy process, becoming more assured as greater numbers of letters were exchanged. Overtly gendered features include men’s overarching emphasis upon sincerity, and women’s virtue, modesty, self-doubt and often religiosity.

The genre of the love letter changed over time, as the language of romantic love became noticeably more elaborate. As *A Dictionary of Love* remarked, the language of couples in the 1730s and 1740s appears remarkably ‘plain’ compared to the melodrama of letters at the close of the century. The culture of sensibility further led lovers in the 1770s and 1780s to describe physical symptoms such as trembling, chills and wrinkles in order to prove their love. Letters also changed over time within individual relationships. The dynamics of a correspondence shifted during courtship, with men entering into lengthy descriptions of work, and women staging a number

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, Fenstanton, October 18<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/5, Bundle A.

<sup>144</sup> Daybell, ‘Introduction’ in *idem*, *Letter Writing*, p. 8 and Hannan, ‘Women, Letter-Writing and the Life of the Mind’, Chapter 6, pp. 171-95, esp. p. 174.

of dramatic emotional crises in the later stages of a relationship. The feature which unites all of the lovers studied in this chapter was the immense value they placed upon their letters, as treasured possessions and embodiments of the absent sender.

The sacred genre of the love letter assumed an even greater importance during adulterous affairs, where couples struggled to arrange clandestine meetings and endeavoured to avoid being seen together in public. The fraught circumstances of adultery shaped the form and content of adulterous love letters, as studied in the next chapter of this thesis.

## Chapter Four

### ‘Perhaps it may be best to burn this:’<sup>1</sup> Secret Codes, Disappearing Ink and Adulterous Exchanges

When the Quaker gentleman Richard How II (1727-1801) came to the aid of his fellow Friend Silena Ramsay (d. 1779) in 1760, her husband Robert was ‘much straitened for money’ and was struggling to pay the rent.<sup>2</sup> Richard expressed sympathy for her distress, making a number of visits to Silena, her son Tommy, and her parents. Soon he was writing long melancholy letters describing his affection for her, proclaiming that ‘my most ardent Desire is thy Happiness’ and ‘thy Letters alone preserve me from plunging into Despair.’<sup>3</sup> The couple embarked on an illicit affair, which caused a great scandal in the tight-knit Quaker community of Aspley Guise in Bedfordshire. In a desperate attempt to keep his wife, Robert threatened to forcibly seize Silena’s child Tommy, which was within his legal rights as her husband and could be enforced by the common law courts.<sup>4</sup> However his threat had little effect, with the couple signing a deed of separation in 1761, and Richard acting as Silena’s trustee, an act which may have been exhorted from Robert in return for financial help. Richard then formulated a shrewd plan to estrange Robert from his family, convincing him in March 1761 to try and recover his fortunes trading on the perilous Gold Coast in Africa. As soon as he left, Silena and Tommy were installed near Richard’s house in Aspley, and he continually checked the papers for news of Robert’s demise. The plan was a success, as Robert died in Gambia in August 1762, allowing Richard to marry his widow three months later.

This chapter analyses the letters and tokens exchanged by adulterous couples to firmly establish the indispensable role they played in conducting an affair during the long eighteenth century. While adulterous affairs were more fraught, insecure and secretive than traditional courtships, certain connections can be made through objects such as hair, rings and inkstands given as gifts. By analysing adultery and courtship within a single study, this is the first account to clearly delineate the different epistolary conventions governing these two distinct genres of love letter.

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<sup>1</sup> How II to Silena Ramsay, May 11<sup>th</sup> 1762, HW88/51, BLARS.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsay to her mother Sarah Moore, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1760, HW88/5.

<sup>3</sup> How II to Ramsay, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW88/6.

<sup>4</sup> On the legal custody of children see Stone, *Road to Divorce*, pp. 17, 153, 170-80.

This chapter is divided into four sections, firstly outlining the legal position of adulterous men and women and the role of letters and tokens in conducting their affairs. Secondly, it examines how couples concealed their relationships by burning their letters, devising secret codes, and concocting disappearing lemon juice ink. Thirdly, it considers unique features of the ‘language of infidelity,’ such as women’s preoccupation with household finances and the health of their lovers, and men’s descriptions of jealousy and lust. Finally, it examines how material objects such as bells, whistles, desks and cabinets facilitated affairs and enabled illicit relationships to prosper without the knowledge of others.

Lawrence Stone has argued that England had ‘the worst of all worlds’ during the eighteenth century, as ‘marriage was far too easy to enter into, but extremely difficult to get out of.’<sup>5</sup> While wives could not sue their husbands for adultery in the civil courts, husbands had the option of bringing an action of ‘criminal conversation’ (or ‘crim. con.’) against their wives’ lovers for ‘trespassing’ their bodies. In doing so, they had deprived a husband of his wife’s ‘comfort and society.’<sup>6</sup> Although a small number of cases took place in the late seventeenth century, they increased drastically in the 1770s, peaking in the 1790s and declining thereafter.<sup>7</sup> Wives could bring an action in the church courts for separation on grounds of adultery or life-threatening cruelty, but only in the presence of aggravating circumstances such as the transmission of a venereal disease or sodomy. Full legal divorce was even more difficult to achieve, and was only attainable by men via a private Act of Parliament. Parliamentary divorces were extortionately expensive and therefore incredibly rare; between 1670 and 1857 there were only 325 divorces in England, 99% of which were obtained by men.<sup>8</sup> On the whole, the church courts held key jurisdiction over

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<sup>5</sup> Stone, *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> This phrase was repeated in pamphlets such as *The tryal between Sir W---m M--rr--s, Baronet, plaintiff, and Lord A---gst---s F---tz-R---y* (London, 1742), pp. 23, 32, 48, and *Adultery Anatomized* (London, 1761), Vol. I, pp. 110, 282, 290, 300, 333.

<sup>7</sup> More specifically there were 2 cases 1690-9, 7 cases 1730-9, 17 cases 1750-9, 36 cases 1770-9, 73 cases 1790-9, and 47 cases 1820-9. See Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p. 255, and Table 9.1, p. 430. On crim. con. also see Susan Staves, ‘Money for Honour: Damages for Criminal Conversation’, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, Vol. 11 (1982), pp. 279-97, Katherine Binhammer, ‘The Sex Panic of the 1790s’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (January, 1996), pp. 409-34 and Donna T. Andrew, ‘Adultery à-la-Mode’, *History*, Vol. 82, Issue 265 (1997), pp. 5-23. For changing attitudes to adultery see David Turner, *Fashioning Adultery: Gender, Sex and Civility in England, 1660-1740* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 73. Between 1800 and 1819, 96% of such divorces were preceded by crim. con. actions, up from 30% between 1700 and 1749. See Stone, *Road to Divorce*, Table 9.2, p. 430. Also Tables 10.1-4 and 13.1-2 for the number of successful and failed divorces,

adultery, granting ‘divorce’ with no right to remarry. While crim. con. cases were increasingly required to secure a successful verdict, a parliamentary divorce required both previous steps.

Informal ‘divorce’ through desertion or mutual agreement was therefore widespread, and the social penalties faced by deserted wives were severe.<sup>9</sup> They were offered little protection under the common law, as their property and future legacies could be confiscated and their children taken away. When the third Duke of Grafton separated from his first wife Anne in 1764-5, she faced a scramble to ‘create and equip an establishment appropriate to the dignity of an estranged duchess.’<sup>10</sup> The deed of private separation was signed on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1765, and the couple remained amicable until she became pregnant by the Earl of Ossory in 1767, giving birth to a bastard child, finally giving the Duke grounds for divorce. Her fall from grace meant society’s doors were firmly ‘closed against her’ due to her scandalous conduct, and Anne was forbidden from seeing her three children again.<sup>11</sup> Anne’s plight demonstrates the immense risk that the unfaithful spouses, especially women, were taking by engaging in extra-marital affairs.

While adultery and divorce have received widespread scholarly attention, adulterous love letters have only rarely been approached by historians. Clare Brant’s *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (2008) unusually categorises these epistles under ‘Writing as a Criminal’ (Chapter Four) rather than ‘Writing as a Lover’ (Chapter Three), which prevents a direct comparison of courting and adulterous letters. It also situates her narrative within notions of criminality rather than romantic love, excluding innumerable affairs which remained undiscovered and did not enter the court system.<sup>12</sup> David Turner’s account of ‘Language, Sex and civility’ in *Fashioning Adultery* (2007) analyses the language used by diarists such as Samuel Pepys to record their affairs, but neglects to take this further to analyse the letters of lovers themselves.<sup>13</sup> Turner’s exploration of ‘Proving Adultery’ also fails

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withdrawn and rejected petitions, social status of protagonists and proportion supported by legal aid, pp. 432-8. Also see Roderick Phillips, *Untying the Knot: a Short History of Divorce* (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 73.

<sup>10</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 137-43, at p. 137.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>12</sup> Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters*, pp. 125-68.

<sup>13</sup> This is despite the fact that illicit letters were read out in court as material proof of adultery. See Turner, *Fashioning Adultery*, Chapter 1, esp. pp. 29-35.

to treat letters as proof of illicit love, focusing instead on witnessing illicit sex in ‘private’ spaces such as the bedchamber.<sup>14</sup> Historiographical accounts of adultery therefore contain the curious chasm of what lovers actually said to one another, entirely neglecting the vital role played by letter-writing in conducting an affair.



**Fig. 25 – Extract from *One of the horned cattle in the City taking an airing with his spouse & family*, engrav’d for the Court & city magazine, London, 1770, etching with stipple engraving, plate mark 16.4 x 25.7cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 770.01.00.01.**

**Fig. 26 – Thomas Rowlandson, *An anonymous letter!*, London, 1799, hand-coloured etching, plate mark 21.7 x 19.4cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 799.10.01.05.**

Scholarly neglect is especially surprising given public ‘impatience’ to devour adultery cases and the lascivious letters they contained.<sup>15</sup> In the trial of the Earl of Sandwich’s niece the Countess of Cork and Orrery, published in 1782, she was accused of writing letters ‘entreating and desiring to see’ her lover, while during the trial of Reverend James Altham for adultery published in 1785, he was purported to have sent letters to Anne Saunders which ‘contained many strong expressions of love and regard.’<sup>16</sup> Similarly in the crim. con. trial of the linen draper William Atkinson published in 1789, letters were produced containing ‘professions of familiar kindness

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 5, esp. pp. 153-7.

<sup>15</sup> *The trial of Mrs Harriet Errington, Wife of George Errington, Esq.* (London, 1785), p. vii.

<sup>16</sup> *The trial of the Right Hon. Ann, Countess of Cork and Orrery* (London, 1782), p. 8, *The trial of the Rev. Mr. James Altham, Of Harlow, in the County of Essex; Vicar of St. Olave Jewry* (London, 1785), Vol. I, p. 4.

never known but between lovers.<sup>17</sup> Texts such as *Adultery Anatomized* (1761) published full transcripts of the letters exchanged in particular cases. Trials also placed special emphasis upon material signs of illicit intercourse, such as bolted doors, tumbled beds, raised petticoats and unbuttoned breeches.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most famous pamphlet of the century was *The genuine copies of letters which passed between His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor* (1770) which ran to seven editions in a single year, demonstrating widespread interest in adulterers and their licentious letters.<sup>19</sup>

Numerous prints and poems dramatised adulterous couples exchanging love letters to fuel their amour; Figure 25 depicts a man secretly slipping a love letter into the hand of a fashionably-dressed woman as her husband marches glumly ahead carrying their child. Illicit letters exchanged in the presence of a husband were a recurring theme in these prints, representing the ultimate symbol of deceit. The transaction was dramatised in poems such as ‘The Adulteress’ (1773):

Nay, when the Cuckold’s walking by her side,  
A wink, or gentle squeeze, the gentle Bride  
Slily [*sic*] conveys; and, with an am’rous look,  
Slips him a billet from her pocket-book.<sup>20</sup>

Adulterous couples were willing to engage in such precarious acts as they had fewer opportunities to meet one another, and could never do so in public.<sup>21</sup> This made them particularly vulnerable to being caught, or having their letters intercepted, as satirised by Rowlandson in Figures 26 and 27. His first etching depicts an angry wife scolding her husband with a letter from ‘Betsey’ in her hand, crying ‘you cant deny the letter you false man – I shall find out all your Vicked Women – I shall you aboninable [*sic*] Seducer!’ The letter reads, ‘My Dear Lif [*sic*], When your Wife is

<sup>17</sup> *Adultery. The trial of Mr. William Atkinson, linen-draper, of Cheapside* (London, 1789), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Adultery Anatomized*, Vol. I, pp. 84-5, 91, 93.

<sup>19</sup> The seventh edition was publicised in the *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, August 9<sup>th</sup> 1770, Issue 213, which had already serialised some of the couple’s letters in June. The case generated numerous spin-off tales, such as ‘The Adventures of the Black Bob Wig’ in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, August 25<sup>th</sup> 1779, Issue 12 944.

<sup>20</sup> *The Adulteress* (London, 1773), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Isabella Carr complained that she was only able to see Sir James Lowther one week in every two months. Even when they were alone, she was ‘so agitated that I scarce knew what I did.’ Carr to Lowther, undated, c. 1759-69, and September 6<sup>th</sup> 1759, D/LONS/L1/1/67/6-7, CRO.

gone too bid meet me in the Garding [*sic*] will then truly yours Betsey Blossom.’<sup>22</sup> In response, her husband protests ‘I know no more who sent the letter than the Man in the Moon.’ In a similar vein, the muscular woman in Figure 27 points an accusatory finger at her new husband and decries, ‘an interspected letter from one of your Naughty Women I knew you was going to Galavant.’ The possibility of their letters being intercepted in this way drove many of the adulterers studied in this chapter to use pseudonyms and write in French, Greek, code and even disappearing ink to shield their sentiments from prying eyes.



**Fig. 27 – Thomas Rowlandson, ‘Autumn’ from *The Four Seasons of Love*, London, 1814, hand-coloured etching, 24.3 x 33.1cm, British Museum, London, AN435277001, © The Trustees of the British Museum.**

The eighteenth century also saw a booming trade in novels about marriage and betrayal, which focused particularly on the production and exchange of illicit letters. *The Fair Adulteress: or, the Treacherous Brother* (1743) presented itself as ‘A story founded on real facts,’ centring on the intercepted letters of the adulteress Amelia and her husband’s brother Mallamour. Similar tales were produced on the Continent, including Cholderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaison Dangereuses* (*Dangerous Liaisons*) in 1782, dramatising the seduction of the magistrate’s wife Madame de Tourvel by the Vicomte de Valmont. In one erotically charged scene, the prostitute Émilie serves as the writing desk for Valmont, who ‘thought it would be amusing’ to

<sup>22</sup> For the language of ‘shrubberies and innuendo’ see Sarah Lloyd, ‘Amour in the Shrubbery: Reading the Detail of English Adultery Trial Publications of the 1780s’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Summer, 2006), pp. 421-42.



physically combine his erotic escapades with letter-writing.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore in Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*) in 1809 (trans. 1854) the protagonist Eduard falls madly in love with his wife's niece Otilie, bestowing her with ostentatious gifts and fanatically kissing her letters.<sup>24</sup> Jane Austen also addressed the damaging consequences of adultery in her lesser-known epistolary novel *Lady Susan* (1805; published 1871) about 'the most accomplished Coquette in England.' The anti-heroine Susan has a scandalous affair with Mr. Mainwaring, giving 'jealousy and wretchedness to his wife.'<sup>25</sup> In retaliation, Mrs. Mainwaring scotches Susan's ensuing relationship with Reginald De Courcy by revealing the continuing affair and love letters exchanged by Susan and her husband.<sup>26</sup>

This chapter analyses the material culture of adultery using detailed case studies of nine extra-marital relationships. These have only infrequently been studied by historians, who have rarely ventured beyond adultery cases in the courts. In addition, the majority of evidence was destroyed by writers themselves, meaning that illicit relationships with accompanying documentary evidence are incredibly scarce. The relationships studied include relatively unknown affairs between Robert Ramsay's wife Silena and the Bedfordshire gentleman Richard How II (1760-2), Mary Crichton-Stuart's husband James Lowther, first Earl of Lonsdale and Isabella Carr (1759-68), Thomas Bennett's wife Anna Maria and Admiral Sir Thomas Pye (1780-5) and the Lincoln housekeeper 'B.F' and William Pratt (1814-16). Other affairs received considerable publicity due to the higher social status or celebrity status of the protagonists, including Thomas Robinson's wife Mary 'Perdita' Robinson and John 'Jew' King (1773) and Sir William Hamilton's wife Emma and Admiral Horatio Nelson (1798-1805), who was also married himself. The chapter also uses evidence from selected crim. con. and 'divorce' trials, which relied heavily upon the evidence of letters and tokens. These paint a revealing portrait of the affairs between Roger Mainwaring's wife Mary and the yeoman John Road (1748-59), Richard, first Earl of Grosvenor's wife Henrietta and the Duke of Cumberland

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<sup>23</sup> Choderlos de Laclos, *Dangerous Liaisons*, trans. Helen Constantine (London, 1782; 2007), L47, Vicomte de Valmont to the Marquise de Merteuil, p. 103.

<sup>24</sup> Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. RJ Hollingdale (London, 1809; 1971), pp. 113, 117, 128.

<sup>25</sup> Austen, *Lady Susan* (Oxford, 1871; 2003), Letter IV, p. 195.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter XXXVI, pp. 242-3. Gillian Russell has argued that Austen used the Grosvenor trial as her inspiration. See *idem*, "'A hint of it, with initials:": Adultery, Textuality and Publicity in Jane Austen's *Lady Susan*', *Women's Writing*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 474-8.

(1769) and John Wilmot's wife Fanny and the footman Edward Washbourn (1791).<sup>27</sup> These are contextualised using supporting evidence from additional crim. con. and adultery suits.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of this chapter is not to provide an in-depth study of adultery in the courts, but to explicate the connection between letters, objects and extra-marital affairs and ascertain the distinguishing features of the language of unfaithful love.

It is notable that unlike the courtships studied in the previous chapter, many of these relationships were conducted between individuals of wildly different social status. While Mary Mainwaring was the daughter of Sir William Dudley, her amour was an illiterate yeoman. She was warned by friends that her 'Family Rank and condition in Life' should preclude such a relationship, but believed 'That Love was a Levellar' and that he was a 'Clean sweet man.'<sup>29</sup> Likewise while Fanny Wilmot was the wife of an MP, her lover was a footman in their household. In such cases, it was usually the married partner who occupied a higher social position. This was presented as a particular cause for outrage in texts such as *Adultery Anatomized*, where a woman's husband had 'raised her from a very low degree of life, to the dignity of a woman of condition', and she had repaid him with her 'prostitution.'<sup>30</sup> Men indulging in affairs with women of lower status include Sir James Lowther, first Earl Lonsdale, who enjoyed a decade-long affair with the gentlewoman Isabella Carr, continuing through his marriage to Mary Crichton-Stuart in 1761. In addition, Admiral Sir Thomas Pye took the merchant's wife Anna Maria Bennett as his mistress after the death of his wife in 1762, while Richard How II married the

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<sup>27</sup> While separation suits were often referred to as 'divorces', separated spouses were legally unable to marry in the absence of a full Parliamentary divorce. See Stone, *Road to Divorce*, pp. 319-24 and Sybil Wolfram, 'Divorce in England 1700-1857', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 155-86.

<sup>28</sup> *The trial of the Hon. Mrs. Catherine Newton, Wife of John Newton, Esq.* (London, 1782), *The trial of Sir Francis Blake Delaval, knight of the bath at the Consistory Court of Doctors commons, For Committing Adultery with Miss Roach* (London, 1782), *The trial of the Right Hon. Ann, Countess of Cork and Orrery and Adultery. The trial of Mr. William Atkinson.*

<sup>29</sup> *Roger Mainwaring, Esq. vs. Mary Elizabeth Mainwaring*, appealed from Consistory Court of Chester to Consistory Court of Durham, 1766, divorce by reason of adultery, p. 157, TRANS.CP.1766/2, Borthwick Institute (subsequently BI).

<sup>30</sup> *Adultery Anatomized*, Vol. I, p. 221.

merchant's widow Silena Ramsay in 1762, which was hugely 'advantageous' to her status.<sup>31</sup>

The second part of this chapter studies the search for secrecy through burning letters and encoding their contents. During general correspondences, many women prudently edited their letter-collections in case they fell into the wrong hands and 'anything unpleasant or personal was brought up.'<sup>32</sup> Writers urged friends to be careful with letters gossiping about others, with Richard How II asking his friend William Tomlinson to 'take particular Care to prevent anybody's seeing this Letter' concerning quarrels with his German relations in 1745.<sup>33</sup> These concerns were amplified tenfold in letters exchanged by adulterous men and women, as the immediate destruction of letters was centrally important in keeping an affair secret. The most popular method used by lovers was burning their letters (rather than simply tearing them to pieces or obscuring particular phrases), as this obliterated all trace of their licentious contents. Lady Grosvenor wrote in her sixth letter to the Duke of Cumberland that she would 'always burn your letters immediately', which made the couple 'as safe as a thief in a mill.'<sup>34</sup> Yet her confidence was unfounded, as scores of letters from both parties survived, and were used as evidence during her husband's crim. con. suit in 1770, and the ensuing divorce trial. Richard How II repeatedly reminded Silena Ramsay to be careful with his letters, writing to her in 1762, 'Perhaps it may be best to burn this, or else be sure lay it by carefully.'<sup>35</sup> The footman Edward Washbourn was equally cautious, burning the 'many letters' he received from Fanny Wilmot 'on the preceding day' before their adultery was discovered.<sup>36</sup> While the yeoman John Read promised to burn Mary Mainwaring's letters, he failed to carry this through, informing one of her friends that 'he had told Mrs Manwaring he had burnt it and that she Mrs Manwaring would kill him if she

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<sup>31</sup> Silena was aware that she was marrying into a powerful Quaker family, writing to her father-in-law that 'however advantagious [*sic*] an Alliance with thy family may be' she could not bear the tension her affair had caused, Ramsay to Richard How I, Woburn, 25/10 1762 [*sic*], HW88/54, BLARS.

<sup>32</sup> Whyman, *Pen and the People*, p. 201. For example Charlotte Mary Curwen burned all of Francis Cobb's letters concerning a disagreement during their courtship, October 18<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/5, Bundle A, EKAC.

<sup>33</sup> How II to William Tomlinson, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1745, HW87/116, BLARS.

<sup>34</sup> Grosvenor to Cumberland, *The genuine copies of letters*, Letter VI, c. 1769, pp. 14-15.

<sup>35</sup> How II to Ramsay, May 11<sup>th</sup> 1762, HW/88/51, BLARS. By 'carefully' Richard probably meant within a locked box, cabinet or writing desk, as discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>36</sup> *The Trial of Fanny Wilmot, Wife of John Wilmot, for Adultery with a Footman* (London, 1792), p. 37. Similarly, Fanny's lady's maid Elizabeth Barnes deposed that 'she hath frequently seen her mistress...throw papers into the fire and burn them', *ibid.*, p. 7.

knew he had shewn it to her.’<sup>37</sup> Mary was right to be wary, as even though her letters were not produced during her divorce trial, it was considered proof enough that her friend could depose to having seen her handwriting. This was the case in numerous other trials, where deponents testified that particular ‘hand writings were in every respect similar,’ indelibly linking the adulterer to their crime.<sup>38</sup>

The regular use of illicit letters as proof of adultery in crim. con. and divorce trials demonstrates how certain individuals were reluctant to burn their precious letters, as these were the only tangible reminders of lovers that they had. Isabella Carr only reluctantly burned her letters from Sir James Lowther after reading them over many times, asking him to do the same, as her peace of mind depended on it.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, it was public knowledge that Lowther had several mistresses at any one time and that he was never happy with his wife, making him less inclined to conceal his affairs from her. In a role reversal between male and female lovers, Lady Emma Hamilton kept nearly all of her letters from Horatio Nelson, while he burned all of hers, urging her to do the same. When his love letters to Emma were published in 1814 she wrote to their neighbour and editor of the *Morning Chronicle* James Perry claiming to have left ‘part of my papers in a case with a person to whom I thought I cou’d depend on’, insisting that they must have been sold, or were ‘the invention of a vile, mercenary wretch.’<sup>40</sup> However Emma’s detractors accused her of selling the letters to ease her poverty, with one owner of *The Letters of Lord Nelson* in 1814 pasting a ballad called ‘Shameless Emma’ into the front of their copy.<sup>41</sup> It was their status as repositories for a person’s most intimate emotions that made adulterous love letters so hard to destroy, especially for women such as Emma whose lovers had long since died.

In an attempt to avoid recriminations, the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Grosvenor used a particularly inventive method to prevent their love letters from

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<sup>37</sup> *Mainwaring, Esq. vs. Mainwaring*, deposition of Amelia Sparre, TRANS.CP.1766/2, p. 259, BI.

<sup>38</sup> *The trial of the Rev. Mr. James Altham*, Vol. I, p. 14. For a further example see the crim. con. trial of the linen draper William Atkinson, where a letter was produced and ‘proved to be his hand writing’ even though he had avoided signing it. See *Adultery. The trial of Mr. William Atkinson*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Carr to Lowther, September 29<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/5, CRO.

<sup>40</sup> Hamilton to James Perry, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1814, L1054 in Morrison, *Hamilton & Nelson Papers*, Vol. II, p. 368. Emma also wrote to Nelson’s old friend Sir William Scott that ‘I knew not of the publication of those stolen letters and I have taken the sacrament on it’, Calais, September 1814, in Wickson, *Nelson’s Love Letters*, p. 110.

<sup>41</sup> *Letters of Lord Nelson*, B7633, 92 Nelson (093.32): 094 NEL, NMM.

being read by outsiders; the Duke wrote in ‘Lemon Duce’ (lemon juice) rather than ink, which faded over time. The aim of this technique was to prevent the potential confrontation of ‘An anonymous letter!’ depicted by Rowlandson in Figures 26 and 27. Yet it also had considerable drawbacks, as the juice was incredibly watery and thin compared to regular ink – Lady Grosvenor complained that ‘I wish I could find a Meethod [*sic*] for you to write in ink, I’ll consider about it night & day, but I fear I cant but realy I make out the Lemon Duce very well.’<sup>42</sup> It was not unusual for writers to concoct different coloured inks, with recipes published in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, cookery books and texts on household governance.<sup>43</sup> The Duke may have gleaned his recipe from publications such as *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, which advised that ‘If you write with any acid (juice of lemons as good as any) upon paper, then let it dry, and it will be invisible, till it be held to the fire, and then it will be as black as ink. – Juice of onions will do the same.’<sup>44</sup> Similar advice was provided in Ovid’s *Art of Love*, which the editor explained gave readers ‘several ways to write letters, so that the writing may not be perceived. The moderns have their sympathetic inks, the most common of which are made of a solution of lead in vinegar, and a lixivium of lime and orpiment; but new milk, or the juice of a lemon, will produce the effect Ovid describes.’<sup>45</sup> The circumstances of adultery directly shaped the form of the letter, with even the ink on the page suffused with secrecy, foretelling the risk which both parties were taking in engaging with one another.

Adulterous lovers also relied upon code names to conceal their identity in case their letters were intercepted. The most famous couple utilising literary pseudonyms were Mary Robinson and the Prince of Wales, who christened themselves ‘Florizel’ and ‘Perdita’ after she charmed him with her performance in David Garrick’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1779. Such names imitated reality, as Florizel was the son of King Polixenes, falling in love with the beautiful Perdita, who he believed was the lowly daughter of a shepherd. Others such as the Lincoln housekeeper ‘B.F.’ who may have been

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<sup>42</sup> Grosvenor to Cumberland, Letter XII, c. 1769, *The genuine copies of letters*, p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> For example recipe for green ink (also used for watercolours) in *The accomplish’d housewife; or, the gentlewoman’s companion* (London, 1745), p. 137, black ink in *The London and country cook* (London, 1749), p. 216, red ink (also used for confectionery) in *The London complete art of cookery* (London, 1797), p. 186 and multicoloured ink in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, March 1750, Vol. 20, p. 116.

<sup>44</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine*, March 1750, Vol. 20, p. 117.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Notes on Ovid’s *Art of Love*’ in Ovid, *Art of Love*, p. 293.

unfamiliar with classical texts successfully concealed their identity by consistently only revealing their initials.<sup>46</sup> The use of pseudonyms was not restricted to adulterous lovers, as courting couples such as James Nicholson and Elizabeth Seddon studied in Chapter Three of this thesis also adopted the names of ‘Lucius’ and ‘Honorina’ in their letters.<sup>47</sup> Such names were particularly appealing as they allowed couples to retreat into a fantasy world. As ‘The Adulteress’ lyricised in 1773:

But some more cautious do in Figures write,  
And use fictitious names when they indite;  
As *Helen, Paris, Ariadne, Sol*;  
These raise the passions beyond *Ned* and *Moll*.<sup>48</sup>

Fictitious names thus endowed relationships with an extra frisson that transported them beyond the reality of their domestic lives, a factor which took on greater importance when the writer was married. The particular pseudonyms they selected allowed writers to switch between different selves, such as from the unhappily married ‘Moll’ to the beautiful Helen of Troy or heroine Ariadne who helped Theseus overcome the Minotaur.<sup>49</sup>

To avoid suspicion over the volume of letters received from individuals other than their spouses, adulterous lovers directed their letters to different recipients and locations. Isabella Carr monitored the receipt of her letters at Lowther Castle and elsewhere, and was cautious not to inundate James with too many letters from a single location. She enquired, ‘Cant you send me some Covers for London or wherever you are to be, as I Fear it would be suspected at [illeg] So many letters Coming from Carlisle.’<sup>50</sup> Continually shifting addresses allowed the couple to manipulate postal practices to suit their own needs. Likewise, the housekeeper ‘B.F’ asked William Pratt who to direct her letters to, urging him to continually change his

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<sup>46</sup> See ‘B.F’ to William Pratt, January 30<sup>th</sup> 1816 and undated, c. 1814-16, DE1184/6-7, LERO. Nelson likewise advised Emma Hamilton that her letters were ‘all read; therefore, never sign your name’, April 19<sup>th</sup> 1804, Letter XLIV, *Letters of Lord Nelson*, Vol. II, p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> Letters between Seddon and Nicholson, 1738-9, GB 133 Eng. MS 1041 (Box 1), JRL.

<sup>48</sup> *The Adulteress*, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> For the various types of historical and geographical pseudonyms and the circumstances in which they were used see Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters*, pp. 180-5, and on courtship code-names in eighteenth-century Philadelphia see Eustace, ‘Love and Power’, pp. 519-20.

<sup>50</sup> Carr to Lowther, September 29<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/5, CRO.

name during their correspondence. In one badly torn letter, she asked that ‘you must continue some other name for me to direct you for [I] dare not send it to the post in your [name] again.’ In order to maintain their secrecy, she decided that ‘I should say [illeg] in my next when I think I am safe for I fear I am not at this time.’<sup>51</sup>

To hide their passion from interlopers or intermediaries such as servants, writers educated in foreign languages often wrote to one another in French. Sentiments in French were viewed as particularly romantic for their sophisticated modes of expression, yet it was also feared that ‘Frenchified’ language would emasculate and enervate the English tongue.<sup>52</sup> The Duke of Cumberland routinely switched into French during his parting addresses, writing ‘*aimons toujours mon adorable petite amour je vous adore plus que la vie mesme*’ (‘love always my adorable little love I adore you more than life itself.’) In return, Lady Grosvenor noted ‘*Je vous eumerois etternelement tres cherre est adorable Amme*’ (‘I will love you eternally my very dear and adorable friend.’)<sup>53</sup> Disguising closing addresses in this way was especially important because they generally featured some of the most ardent declarations contained in love letters. The gentleman Richard How II travelled around Europe in his youth, living with his Uncle in Altona to learn German and French. This allowed him to draw liberally upon French in his love letters to Silena Ramsay, to conceal forbidden sentiments from third parties. He had used a similar practice in letters to his friend William Tomlinson in his youth, writing whole paragraphs about his Aunt in Ancient Greek.<sup>54</sup> This device was only available to writers who had received a formal education or had taught themselves classical and European languages, marking a clear divide in the secret measures available to writers of different social rank.

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<sup>51</sup> ‘B.F’ to Pratt, January 30<sup>th</sup> 1816, DE1184/6, LERO. For further examples see letters from Nelson to Hamilton, which were often directed to ‘M<sup>rs</sup> Thompson to the care of Lady Hamilton’, Morrison, *Hamilton & Nelson Papers*, Vol. II, L505, 508, 510, 514, 519, 523, 525-8, pp. 110-11, 13, 117, 119-21.

<sup>52</sup> Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1996), p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> Letters III and XII, c. 1769, *The genuine copies of letters*, pp. 5, 27. Samuel Pepys also used a combination of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Latin and code when recording his encounters with servant girls. See Donald McCormick, *Love in Code: or, How to Keep Your Secrets* (London, 1980), pp. 31-2.

<sup>54</sup> How II to Tomlinson, March 17<sup>th</sup> 1744/5, HW87/96, BLARS. Richard also composed parting addresses to his sweetheart Elizabeth Johnson in French during their courtship from c. 1747-51, HW87/224, BLARS.

As Richard and Silena's affair progressed French was no longer a sufficient disguise, and they created a code of jumbled letters to conceal their love. The making and breaking of codes was a vast enterprise in the eighteenth century, with a government agency termed 'the Deciphering Branch' translating letters intercepted by the Secret Office and the Private Office, two spying divisions of the Post Office.<sup>55</sup> More simplified codes were also translated by eighteenth-century correspondents, who enjoyed completing puzzles such as *The Tunbridge Love Letter* (1794), which is analysed in Chapter Five of this thesis.<sup>56</sup> The novelist Jane Austen experimented with coded letters, writing a backwards letter to her niece Cassandra in 1817 to 'hsiw uoy a yppah wen raey' (wish you a happy new year).<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the most unusual romantic code was created by the seventeen-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who used an alphabet of crotchet notes to communicate his love to a young English girl in Salzburg in 1774.<sup>58</sup> Translating these codes and playing with language was a fun pastime for literate individuals, providing a way to improve their epistolary skills and add intrigue to their letters.

a = w	k = p	u = e
b = x	l = j	v = s
c = h	m = n	w = c
d = v	n = k	x = u
e = f	o = l	y = a
f = t	p = m	z = y
g = d	q = i	
h = r	r = o	? = q
i = b	s = g	? = z
j = k?	t = x	

**Fig. 28 – Translation of code used by Richard How II, listing letters in code first and letters of the alphabet second, Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service, Bedford, HW88/33-53.**

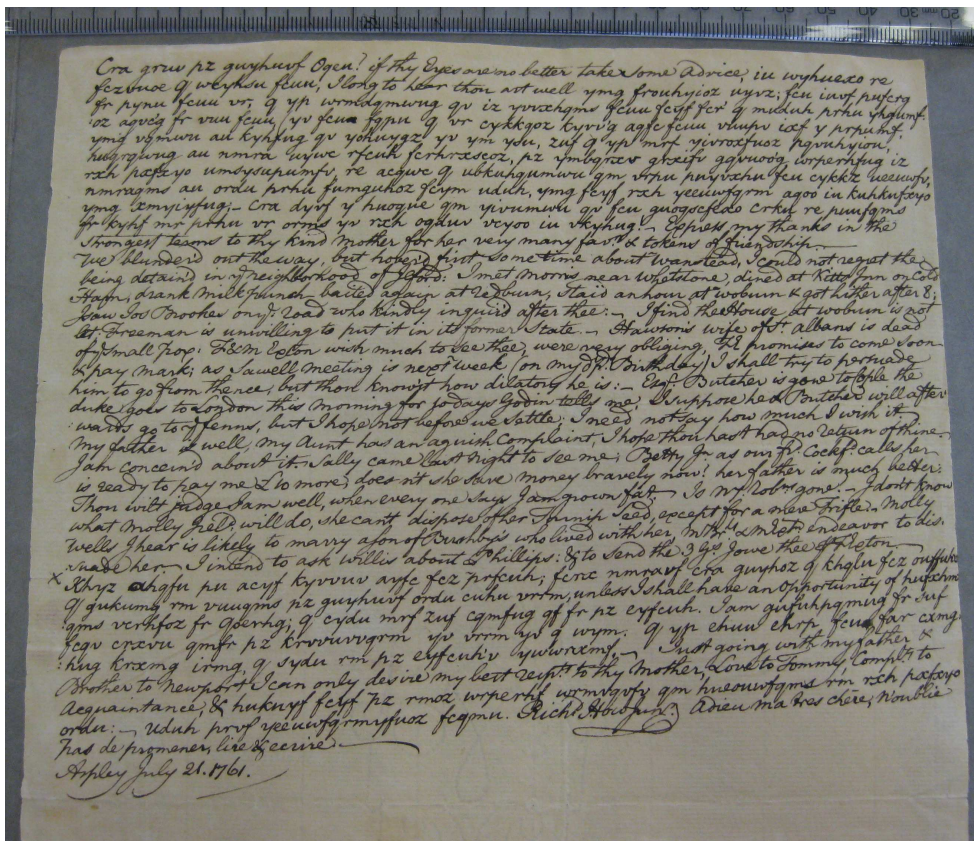
<sup>55</sup> Equivalent branches in Europe were the 'Cabinet Noir' (Black Chamber) in France and 'Geheime Kabinets-Kanzlei' (Secret Legal Office) in Vienna. See Stephen Pincock and Mary Frary, *Code Breaker: The History of Secret Communication* (London, 2007), p. 60. Also See David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York, 1967; 1996), esp. Chapter 5, pp. 157-88.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 191-2.

<sup>57</sup> Jane Austen to her niece Cassandra, January 8<sup>th</sup> 1817, MA 1034.6, The Morgan Library and Museum.

<sup>58</sup> McCormick, *Love in Code*, pp. 48-50.





**Fig. 29 – Letter from Richard How II to Silena Ramsay which begins in code and ends in French, July 21<sup>st</sup> 1761, Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service, Bedford, HW88/34.**

Richard’s code to Silena was particularly sophisticated, and appears to have been devised completely at random, with ‘a’ substituted for ‘w,’ ‘g’ substituted for ‘d,’ and ‘u’ substituted for ‘e’ (Fig. 28). The code would have taken weeks if not months for individuals encountering his letters to decipher; thankfully for modern readers it was partially translated by one of Richard’s relatives in the nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> Silena must have memorised the code, or perhaps taken the risk of recording it on a slip of paper and then hiding this within a safe place such as her writing desk. Richard first tested his code in 1761 using shorter statements such as ‘Pz guyhuvf oqeu’ to conceal the shift in his opening address from the standard Quaker greeting ‘My dearest Friend’ to the more incriminating ‘My dearest life.’<sup>60</sup> The coded portions of letters gradually increased, leading to whole paragraphs and letters in code. Surprisingly, this did not seem to present an obstacle to Richard,

<sup>59</sup> See HW88/33.

<sup>60</sup> How II to Ramsay, Aspley, October 14<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW88/44.

whose letters appear to have been written at speed in his minute joined-up hand. The code was then interspersed with French for extra security, leaving mundane statements such as ‘my father is well’ in normal text (Fig. 29).<sup>61</sup> His code allowed Richard to make bold gestures of love, exclaiming ‘rc fcyf au pyz iu qmvukyhuioz xmqfug’ (‘oh that we may be inseparably [*sic*] united’).<sup>62</sup> Without such a code, expressing such sentiments to a married woman would have been potentially scandalous, providing Robert Ramsay with clear grounds to seize Silena’s child Tommy and bring a crim. con. suit against Richard, significantly depleting his fortune.

Even once letters had been written, lovers could not send them whenever they pleased, instead instructing one another when it was safe to use the post, and when it was wiser to use intermediaries such as servants or friends. Isabella Carr and Sir James Lowther used their mutual friend Mr. Garforth to facilitate their affair. This allowed them to enquire with him whether particular missives had been delivered, and proclaim themselves ‘extremely glad’ when they found a letter had failed to arrive (rather than being ignored).<sup>63</sup> Mr. Garforth also resolved misunderstandings between the pair, enlightening Isabella when he believed James ‘did not lay much stock’ upon his proposal for her to leave the country, later becoming the victim of her demands for money when James refused to heed.<sup>64</sup> When she was away from home, Isabella ‘left my own servant at Home on purpose’ to receive James’s letters, as this was safer than forwarding his letters by post.<sup>65</sup> Couples had to be sure that they could trust particular servants, as they were frequently the source of their betrayal in crim. con. and adultery trials.<sup>66</sup> Lady Grosvenor’s affair with the Duke of Cumberland was discovered when their letters were being delivered:

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21<sup>st</sup> 1761, HW88/34.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1762, HW88/48.

<sup>63</sup> Carr to Lowther, Piccadilly, December 14<sup>th</sup> 1764, D/LONS/L1/1/67/3, CRO.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* and September 1768, D/Lons/L1/1/67/14. ‘Mr Garforth was the only person I had left to apply to and it has been in vain let me therefore beg of you to send me some money.’

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, October 25<sup>th</sup>, D/LONS/L1/1/67/3.

<sup>66</sup> Lady Grosvenor worried in Letter XII that ‘my Maid tells me there has been some of our servants telling her that is all about here that you have been here & she has realy [*sic*] told me every particular that you came down with us, and that we met here in the Fields and Lanes’, c. 1769, *The genuine copies of letters*, pp. 23-4.

His lordship meeting with one of his servants...going with a letter from his lady to put into the post, stopt him to go upon another errand, taking the letter, and saying he would put it in himself: he then had the curiosity to open it, which he found to be the first letter from Lady G – to his R. H. when, after having taken a copy of it, he put it into the post, and intercepted all the rest.<sup>67</sup>

The couples studied in this chapter showed a sharp awareness that illicit correspondences were all too easy to intercept, saturating their missives with unease and the calculated risks of illicit love.

After the stringent measures they took to conceal their relationships, adulterous lovers were understandably upset when they discovered that their letters had already been opened. As 'B.F' wrote in 1816, 'I received yours dated the 22 but I am unhappy about it for I fear it has been opened before I got it it was sealed wit two wafers of different colours and I did not get it until the 28.'<sup>68</sup> Horatio Nelson and Lady Emma Hamilton also closely monitored the sending and receipt of their love letters, noticing instantly if a seal had been opened by a third party. To catalogue their correspondence as accurately as possible, Horatio numbered both Emma's and his own letters, to alert him when one was missing. While at sea in 1801 he wrote how,

I cannot imagine, who can have stopped my Sunday's letter! That it has been, is clear: and the seal of the other has been clearly opened; but this might have happened from letters sticking together. Your's all came safe; but the numbering of them will point out, directly, if one is missing. I do not think, that any thing very particular was in that letter which is lost.<sup>69</sup>

The third section of this chapter studies linguistic features which were unique to adulterous letters. While courting couples described at length the suspense of awaiting love letters,<sup>70</sup> adulterers were more often forced to apologise when their domestic lives took precedence over their affairs. The housekeeper 'B.F' begged William Pratt to forgive her for failing to come and meet him in 1816, as her

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>68</sup> 'B.F' to Pratt, January 30<sup>th</sup> 1816, DE1184/6, LERO.

<sup>69</sup> Nelson to Hamilton, San Josef, February 16th, 1801, Letter X, No. 2, *Letters of Lord Nelson*, Vol. I, p. 15.

<sup>70</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 96-7.

husband was so suspicious that it prevented her from leaving the house. Although she struggled with limited epistolary literacy, she produced strained notes to William using phonetic spelling to explain the uncertainties she faced:

ho pratt you But lettell know me yet in the for place ded I ever refuse you anny Won thing that was in my power to grant...it is my firm Determination to see you the very furst opprtunety I can Com safe but the thing is this you know W is very un Certain and when I could com safe then I have to leat you know and then by that time I ham all unsearten agean I could hav Com This This preasent satterday but then I was not shore.<sup>71</sup>

Her letters reveal the difficulties of arranging illicit encounters, as she could never be 'shore' that they were safe. Even when she did attempt to leave the house, by the time she had informed William the situation was insecure once more. Such language was unique to adulterous letters, as couples faced the continual guilt of living with and escaping from their spouses. 'B.F.' entreated William to have more sympathy with her situation, as 'you do not conceder my hard worck and unhappy mind you might mack some betel alliances for my unhappy setteuesh.'<sup>72</sup> While women such as Lady Grosvenor may have had more personal freedom, they still found it difficult to provide the constant contact demanded by their lovers. As she noted in c. 1769, 'we had better not do any thing imprudent...for our meeting imprudently might endanger our not meeting so often at another time.'<sup>73</sup>

Adulterous lovers placed their secret in danger when they could not suitably control their emotions in public. Isabella Carr found it difficult to restrain herself when her suitor James Lowther was brought up in conversation, describing how, 'I am sometimes distressed least when I hear y<sup>r</sup> name mentioned; I should shew an Aakwardness [*sic*] for it is never mentioned but I find myself Effected, and Agitated.'<sup>74</sup> Isabella's physical awkwardness thus betrayed the secret which they had worked tirelessly to conceal. When an affair became public knowledge, mistresses

<sup>71</sup> 'B.F.' to Pratt, undated, c. 1814-16, DE1184/10, LERO.

<sup>72</sup> In order to placate William, she saved money to visit him by buying very little food for the household, describing how 'I heave not bought anny butter or shugar and very lettell meat and less aill so I will leve you to juge what I have in my powr at preasent. 'B.F.' to Pratt, May 14<sup>th</sup>, c. 1814-16, DE1184/8, LERO.

<sup>73</sup> Grosvenor to Cumberland, Letter XII, c. 1769, *The genuine copies of letters*, p. 24.

<sup>74</sup> Carr to Lowther, September 29<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/5, CRO.

had to bear the shame and public censure experienced by the Duke of Grafton's first wife Anne in 1765. Social disapproval made Isabella muse that at least if she left the country she would have 'the advantage of not being shun'd by all the conversable people, and pointed at by the vulgar.'<sup>75</sup> It had forced her to lead a 'quiet' and 'prudent' life for the past three years, which had the happy consequence of persuading 'Ladies of my former Acquaintance to visit me again they make no secret of their coming, which may induce a few more to follow their example.' Isabella was also estranged from her family, but hoped to eventually be reintroduced to them over time.<sup>76</sup> Anna Maria Bennett had to worry about more obvious signs of adultery when she became pregnant with Admiral Pye's child in 1781. She found that 'Every body observes how Lusty I Grow in the waist and how thin in the face...I feel so awkward and ashamed of Every ones observation.'<sup>77</sup>

The scandal was particularly acute for Quakers such as Richard How II and Silena Ramsay, who lived in the intimate Quaker community of Aspley Guise in Bedfordshire. Richard's father Richard How I was a leading figure in the village, working as an intermediary for the Eccleston family when their fifteen-year-old daughter ran away to marry a coachman in 1717.<sup>78</sup> It was thus particularly scurrilous to find his own son embroiled in scandal. Richard dutifully reported the details of local gossip to Silena, writing in 1761 that 'I find R Saw<sup>ll</sup> was y first who comunicated [*sic*] y Scand<sup>l</sup> to WD...I lament only they can find no bett<sup>r</sup> Topics, & pity the want of Taste.'<sup>79</sup> The social stigma forced to Silena to write to Richard's father Richard How I on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1762 to beg his forgiveness for the shame she had brought upon their family. In a neat and carefully constructed letter of apology to her 'Respected Friend,' Silena admitted that 'many things have concur'd to inspire thee an unfavourable opinion of me, Appearances have been Against me, I know it', but hoped that his sentiments would change after marriage, given her good conduct.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14<sup>th</sup> 1764, D/LONS/L1/1/67/11.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Anna Maria Bennett to Admiral Thomas Pye, summer 1781, 36/67, Westminster City Archives (subsequently WCA).

<sup>78</sup> Letters concerning Eccleston elopement, HW86/1-120, BLARS. Isabella's father was so incensed that he contemplated putting the groom in the pillory and bribing someone to pelt him to death.

<sup>79</sup> How II to Ramsay, Aspley, January 8<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW88/7.

<sup>80</sup> Ramsay to How I, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1762, HW/88/53.

Men's adulterous letters are marked by their jealousy, as married men worried that their mistresses would desert them and leave them saddled with their wives, while unmarried men were concerned that a woman's husband would take precedence over them. While jealousy constituted a guiding theme of men's letters, it was notably absent from women's replies. *A Dictionary of Love* defined 'Jealousy' as an emotion felt by a man towards his mistress: 'Where the *fear* of losing one's mistress is the principal constituent of it, and that fear arises from a modest diffidence of one's merit, it is the delicatest, and not the commonest, proof of love.'<sup>81</sup> Using jealous language therefore allowed men to prove their affection, also providing a means of power. Jealousy has been the subject of sustained attention from historians of emotion such as Peter Stearns, who has argued that 'jealousy was assumed to be a particularly masculine emotion in support of proper patriarchal governance.' Jealousy did not necessarily detract from a man's love, and could be interpreted as a sign that he cared.<sup>82</sup>

For the Quaker gentleman Richard How II, jealous behaviour provided a way to keep his lover away from other men whom he considered a threat. He was consumed by fear that Robert Ramsay might revoke his deed of separation from Silena, and urged her to end all contact with him until he sailed for Africa in March 1761. In January he offered to remain with Silena and her mother until Robert had left, under the guise of 'protecting' them. His letters described how 'if thy Mother & self think my coming to Ilford & staying till RR's departure may be of any use I shall immediately comply; the plea would be most welcome, to satisfy others.'<sup>83</sup> He even prevented Robert from staying the night at Silena's mother's house when visiting their son Tommy. After Robert sailed to Gambia Richard still did not consider himself safe, reminding Silena that 'should R.R. return I depend on thy acting with spirit, and depend on my seconding thee to the utmost of my power.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Dictionary of Love*, p. 80.

<sup>82</sup> Courtly love poetry such as Andreas Cappellanus' *The Art of Courtly Love* even presented jealousy as a way to increase love. See P. Stearns, *Jealousy: The Evolution of an Emotion in American History* (London, 1989), pp. 14-18, at pp. 14-15. Also Ben-Ze'ev, 'Jealousy and Romantic Love' in Sybil L. Hart and Maria Legerstee (eds.) *Handbook of Jealousy: Theory, Research, and Multidisciplinary Approaches* (Chichester, 2010), pp. 40-54, and bibliography on love and jealousy at p. 54.

<sup>83</sup> How II to Ramsay, January 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW88/11, BLARS.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* For a further example see letters from Nelson to Hamilton, where he agonized over the Prince of Wales' pursuit of her, ranting 'Do NOT let the lyar [*sic*] come...Do not, I beseech you, risk being

Incredibly, Richard even went as far as warning Silena off other men who he considered a threat, such as ‘B-n’, whose ‘former Endeavors to cultivate an Intimacy were sufficiently apparent.’ According to Richard, ‘B-n’ had ‘triumphed (in his own Mind) at having gain’d his point in persuading thee to go with ~~to see him, not being used I suppose to have many female visitors.~~’<sup>85</sup> His anguish is apparent in the numerous crossed out phrases, as he struggled to contain his jealousy and express his thoughts in an appropriate manner. A small ‘x’ led Silena to an additional warning written vertically down the left side of the page, cautioning her, ‘Is it not advisable to treat a Man of a forward disposition, whose Character & Intentions are at best suspicious, with a determined, constant, distant, reserve & carefully to guard against his assuming disagreeable Freedoms, to prevent his becoming too familiar.’<sup>86</sup> He was still consumed by B-n’s liberties in a letter written in French eleven days later.<sup>87</sup> Richard was clearly aware that after separating the pious and highly desirable Silena from her husband, he would have to compete with other men to gain her hand.<sup>88</sup> Such strident and uncompromising instructions would have constituted an outrageous insult in courtship letters, where writers strove to present themselves at their best, deliberately avoiding jealous or intimidating language. Men’s jealousy demonstrates how adulterous letters were guided by their own idiosyncratic conventions, as more was at stake for the individuals involved.

In response to these worries, married individuals such as ‘B.F’ placated their lovers by continually stressing how they no longer loved their spouses, promising, ‘never shall W be anny thing mor [*sic*] to me.’<sup>89</sup> She was especially careful to emphasise how they were no longer physically intimate, and that she tried to keep his ‘hands of My self.’<sup>90</sup> Most importantly, ‘W and me as not het [*sic*] nor slept to geather sens [*sic*] he came home nor Do I intent [*sic*] it.’<sup>91</sup> She provided regular accounts of her husband’s aggression, describing how he ‘as returnd And feall out

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at home. Does Sir William want you to be a whore to the rascal?’, February 19<sup>th</sup> 1801 in Morrison, *The Hamilton & Nelson Papers*, Vol. II, L521, p. 118.

<sup>85</sup> How II to Ramsay, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW/88/19.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW88/20.

<sup>88</sup> John King was similarly fearful during his affair with Mary Robinson in 1773, asking her, ‘If some other happy Youth has attracted your wandering Eye, tell me my Doom’, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1773, Answer to Letter VI, *Letters from Perdita*, p. 38.

<sup>89</sup> ‘B.F’ to Pratt, Monday 15<sup>th</sup>, c. 1814-16, DE1184/7, LERO.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, undated, c. 1814-16, DE1184/4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, DE1184/3.

with me most shamefull.<sup>92</sup> This reassured William Pratt that her marriage was far from harmonious. Mary Robinson also legitimised her affair with John King using her husband Thomas Robinson's unreasonable behaviour, exclaiming 'How can I love that stupid Thing R-!'<sup>93</sup> She justified the affair by arguing that she was tricked into marrying Thomas – 'I cannot think I am bound to abide strictly by an Engagement that I was trepanned into, for you know he *deceived* me.'<sup>94</sup>

Men's jealousy was especially aroused by the thought of continued sexual relations between women and their husbands. It was encouraged by their own thwarted sexual passions during periods of separation, which were discussed at length in their letters. John King produced extraordinary accounts of his sexual desire for Mary Robinson. In his third letter he 'pants' to be in Bristol with her, while his fourth becomes more intense, fantasising about,

such delicate wellformed limbs, such panting snowy Breasts, such – Oh!  
what *Raptures* ineffable seize my *delighted Imagination*, when I *recollect* the  
*delirious Transports* that throbbd to my very Soul, when that beauteous  
Form stood confessed in all the resistless Power of – *Nakedness*.<sup>95</sup>

These thoughts only grew in intensity throughout their correspondence, as by his fifth letter all of his happiness was '*entwined* in those snowy Arms, reposed on thy *panting Bosom*', and he longed for the moment when her '*magick Touch* will again throw me into a *Delirium of Ecstasy*'.<sup>96</sup> By his penultimate letter, John compared his feelings to a burning fire, while hers were like ice in return – 'You know I am all on *fire*, and your *luke-warm* Strain is colder to me than *Lapland Blasts*'.<sup>97</sup> Such rampant sexuality was also present in the Duke of Cumberland's letters to Lady Grosvenor,

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, DE1184/4.

<sup>93</sup> Robinson to King, Bristol, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1773, Letter IV, *Letters from Perdita*, p. 26.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* Admiral Nelson also complained about his wife in his letters to Lady Hamilton, terming her 'that person at Brighton.' When Fanny requested to nurse him out of sickness he reassured Emma that he had sent 'such an answer that will convince her she would not be received', February 18<sup>th</sup> 1801, Egerton 1614/23, BL.

<sup>95</sup> Robinson to King, Bristol, October 1773, Answers to III and IV, *Letters from Perdita*, pp. 25, 28-9.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1773, Answer to V, pp. 33-4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1773, Answer to VI, p. 38. The paradox between hot and cold was widespread in love letters. As Linda Phyllis Austern has argued, love was 'continually likened to fire, to poison, to agents that pierce, sting, burn, prick or discharge venom. The flames of love blazed like those of war.' See *idem*, 'Musical Treatments for Lovesickness: the Early Modern Heritage' in Peregrine Horden (ed.) *Music as Medicine: the History of Music Therapy since Antiquity* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 213-45, at p. 216.



which were damned as ‘illiterate and vulgar’ in court.<sup>98</sup> In one example he fantasised about how he ‘had you on the dear little *couch* ten thousand times in my arms kissing you and telling you how much I loved and adored you.’<sup>99</sup> These sexualised descriptions were solely the preserve of frustrated men, demonstrating how the epistolary conventions of adultery were strongly drawn along gendered lines. They reflect the ‘ruthless, misogynist celebration of gentlemanly sexual conquest’ which had become firmly established by mid-century, presenting men – especially gentlemen – as cold-blooded seducers.<sup>100</sup> Such language was solely used during adulterous affairs, where the prudent declarations of courtship could legitimately be abandoned to describe the boundless limits of men’s libido.

In contrast, women’s epistles deliberately preoccupied themselves with the good health of their lovers. Isabella Carr continually reminded Sir James Lowther to take care of himself, praying ‘for its being fine Weather for you next week to make y<sup>r</sup> Fatigue less to you, bliss you take Care of y<sup>r</sup> self, how dose [*sic*] y<sup>r</sup> leg do: dont fail to tell me when you write that y<sup>r</sup> well.’<sup>101</sup> Isabella also rejoiced in minor occurrences such as when Sir James had been bled for his health.<sup>102</sup> Anna Maria Bennett was similarly preoccupied with the health of Admiral Pye, even expressing sympathy for minor complaints. As she wrote in 1781, ‘am very Sorry to hear your headach [*sic*] is so Bad.’<sup>103</sup> In a similar tone, Lady Grosvenor repeatedly wished that the Duke of Cumberland would take ‘more care of your health.’<sup>104</sup> This epistolary trope provided a way for mistresses to communicate their affection by behaving as a wife would towards her husband.<sup>105</sup> While avoiding the topic of a married man’s family life or children, it allowed women access into their everyday lives,

<sup>98</sup> A Civilian, *Free Thoughts on Seduction, Adultery and Divorce* (London, 1771), p. 183. They were also demeaned as ‘simple and void of meaning’, *The genuine copies of letters*, p. 52.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter III, c. 1769, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex*, pp. 169-79, at p. 169.

<sup>101</sup> Carr to Lowther, September 29<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/5, CRO.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, Monday 10<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/4.

<sup>103</sup> Bennett to Pye, February 1781, 36/66, WCA.

<sup>104</sup> Grosvenor to Cumberland, Letter XIV, Tuesday Evening 5<sup>th</sup>, c. 1769, *The genuine copies of letters*, p. 34. Nelson also described his health in terms that suggest he was replying to enquiries by Emma Hamilton; ‘My health is *so, so!*’, April 10<sup>th</sup> 1804, Letter XLIII, *Letters of Lord Nelson*, Vol. II, p. 28.

<sup>105</sup> For similar expressions in the letters of husbands and wives, see the letters of James and Elizabeth Nicholson after their marriage in 1738, 920 NIC/6/1/1-12 and 920 NIC/5/6/1-65, LIRO and Elizabeth and Edward Leathes after their marriage in 1774, BOL 2/135-6, 740 x 4, NRO. As Elizabeth Nicholson wrote to her husband in 1742, ‘I hope you will remember [*illeg*] to take care of your Self [*sic*] and write very often...and whether you are well wich [*sic*] will make me esey, ~~to hear it~~’, November 29<sup>th</sup> 1742, 920 NIC/5/6/2, LIRO.

simultaneously expressing their care and affection. The demonstration of anguish allowed adulterous women to maintain the modest and discrete style used by courting women in Chapter Three of this thesis, providing an appropriate means of expressing a woman's love.<sup>106</sup>

Letters written by long-term mistresses were governed by more practical concerns. Whilst wives managed the household budget, mistresses such as Anna Maria Bennett, Isabella Carr, Mary Robinson and Lady Emma Hamilton relied on their lovers to keep them in the lifestyle they had become accustomed to.<sup>107</sup> Both Isabella Carr and Anna Maria Bennett gave full accounts of their expenses to their lovers, asking them to pay their debts, the wages of their servants, and buy new furnishings for their home. While Isabella's lover Sir James Lowther was one of the wealthiest men in the country, her letters develop over time into rambling accounts of her financial misfortunes. As she wrote on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1762:

Williamson and Miss Borrow have both been in danger of being arrested, which has forced me to part with my ready money, and between the rest of the Bills I owe of a long standing, the misreckoning I mention'd to you before, and going into a new House, where some things must be purchased, and pay'd for directly, I never was under greater difficulty for money...I ought to beg pardon for entering into all these trifling particulars, but do it by way of excuse for being so troublesome.<sup>108</sup>

Isabella's spending began to grate on James, and by the early 1760s he (ironically) accused her of extravagance, forcing her to sell her house and discharge her servants to pay her own debts. These amounted to over £31 on rent and £37 on servants, which she paid using £69 from selling her furniture.<sup>109</sup> Isabella's situation was no better in 1764, as despite receiving £550 in instalments from James, her debts

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<sup>106</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 111-5. For further examples of courting women enquiring after their suitors' health, see letters from Elizabeth Jeffreys to Charles Pratt, U840/C9/12, 15, 20, CKS.

<sup>107</sup> On household spending see Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, esp. Chapter 4, pp. 127-60 and Beverly Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life: Gender, Practice and Social Politics in England, c. 1600-1900* (Manchester, 2005), esp. Chapter 7, pp. 187-226.

<sup>108</sup> Carr to Lowther, Piccadilly, October 9<sup>th</sup> 1762, D/LONS/L1/1/67/8, CRO.

<sup>109</sup> Isabella herself reflected that 'I certainly have spent money I might have saved...as I never doubted the security of my Income', *Ibid.*, December 14<sup>th</sup> 1764, D/LONS/L1/1/67/11.

amounted to nearly £800.<sup>110</sup> The relationship appears to have ended due to her continuing financial demands, with her final letter accusing him of enjoying ‘the pleasure of tormenting me’, containing the desperate plea that ‘it is Distress only that forces me to speak and to plague you for the last time.’<sup>111</sup> These letters confirm the widespread view of Lowther as a miserly and selfish man – known as ‘Wicked Jimmy’ – as he declined to help Isabella despite his vast fortune. Towards the end of their affair, he allowed Isabella to sell her house and all of her possessions, despite being able to easily pay her debts using the annual income from his estates in Westmorland and Middlesex alone.<sup>112</sup>

Conversely, Anna Maria Bennett appears to have had more influence over Admiral Thomas Pye as she had given birth to at least two of his illegitimate children. This meant that her financial demands were more graciously received, and that he visited more often to see the infants. Rather than rounding her expenses up to the nearest fifty or one hundred pounds like Isabella Carr, Anna asked the Admiral to refund the exact pounds, shillings and pence that she had spent. In February 1781, she sent him a bill for £21. 5s. 8d on damask, £5.18s on a tailor and £3.5s to pay the maid.<sup>113</sup> Later in 1783, she sent him a four-page breakdown of her expenses based on her memorandums and receipts, excluding only the ‘Little things’ which had ‘slipt my memory.’ These included the cost of a maid in her Suffolk Street house, the cost of her present coachman, a white table, a dressing glass, a bottle stand and a side board.<sup>114</sup> While household items only began to preoccupy courting couples before their pending marriage,<sup>115</sup> the assembly and cost of particular objects provided a dominant trope of adulterous letters. Indeed, Anna Maria’s letters were almost entirely taken up with the cost of damask, linen, carpets, curtains, kitchen accessories

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27<sup>th</sup> 1768, D/LONS/L1/1/67/12.

<sup>112</sup> These had an annual rental value of £1,200 in 1755. See *ODNB*.

<sup>113</sup> Bennett to Pye, February 1781, 36/66, WCA.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, early 1783, 36/70. Lady Emma Hamilton also received regular instalments of money from Horatio Nelson. He described sending her £100 per month plus money to pay the bills for alterations at Merton, Letter L, July 1<sup>st</sup> 1804, and £200 ‘for your own pocket money’, October 13<sup>th</sup> 1804, Letter LVI, *Letters of Lord Nelson*, Vol. II, pp. 60, 81.

<sup>115</sup> See Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, Chapter 3, pp. 83-105. For further examples see letters between Pratt and Jeffreys concerning linen, needlework, furniture and painting in 1749, U840/C9/26, 32-3, CKS, and between Jos. Strutt and Douglas concerning paintings, table cloths, napkins and towels in 1792, MS3101/C/E/4/8/33-4, BCA.

and the ‘Constant Expence of that house.’<sup>116</sup> The content of her letters was directly shaped by the realities of adultery, as they read as invoices as much as love letters.

While Anna Maria seemed to request new goods as she pleased, others such as Isabella Carr and Mary Robinson had to be more tentative as their demands could easily exacerbate underlying tensions. John King was so incensed by Mary Robinson’s continual demands for money that he wrote her one final letter about her ingratitude and selfishness to end their affair for good on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1773. His cruel final words lectured her that ‘Ingratitude is the blackest Crime that the human Heart can be guilty of; it destroys Trusts and hinders Acts of Benevolence: If my *Liberality* could not engage your Affections, it was entitled to *Acknowledgement*.’<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, given that John published Mary’s epistles himself, we should bear in mind that he may have added such phrases to improve his reputation (not to mention his business as a money lender) by emphasising his generous nature.

These letters do not just evince love and financial dependence, but are suffused with the risk of discovery. They often provide glimpses of absent spouses who were either at home or soon expected to return. As Lady Grosvenor hastily concluded her letter to the Duke of Cumberland in 1769, ‘I’m very sure you’ll [*sic*] write as soon as you can, I know your tenderness for me well enough to be certain of that – he is coming up stairs I find so I shall conclude till to-morrow, God bless you my Dear Dear Friend.’<sup>118</sup> She even risked writing while her husband was in the house, noting that ‘I’ve but a few minutes to write in as my Lord is at home...I’m all in a twitter dreading every moment he may come in’, but still managing to produce a letter of considerable length.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Isabella Carr was frequently forced to abandon her letters mid-sentence, writing, ‘I am Interrupted bliss [*sic*] you – ’ and then resuming the epistle once her company had left.<sup>120</sup> The fear of discovery played an important role in the hasty and halting production of illicit letters, a factor which was notably absent in the creation of courtship letters as a whole. As Isabella herself

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<sup>116</sup> Bennett to Pye, Wenesday [*sic*], c. February 1781, 36/66, WCA.

<sup>117</sup> King to Robinson, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1773, Answer to VII, *Letters from Perdita*, p. 43.

<sup>118</sup> Grosvenor to Cumberland, Letter IV, Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>, c. 1769, *The genuine copies of letters*, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, Eaton, Letter X, p. 21.

<sup>120</sup> Carr to Lowther, October 5<sup>th</sup>, Monday 10<sup>th</sup> and September 29<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/2, 4-5, CRO.

noted, 'y<sup>e</sup> fear of being Interrupted as [*sic*] made me write as fast as my fingers would move.'<sup>121</sup>

Women such as Mary Mainwaring not only scribbled hurried letters in the presence of friends, but also dared to exchange them while they were present. Mary's friend Amelia Sparre deposed that while they were together in her dressing room, 'she saw Mary write something upon a piece of Paper with a Pencil and after she had done so she tore it away from the other part of the paper and lapping [*sic*] it slightly up putt it into her pocket.' Later while they were walking around the village, she observed Mary 'take a paper out of her pocket and holding it...in her hand she saw the said John Read take it privately from her and putt it into his pocket.'<sup>122</sup> Unfortunately Mary had failed to consider that John was illiterate, so would inevitably have to show her letter to someone to find out what it said. When Amelia confronted him a few days later he 'took a paper out of his Breeches Pocket and gave it to this Deponent telling her "He could not make it out"... and being well acquainted with her Character and manner of Writing she knows the same were of her proper hand.'<sup>123</sup> Amelia's deposition demonstrates how the privacy of illicit correspondences varied significantly according to the epistolary capabilities and resources of those involved.

In the process of scribbling hurried letters to one another, many adulterers dispensed with opening and closing addresses to go straight into discussing their most urgent concerns. The illicit nature of adulterous correspondence thus directly shaped the content and style of letters produced. One pertinent example is the deterioration of Isabella Carr's affair with Sir James Lowther. In 1762, she desperately pressed her affluent lover for money, reassuring him that 'When I wrote to you last I was in hopes I should not be obliged to trouble you again so soon,' requesting that he pay off her bills.<sup>124</sup> In her next surviving letter a year later she was again forced to ask for financial help, opening the epistle by warning him that 'I am under more difficulty than usual in writing to you as I find myself obliged to speak

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, D/LONS/L1/1/67/5.

<sup>122</sup> *Mainwaring, Esq. vs. Mainwaring*, deposition of Amelia Frederica Wilhemina Melesina Sparre of Twemlow, TRANS.CP.1766/2, pp. 256-8, BI.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

<sup>124</sup> Carr to Lowther, October 9<sup>th</sup> 1762, D/LONS/L1/1/67/8, CRO.

very plainly upon the subject of my present situation.’<sup>125</sup> Isabella’s anguished tone provides a clear contrast to happier letters in 1759 where she took the time to address him as ‘My ever Dear Sir James.’<sup>126</sup> Other writers such as ‘B.F’ routinely dispensed with dates and salutary addresses, as if in continuous dialogue with the recipient.<sup>127</sup> Throughout her letters she exclaimed ‘o pratt’, ‘ho pratt’ and ‘no pratt’, which somewhat negated their decision to continually change their names during their correspondence.<sup>128</sup> The style of ‘B.F’’s letters may have been shaped by the lack of a formal education, knowledge of letter-writing conventions, or the continual risk of her husband returning home.

The final section of this chapter focuses on the material dimensions of adulterous affairs. As Sarah Lloyd has argued, during infamous crim. con. trials minor points of an affair came to represent the adultery as a whole and ‘stand in for the trial and events at large,’ such as a lock of Lady Grosvenor’s hair, the Duke of Cumberland’s black bob wig, and her badly spelt letters.<sup>129</sup> In the illicit relationships studied in this chapter, women such as Mary Mainwaring and Fanny Wilmot used objects such as bells and whistles to physically summon their suitors to come and meet them. During the trial of Mary Mainwaring, the prosecution argued that Mary,

did at such times keep and use a whistle under pretence of calling her ffowl [*sic*] and Poultry to be fed with which she whistled so loud that the said John Read might and did hear her and that such Whistling was a token or signal that she the said Mary Elizabeth Manwaring wanted the said John Read to come to her.<sup>130</sup>

By using a whistle to call John, material objects both facilitated and encouraged their adultery. A similar pattern is found in the affair between Fanny Wilmot and her footman in 1791, as she rang a bell in the drawing room to summon him for amorous encounters. Her husband’s butler William Garthwaite deposed that,

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1763, D/LONS/L1/1/67/9.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, September 6<sup>th</sup> 1759, D/LONS/L1/1/67/7.

<sup>127</sup> B.F.’s reliance on verbal discourse and phonetic spelling had a long historical precedent; see Alison Truelove, ‘Commanding Communications: the Fifteenth-Century Letters of the Stonor Women’ in Daybell, *Early Modern Women’s Letter Writing*, pp. 42-55. Also Goodman, *Becoming a Woman*, pp. 116-32, and Cressy, ‘Literacy in Context’, pp. 313-4.

<sup>128</sup> ‘B.F’ to Pratt, undated, c. 1814-16, DE1184/10, LERO.

<sup>129</sup> Lloyd, ‘Amour in the Shrubbery’, pp. 422-3.

<sup>130</sup> *Mainwaring, Esq. vs. Mainwaring*, TRANS.CP.1766/2, pp. 146-7, BI.

Fanny Wilmot, soon after she retired from the dining-parlour, used to ring her drawing-room bell, which was in general answered by the footman...this deponent has then observed her to make private signals to the said Edward Washbourn...and on receiving such private intimations, the said Edward Washbourn used to leave the kitchen, or servants' hall, and go up stairs into the back drawing-room, and remain there alone with the said Fanny Wilmot, from twenty to forty minutes.<sup>131</sup>

Adulterers like Fanny and Mary relied upon objects such as whistles and bells to seize the opportunity for amorous encounters whenever they were alone. In this way, the physical properties of piercing or shrill objects literally brought a couple together, facilitating an affair but also potentially attracting the attention of others.

Gifts exchanged by lovers provided a distant means of contact when they were not able to physically be together. In her fourth surviving letter to Sir James Lowther, Isabella Carr described how 'I have gathered two or three of my Favourite [*sic*] Flowers Violets which I send you – you see I am as willing as possible, to shew that We Can produce something, tho it falls far short of Lowther.'<sup>132</sup> By falling 'short of Lowther' she may have been referring to the domestic life which they were barred from creating together at Lowther Castle. While her flowers provided a way to demonstrate her affection, they also gave the impression of a typical romantic relationship, as if the couple were simply courting. In Isabella's own words, the flowers allowed the couple to 'produce *something*.' They therefore gave the relationship an appearance of normality within an affair that in reality was far from normal. They also left part of her identity in James's matrimonial home, with her letters noting, 'what would I give to be in the place of these Flowers.'<sup>133</sup>

When a husband suspected his wife of infidelity, such tokens were the first thing he looked for to prove an affair. The poem 'The Adulteress' (1773) advised suspicious readers that they should first search a wife's pocket book:

<sup>131</sup> *Trial of Fanny Wilmot*, deposition of William Garthwaite, p. 10.

<sup>132</sup> Lord Edward Bentinck's daughter Charlotte also sent her suitor Robert Garrett some violets in 1811, as they symbolised virtue and faithfulness. See Chapter 2, p. 53.

<sup>133</sup> Carr to Lowther, Monday 10<sup>th</sup>, c. 1759-69, D/LONS/L1/1/67/4, CRO.

Which if the Husband dare but rummage o'er,  
 He'll find a thousand proofs – that she's a Wore:  
 He'll find it stuff'd with Verses, Letters, Hair,  
 And daily Assignations here and there:  
 For Women are such wond'rous Fools in Love,  
 They memorandum all the Joys they prove.<sup>134</sup>

Similar actions were made by Fanny Wilmot's husband John on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1791, ordering her lover Edward Washbourn's trunks to be searched by an officer of the peace. He was right to be wary, discovering a cornucopia of gifts including,

a sum of money in new guineas, and a large assortment of new apparel, and also divers prints and drawings... a gold shirt-pin set with hair, a fancy gold ring, a box with shells, a nutmeg-grater, a pocket-book, an inkstand, two riding whips, a straw box, a bottle of scented water, and various other articles.

Fanny admitted that she had given these items to Edward, while they both confessed to writing love letters which were later destroyed.<sup>135</sup> The sheer volume of gifts given by Fanny supports the argument in Chapter Two of this thesis that women had an important role to play in the process of exchange.<sup>136</sup> The objects reveal striking similarities between the gifts exchanged by courting and adulterous couples, even though Fanny and Edward were not planning for their eventual marriage. One notable difference is that while courting couples exchanged regular letters requesting, praising and enquiring after particular tokens, gifts were rarely, if ever, discussed by adulterers. This may have been due to the lingering danger of discovery, which meant that tokens were exchanged quickly and secretly, without the risk of recording their desires in writing.

Concealing an illicit affair was also aided by the secretive properties of particular rooms and pieces of furniture within the home.<sup>137</sup> The mystery of the

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<sup>134</sup> *The Adulteress*, p. 14.

<sup>135</sup> *The Trial of Fanny Wilmot*, p. 53.

<sup>136</sup> Chapter 2, pp. 69-73.

<sup>137</sup> Vickery has argued that secure storage was 'a necessity for any respectable individual who had no room of their own,' such as the portable locking boxes or trunks used by single, mobile workers such



writing desk was propounded in novels such as *Les Liaison Dangereuses*, where characters carefully kept illicit letters under lock and key. In Letter 40, the Vicomte de Valmont notices that Madame Tourvel has left the key in her writing desk, and seizes the opportunity to search it by feigning a nosebleed. His letter describes how ‘I rushed upstairs to her desk, but I found all the drawers unlocked and not the slightest sign of a letter. And yet at this time of the year we have no fires in which to burn them. Whatever does she do with the letters she receives?’<sup>138</sup> The extract reveals why nervous adulterers hurriedly burnt their letters, while demonstrating the importance of secret drawers or compartments which could not be easily accessed by lovers or spouses. This scene was not far removed from reality, as men such as the yeoman John Road also used writing desks to store gifts for their sweethearts. In John’s case, he had purchased a pound of tea to give to his genteel lover Mary Mainwaring. During her divorce trial, a witness deposed to having seen John ‘open a Writing Desk in his Parlour in which the said Tea was and to take it out, and to run with it out of the Doors in a hurry.’<sup>139</sup> Even though John was described as illiterate in court records so presumably did not use his desk for writing, it nonetheless provided the perfect place to conceal amorous gifts.

The elaborate pine and oak cabinet in Figure 30 contains a secret compartment (displayed on the far right) which can only be revealed when the bottom drawer of the central row is removed. The dustboard then slides out to reveal a hidden compartment itself containing four additional drawers. Such drawers would have been eminently suitable for storing love letters or smaller tokens such as jewellery. Publications such as Thomas Sheraton’s *Cabinet Dictionary* (1803) anticipated the use of ladies’ writing desks to store private objects, allowing them ‘to preserve their trinkets and other curious matters.’<sup>140</sup> Due to its fine craftsmanship, this kind of cabinet would have been the preserve of wealthier individuals such as Richard How II or the extravagant gentlewoman Isabella Carr studied in this

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as servants. See *idem*, *Behind Closed Doors*, Chapter 1, pp. 25-48, at p. 39. Also Tim Meldrum, ‘Domestic Service, Privacy and the Eighteenth Century Metropolitan Household’, *Urban History*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1999), pp. 27-39.

<sup>138</sup> *Dangerous Liaisons*, L40, Vicomte de Valmont to Marquise de Merteuil, p. 91.

<sup>139</sup> *Mainwaring, Esq. vs. Mainwaring*, deposition of Sarah Williamson, TRANS.CP.1766/2, p. 239, BI.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Sheraton, *Cabinet Dictionary* (London, 1803), p. 115.

chapter.<sup>141</sup> Other more simple and less costly items such as writing desks were also built with false bottoms, or concealed secret compartments controlled by pin mechanisms beneath the lid of the desk.<sup>142</sup> The mechanism meant that the opening could not be seen from outside, or discovered unless the assailant had some prior knowledge of it and dedicated a good deal of time attempting to find it. The delay would subsequently have made the interloper vulnerable to being caught invading a lady's private space.<sup>143</sup>



**Fig. 30 – Cabinet with secret drawer, possibly made by John Byfield, Yorkshire, c. 1700, marquetry of walnut, burr walnut, sycamore and ivory, on a pine and oak carcass, with brass fittings, 240cm (H) x 136cm (W) x 66cm (D), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, W.136:1 to 46-1928.**

While a spouse would frequently have remained unaware of these secret compartments, adulterers often revealed to one another where their letters were stored. This allowed them to interrogate one another as to the whereabouts and relative safety of their missives. As Richard How II questioned the merchant's wife Silena Ramsay in code in 1761, 'grvf ududh ouydu fcu nuzv qm fcz guvn acuhu fcz

<sup>141</sup> The cabinet was inherited by Mrs. Catherine Bower and subsequently given to her son Henry in her will in 1742. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8252/cabinet/>

<sup>142</sup> For secrecy and particular items of furniture see Goodman, 'The *Secrétaire* and the Integration of the Eighteenth-Century Self' and Carolyn Sargentson, 'Looking at Furniture Inside Out: Strategies for Concealment and Secrecy in Eighteenth-Century French Furniture' in Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (eds.), *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century* (Oxon, 2007), pp. 183-204 and 205-36.

<sup>143</sup> An equivalent example is the oak, pine and walnut bureau and cabinet owned by Samuel Bennett, constructed in London c. 1725-30. By releasing an internal spring, the middle section of the desk can be removed, revealing six drawers hidden behind the columns flanking the central door, W.66:1-1924, Victoria and Albert Museum (subsequently V&A).

ouffuhv yhu?’ (‘Dost ever leave the keys in thy desk where thy letters are?’)<sup>144</sup> His coded enquiry shows that Richard both knew where his letters were stored, and how to access them if necessary. The desk was always mentioned alongside the key, as this had the potential to either protect or betray a couple’s secrets. It allowed individuals to preserve their letters both during and after a relationship, an option which was certainly used by many lovers whose letters have survived until the present day. The writing desk containing the illicit letters of Richard and Silena may have been the only object standing between the couple, Silena’s husband, and potentially ruinous crim. con. damages.

To conclude, this chapter has demonstrated that illicit letters were indispensable in both conducting and proving adultery. Detailed study of nine extra-marital relationships has revealed an emotionally charged ‘language of forbidden love’ which relied upon covert measures such as lemon juice ink, pseudonyms, foreign languages and secret codes. Adulterous letters are also distinguished by a number of key concerns which are notably absent in letters exchanged during courtship. These include continual apologies for being unable to meet, and the lingering presence of husbands and wives. The circumstances of adultery determined both the language chosen by writers, and the production of the letter itself, as missives were rapidly scribbled, curtailed or abandoned as spouses returned home. The exchange of letters was also fraught with danger, as couples advised one another whether it was safer to rely on intermediaries or the postal system, taking additional precautions such as using letter covers from different locations.

The content of adulterous letters was strongly guided by a writer’s gender. The letters of long-term mistresses were dominated by financial concerns, as they entreated their lovers to continue paying for their expensive lifestyles. Such demands were entirely absent from courtship letters, where women largely remained under the protection of their fathers. Men’s letters were dominated by jealous language, especially over continued sexual relations between husband and wife. They are also defined by their unbounded passion and sexual desire, which constitutes a key feature distinguishing men’s adulterous letters from other forms of correspondence. In comparison, women’s prudent letters were more concerned with the physical

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<sup>144</sup> How II to Ramsay, Aspley, October 6<sup>th</sup> 1761, HW88/42, BLARS.

health of their lovers, akin to letters written by wives. These features transcended social boundaries, with the letters of the housekeeper 'B.F' and her social superior Lady Grosvenor united by a number of features necessitated by the circumstances of adultery.

As a whole, these letters provide historians with a way to access both the small-scale dramas of particular couples such as Richard How II and Silena Ramsay, and broader social issues such as marital disharmony and the reality of conducting an extra-marital affair. The relationships studied have revealed the importance of objects such as whistles and bells in physically bringing a couple together, while also providing the illusion of courtship and allowing a couple to 'produce *something*' from a troubled relationship. The secrecy of an alliance was also aided by objects such as writing desks and locked cabinets containing secret drawers and compartments. The analysis now turns to focus upon the shared language of romantic love more closely, investigating the religious, medical and literary tropes which shaped how lovers formulated their emotions.

## Chapter Five

### ‘Sensibility must be Love’s best advocate:’<sup>1</sup> Shaping the Language of Romantic

#### Love

*LOVE*. *n. s.* [from the verb.]<sup>2</sup>

1. The passion between the sexes. ‘Hearken to the birds *love*-learned song, / The dewie leaves among!’ *Spenser*.
2. Kindness; good-will; friendship. ‘Death grin on me, and I will think thou smil’st, / And kiss me as thy wife; misery’s *love*.’ *Shakespeare*.
3. Courtship. ‘Demetrius Made *love* to Nedar’s daughter Helena, / And won her soul.’ *Shakespeare*.
4. Tenderness; parental care. ‘No religion that ever was, so fully represents the goodness of God, and his tender *love* to mankind, which is the most powerful argument to the love of God.’ *Tillotson*.
5. Liking; Inclination to: as, the *love* of one’s country.
6. Object beloved. ‘Open the temple gates unto my *love*.’ *Spenser*.
7. Lewdness. ‘He is not lolling on a lewd *love* bed...’ *Shakespeare*.
8. Unreasonable liking. ‘The *love* to sin makes a man sin against his own reason.’ *Taylor’s Holy living*.
9. Fondness; concord. ‘Come *love* and health to all!’ *Shakespeare*.
10. Principle of *union*. ‘*Love* is the great instrument of nature’, *South*.
11. Picturesque representation of love. ‘The lovely babe was born with ev’ry grace...as painters...on naked *loves* bestow.’ *Dryden*.
12. A word of endearment. ‘Tis no dishonour, trust me, *love*, ’tis none.’ *Dryden*.
13. Due reverence to God. ‘I know that you have not the *love* of God in you.’ *John*.
14. A kind of thin silk stuff. ‘This leaf held near the eye...appeared so full of pores, with such transparency as...a piece of cypress, or *lovehood*.’ *Boyle*.

In 1756, the second edition of Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* provided fourteen separate definitions of ‘love’ (*n.*) covering diverse themes from passion and lewdness to friendship, kindness, parental care, courtship

<sup>1</sup> Paul Moon James to Olivia Lloyd, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1806, TEMP MSS 493/9/19/1/3, Library of the Society of Friends (subsequently LSF).

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. II, pp. 70-1. While Johnson utilised up to eleven quotations to illustrate each definition, this extract reproduces only the first instance, with longer examples abbreviated. In the preceding entry Johnson defined the verb ‘To LOVE’: firstly ‘To regard with passionate affection, as that of one sex for the other’, secondly ‘To regard with the affection of a friend’, thirdly ‘To regard with parental tenderness’, fourthly ‘To be pleased with’ and fifth ‘To regard with reverent unwillingness to offend.’

and marriage. Whilst united by the same terminology, these divergent ideas illustrate the inherent contradictions in the term which existed contemporaneously in the eighteenth century. Whilst love was a Godly principle given to and from the Lord, it was also a sexualised term for passion and desire. Likewise, love was both the guiding principle of parental affection and the objectification of a loved one. The pervasive concept manifested itself in scores of other terms describing objects such as a 'loveknot', 'lovetoy' and 'loveletter.' It also foretold the inherent dangers of romantic love, such as falling prey to the 'lovetrick' of a 'lovemonger' and becoming 'lovelorn' and 'lovesick.'<sup>3</sup> These different definitions demonstrate that love was not a monolithic concept, but came in many different varieties, including romantic, passionate, idealised, courtly, nuptial and friendly forms of love.<sup>4</sup>

Romantic love will be approached in this chapter as a religious, spiritual, mystical and intellectual 'passion' between the sexes. The way in which love was understood and expressed was contingent upon particular religious, medical and literary developments. The centrality of culture to emotional experience has long been realised by psychologists and neurologists; as Oliver Sacks famously noted, 'culture tunes our neurons.' Our reliance on culture in formulating emotion means that our nervous systems 'need culture as much as they need chemicals. Without language and culture, we are like headless monsters.'<sup>5</sup> Philosophers such as Peter Goldie have similarly argued that our way of thinking about love is undoubtedly 'shaped by our environment.'<sup>6</sup> While it would be impossible for historians to determine how lovers actually *felt*, we can nonetheless access how they conceptualised, formulated and expressed their emotions. William Reddy creates an even stronger correlation, arguing that such expressions take us beyond mere description, intensifying, shaping, modulating and even creating the experience of

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> On the relationship between love and friendship see Frances Harris, *Transformations of Love: the Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin* (Oxford, 2002), esp. pp. 79-80, Simon May, *Love: A History* (London, 2011), esp. Chapter 4, pp. 56-68 and Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, pp. 36-8. For the many different phenomena involved in 'love' see Harold H. Kelley, 'Love and Commitment' in *idem et al* (eds.) *Close Relationships* (New York, 1983), esp. pp. 280-7.

<sup>5</sup> David Howes, 'Culture Tunes Our Neurons' in *idem* (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford, 2005), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Goldie, 'Love for a Reason', *Emotion Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January, 2010), pp. 61-7, at p. 62.

love. As Reddy notes, ‘Emotion words...have a direct impact on what they are supposed to refer to.’<sup>7</sup>

The recent growth of emotion history as a discipline means that the specific conventions of romantic love are only beginning to be addressed by historians.<sup>8</sup> Previous neglect may be due to the supposition that the language of love is ‘real’ and ‘genuine’ and therefore transhistorical and unchanging.<sup>9</sup> However this assumption is misleading, for the language chosen in the expression of romantic love was undoubtedly influenced by certain social and cultural discourses.<sup>10</sup> The social construction of love was famously challenged by the structuralist philosopher Roland Barthes, who contended that ‘I can be understood by everyone (love comes from books, its dialect is a common one), but I can be heard (received “prophetically”) only by subjects who have exactly and right now the same language I have.’<sup>11</sup> The expression of romantic love therefore relied upon appropriately adapting, reusing and engaging with a number of devices (often found in literature) which were understood by both writers and recipients.

The changeable nature of the language of love is aptly represented in the series of prints *Symptoms of the Shop* (1801) which depict men declaring love for women using the language of their profession. While a grocer praises an emaciated woman for being ‘as graceful as a stick of barley sugar’, a print-seller on bended-knee declares that he ‘does not wish to varnish over his passion with the opaque mixture of fulsome flattery.’ Meanwhile a pious former minister reassures an aghast woman that ‘I have ample credentials ready to ratify my powers, and if you please will enter Into preliminaries immediately.’ In contrast to these polite declarations, a

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<sup>7</sup> Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, pp. 103-7.

<sup>8</sup> For example the conference ‘New Histories of Love and Romance, c. 1880-1960’ at the University of Glamorgan, Cardiff on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012 <http://genderstudies.research.glam.ac.uk/conference/> and Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*, esp. pp. 3, 61-2, 87-95, 102-20, 178, 198, 201-2. Also see Chapter 8, note 30, p. 273.

<sup>9</sup> For example Norbert Elias argues that troubadour songs ‘have a core of authentic feeling and real experience’ and that in many instances the ‘feeling and experience are genuine.’ See *idem*, *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. II: State Formation and Civilization, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1982), pp. 83-4.

<sup>10</sup> One of the clearest ways to explicitly demonstrate change is to study a letter from a much earlier period. When Fulke Madeley wrote to Susanna Saunders on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1652, he addressed her as his ‘Heroic Ladie’ and described how her eyes were ‘Percinge as an Instrument of death’, LM/COR/6/4, SHC. It becomes immediately clear to readers that Fulke was drawing upon references far removed from those used in this thesis, as the language of romance had evolved simultaneously with social and cultural changes.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, trans. Richard Howard (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 212.

lewd sailor requests that a fashionable woman ‘hoist up your canvas...hap I may take a cruise with you’ (Figs. 31-34).<sup>12</sup> These declarations reveal social expectations that the lexicon of particular suitors would not only be shaped by wider social movements such as romanticism and sensibility, but also by their occupation and social rank.



**Plates from *Symptoms of the Shop* series, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1801, Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock (clockwise from top left)**

**Fig. 31 – ‘Sailor’, Plate 2, hand-coloured print, 27.5 x 22.5cm, D5459/2/25/3.**

**Fig. 32 – ‘Grocer’, Plate 4, uncoloured print, 28.5 x 19.8cm, D5459/2/25/6.**

**Fig. 33 – ‘Print-Seller’, Plate 6, hand-coloured print, 27.8 x 22.2cm, D5459/2/25/9.**

**Fig. 34 – ‘Minister’, Plate 10, uncoloured print, 28 x 21.6cm, D/5459/2/25/12.**

<sup>12</sup> For an account of a tradesman borrowing ‘terms from his art’ in his love letters see report of *Hand vs. Kisten* for breach of promise in *Morning Chronicle*, July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1802, Issue 10351.



This chapter is divided into three thematic sections, each focusing upon one guiding principle of romantic love between c. 1730 and 1830. Since romantic love is a vast subject, the chapter is necessarily schematic. The first section uses love letters to explore the founding doctrines of Christian love in the Bible, Book of Common Prayer and *Paradise Lost* (1667), considering denominational differences between Anglican, Unitarian and Quaker letters. The second looks at changes in physical understandings of love from Galen to Gilbert, investigating the symptoms of love and lovesickness as gendered ailments. Finally, the third section examines archetypal couples such as Troilus and Cressida invoked by lovers, plus new tropes disseminated through epistolary, romantic and gothic fiction. These diverse ideas in religion, medicine, science and literature influenced the romantic expectation of different individuals by determining the signs, symptoms and conventions of love in the wider world.

In reconstructing the passion, reverence and lewdness which comprised romantic love, the chapter uses evidence from eighteen different courtships alongside excerpts from religious tracts, medical treatises, dictionaries, novels, plays, poems and ballads. Although the thesis is largely concerned with the years c. 1730 to 1830, it has inevitably been necessary to address previous doctrines such as Galenism which exerted a lasting influence. Key questions include how the expression of romantic love changed over time? How did religious beliefs shape romantic language? How did the language of love evolve with medical and scientific discoveries? Who were the archetypal couples in fiction? These help us to understand the more abstract relationship between lovers, letters, and wider romantic culture.

The first part of this chapter analyses how particular religious doctrines and denominational beliefs shaped the conception and expression of romantic love.<sup>13</sup> The Bible was distributed throughout all levels of society, inextricably linking romantic and Biblical notions of love.<sup>14</sup> After discoursing ‘on Religion’ with her friend Sally

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<sup>13</sup> For an in-depth study of religious language see Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (Cambridge, 1991 and 2000), Vols. I and II.

<sup>14</sup> The Bible was one of the most influential books of the early modern period, and had a vast readership, increasingly becoming the focus of preliminary education in the eighteenth century. Copies were distributed by groups such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Bible Society. The Authorized Version (1611) became the only edition readily available to purchase

Sheppard in 1760, the tailor's daughter Sarah Hurst (1736-1808) wondered how 'there can be so astonishing a thing in the World as an Atheist.'<sup>15</sup> Two years later she gave 'thanks to the supream Being for making my Harry mine.'<sup>16</sup> The Unitarian John Eccles (d. 1780) was equally convinced of the celestial nature of love, proclaiming, 'Tis an inexpressible power, that moves all the faculties of the soul...'tis a celestial spark...'tis the finishing stroke of heaven, the polish of existence.'<sup>17</sup> Numerous phrases in courtship letters were directly inspired by Biblical passages, with the banker and brewer Francis Cobb (1759-1831) noting in 1805, 'Grace, Mercy & Peace be with you, My Dearest Love – thanks to a kind God for the Mercies of this day.'<sup>18</sup> Such language can be found throughout the King James Bible, with Timothy and Titus both noting 'Grace, mercy *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.'<sup>19</sup> These lovers used celestial language to characterise love as a heavenly force, even obliquely transferring passages from The Bible to their own letters.

Christian couples rooted their letters in Biblical doctrines to debate the virtuous or selfish nature of humanity. The Unitarian lovers James Nicholson (1718-73) and Elizabeth Seddon (1721-91) used debates about human nature as the founding doctrine of their courtship between 1738 and 1740. As Elizabeth argued in December 1738, 'with regard to moral virtues we are in a Great measure free agents...I think no moral virtues will bring us to Heaven, tho' there is no attaining Heaven without them.'<sup>20</sup> Such theological issues provided a stimulating subject for discussion, with Elizabeth reminding James that 'it is your turn to propose the next To pick.'<sup>21</sup> The political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) famously argued that virtue was solely a matter of private will and that humans were essentially selfish and sensual. Adam's mortality was brought about by his first sin, while Jesus

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after 1660. See David McKitterick, 'Customer, Reader and Bookbinder: Buying a Bible in 1630', *The Book Collector*, Vol. 40 (1991), pp. 48, 63-4 and Scott Mandelbrote, 'The Bible and its Readers' in Rivers (ed.) *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London, 2001), pp. 35-78, esp. 46-50.

<sup>15</sup> Diary of Hurst, March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1760, MS 3543, HM. Sarah 'Sally' Sheppard was Sarah's closest friend, and the daughter of the butcher Stringer Sheppard.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1762, MS 3545.

<sup>17</sup> Eccles to Hays, Letter XXXIX in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Cobb to Curwen, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/4 (ii), EKAC.

<sup>19</sup> For example Timothy 1:1, 2:1 and Titus 1:4, The Bible, Authorized King James Version (subsequently KJV).

<sup>20</sup> Seddon to Nicholson, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1738, GBB 133 Eng. MS 1041/9 (Box 1), JRL.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7<sup>th</sup> 1738, GBB 133 Eng. MS 1041/3.

'hath satisfied for the Sins of all that believe in him; and therefore recovered to all Believers, that *eternal Life*, which was lost by the Sin of *Adam*.'<sup>22</sup> In contrast, moralists such as Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Joseph Butler (1692-1752) and Anthony Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) argued that humans were naturally virtuous.<sup>23</sup> Such debates were discussed at length by nonconformist couples such as Elizabeth and James, allowing them to gauge their compatibility before marriage. These debates ceased immediately after their marriage on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1740, as they had served their purpose in encouraging intellectual exchange between the couple. Through providing a fertile ground for debate, discussion of religious maxims facilitated the development of a mutual bond on the path to matrimony.

The Bible shaped individual conceptions of love using the relationships of particular couples.<sup>24</sup> The Old Testament told the inspiring stories of the beautiful Rebecca and her betrothal to Isaac, which she considered 'the most happy event of her life.' Eighteenth-century texts advised readers that 'every one entering on that state, ought to have chiefly in their eye...such principles and dispositions as Rebecca had received from a regular and godly education.'<sup>25</sup> Naomi was also blissfully happy with her husband Elimelech: 'in marriage she has sacrificed her all, conscience excepted, to the will and power of her husband, and now looks up to him as her earthly all...they are no longer twain but one flesh.'<sup>26</sup> Publications on the 'Happiness of Kissing' utilised a kiss between Rachel and Jacob in Genesis to represent 'the

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<sup>22</sup> 'Of a Christian Commonwealth' from *Leviathan* in *The moral and political works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (London, 1750), pp. 296, 302. For later Hobbesian thinkers such as Benedict de Spinoza (1632-77) and Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) see Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, Vol. II, pp. 14, 16, 20-2, 64, 96, 197, 245-6.

<sup>23</sup> See *An inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue* (London, 1725; 1738) and *An essay on the nature and conduct of the passions and affections* (London, 1728; 1730). John Wesley (1703-91) argued that Hutcheson's position was particularly dangerous as he made morality independent of God. See Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, Vol. I, pp. 230-1 and Dixon, *Passions to Emotions*, pp. 69-70. Also Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times*, Vol. II (London, 1711; 1732), esp. pp. 175-6, and Butler, *The analogy of religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature* (London, 1736), esp. p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> For the deliberate shift towards matrimonial lexicon in early modern Bible translations see Naomi Tadmor, 'Women and Wives: the Language of Marriage in Early Modern English Biblical Translations', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 62 (Autumn, 2006), pp. 1-27.

<sup>25</sup> John Baird, *Dissertations, chronological, historical, and critical, on all the books of the Old Testament* (London, 1778), Dissertation XXII, p. 331-3. Isaac 'loved her with an increasing love. All of which is typical of the conduct of Christ towards the Jewish and Gentile churches', John MacGowan, *Discourses on the Book of Ruth* (London, 1781), Sermon I, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> MacGowan, *Discourses*, p. 20.

Power of Love.’<sup>27</sup> Further popular couples were Naomi’s daughter-in-law Ruth and the generous Boaz, who were the subject of numerous contemporary plays and poems such as Thomas Haweis’ *Ruth. A Sacred Oratorio* (1778) and *Ruth, or, The fair Moabitess* (1810). The relationship between the three provided a model of the kindness of God, as his disciples looked after one another; ‘So Ruth to Naomi, Boaz to Ruth.’<sup>28</sup>

Biblical couples such as Adam and Eve paradoxically represented both the joys of love and dangers of deception. The Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II harnessed Adam’s dialogue with the Angel Raphael to conceptualise his feelings for Elizabeth Grey, describing how ‘when I hear from thee I seem in Heaven / & thy words / Bring to their sweetness no satiety.’<sup>29</sup> The tale was dramatised in Book IX of John Milton’s (1608-74) *Paradise Lost* (1667) and republished annually in the eighteenth century as ‘the sale increased double the number every year.’<sup>30</sup> Milton’s epic had a profound effect on romantic love through the intimate relationship he created between Adam and Eve. Adam praised how ‘we are one, / One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself’, while Eve replied ‘O glorious trial of exceeding love...One heart, one soul in both.’<sup>31</sup> The text also explored the subject of ‘man’s disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise’, explaining the role of Satan disguised as the serpent in man’s downfall.<sup>32</sup> Spurned lovers such as Richard Law of Marylebone were inspired by Eve’s deception, writing to his ex-lover in 1816 that ‘you were once pleasant to me as the blooming Maid of Paradise, till you was deceived by the Serpent, and perswaded [*sic*] to change your angelic form...how is she that was my friend thirteen years since, become my foe, filled with an endless enmity.’<sup>33</sup> The tale provided a rich vocabulary of love and deception, with neither Samuel nor Richard directly naming the book they quoted from, instead presuming the recipient’s complicity in the *shared* language of love.

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<sup>27</sup> *A dissertation wherein the meaning, duty and happiness of kissing are explained, from Genesis* (London, 1780), pp. 7-8. The kiss provided ‘an Introduction to a stricter Intimacy, which terminated in a happy Marriage.’

<sup>28</sup> MacGowan, *Discourses*, Sermon VI, p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Spa, September 11<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6577, No. 31, BLARS.

<sup>30</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost. A Poem, In Twelve Books* (London, 1667; 1788), preface.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Book IX, p. 245. For Eve as the ‘model of feminine loveliness’ within the Puritan colonies, see Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (London, 2007), p. 91.

<sup>32</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Law to Jane Townley, Doncaster, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1816, Add Mss. 47796/1, BL.

The Book of Common Prayer used to conduct Anglican ceremonies provided devout writers with a guidebook of pious lexicon to express their emotions. The Margate banker and brewer Francis Cobb and his sweetheart Charlotte Mary Curwen regularly referred to themselves as ‘your Unworthy Man’, ‘his unworthy servant’ and ‘this unworthy Handmaid, & servant’ in their letters.<sup>34</sup> Such phrases reflected the general thanksgiving ‘Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble thanks for all thy goodness to us.’<sup>35</sup> The couple also discussed psalms they had read, with Francis asking Charlotte to ‘inform me the verses of the Psalms you used to repeat in a morning when the Lord favoured us by being together in his presence, I admired them very much.’<sup>36</sup> These include Psalm XXXIV, ‘The Hosts of God encamp around / Deliv’rance he affords to all / O make but Trial of his Love.’ The notion of a ‘trial’ was frequently employed during courtship letters, where lovers ‘cease not to pray for support under this my great trial.’<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless this did not mean that all self-professed Anglicans drew upon Godly discourses in their letters, as only a select number who were particularly devout chose to do so. On the whole, it was more common for women to draw upon religious language in their missives, as this allowed them to emphasise their piety to their prospective husbands.<sup>38</sup>

The Biblical quotations used by Francis and Charlotte raise the thorny issue of what it meant to be ‘influenced’ by a particular text. Fay Bound Alberti has used quotations from The Book of Common Prayer, letter-writing guides and popular fiction to argue that the authorship of love letters is ‘problematic’ as they were crafted from a number of different sources. In so doing, she reduces romantic love to ‘A Matter of Convention.’<sup>39</sup> The language used by Francis and Charlotte certainly confirms that particular publications played a pivotal role in constructing their

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<sup>34</sup> For example Francis Cobb asked Charlotte Mary Curwen to ‘Unite with me to ever gracious God for his kind care over his unworthy Servant, thus far’, Canterbury, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1805, EK/U1453/C287/5, EKAC. Five days before their marriage she wrote, ‘Thanks be to Almighty God, for all his mercies to this his unworthy Handmaid, & servant’, Fenstanton, December 13<sup>th</sup> 1805, EK/U1453/C2/A/9.

<sup>35</sup> *Abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments* (London, 1773), p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> Cobb to Curwen, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/4 (i).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* and 24<sup>th</sup> January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/1.

<sup>38</sup> Also see Chapter 3, p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> Bound, ‘Writing the Self?’, pp. 5-12.

letters. In some cases this may have been conscious, such as quoting the book of Ruth to exhibit your loyalty. As Robert Pattison has argued, letter-writing required ‘consciousness of the uses of language and the mastery of skills to express them.’<sup>40</sup> However the evidence in this chapter suggests that the relationship between love, fiction and self-expression was far from straightforward. Writers often seem to have quoted certain texts unconsciously, perhaps because they were reading them at the time. A multiplicity of forces shaped the language they chose, including the writer’s gender, education, the circumstances of production, and letters by other writers. While the language of love was certainly not spontaneous, neither was it plagiarised directly from published pieces.

Courtship letters written by Quaker couples demonstrate the multifaceted relationship between love, religion and letter-writing. The Quaker banker Paul Moon James (1780-1854) praised ‘Loves pure light’ and the ‘purity and gentleness’ of his sweetheart’s affection.<sup>41</sup> Such writers located their love in the soul, reflecting Quaker constructions of the soul as the place of communion between man and God. As the flour merchant Thomas Kirton (1682-c.1757) wrote to Olive Lloyd (1707-75) in 1734, his sentiments ‘respecting thee’ acted ‘on my Soul.’<sup>42</sup> Quaker writers also characterised marriage as a union of minds or spirits, with the minister’s niece Betty Fothergill (1752-1809) noting in her diary in 1770 that separation ‘could not dis Joint [*sic*] the union of minds which is the seat of Intellectual love.’<sup>43</sup> William Rathbone similarly urged his future daughter-in-law in 1786 to make ‘a religious influence...the foundation of the union of your spirits.’<sup>44</sup> Quaker emphasis upon marriage as the ‘Seed of God’ reflects the expectation that they would marry within the Society of Friends.<sup>45</sup> The importance of maintaining the pure and godly foundations of marriage was reinforced in texts such as William Smith’s *Joyful Tidings to the Begotten of God in All* (1663) which was repeatedly re-published

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Pattison, *On Literacy* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 5, 9.

<sup>41</sup> James to Lloyd, September 9<sup>th</sup> 1807 and November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1807, TEMP MSS 403/9/19/1/16, 19, LSF.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Kirton to Olive Lloyd, Rimpton, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1734, TEMP MSS 210/2/96, LSF.

<sup>43</sup> Diary of Betty Fothergill, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1770 (fifth Day), MS. Vol. 5, 51/1, p. 27, LSF.

<sup>44</sup> William Rathbone to Hannah Mary Rathbone, 8<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> month 1786, RP. III. 1. 253, Liverpool University Library (subsequently LUL).

<sup>45</sup> Moses West’s *A Treatise Concerning Marriage. Wherein the Unlawfulness of Mixt-Marriages is Laid Open* was repeatedly republished in 1732, 1735, 1736, 1761 and 1780. Based on key-word search of Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (subsequently ECCO) on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012. On Quaker marriage practices see Edward H. Milligan, *Quaker Marriage* (Kendal, 1994) and on distinctive features of Quaker letter-writing see Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 144-54.

throughout the eighteenth century. The Quaker couples studied in this chapter intertwined the languages of love and Quakerism to eschew the physicality of love, locating their emotions in the soul while using their letters to construct a spiritual and intellectual union before marriage.

Courtship letters by nonconformist women could be more strident than letters by their Anglican counterparts, due to a greater emphasis upon female education and the prominent role of female ministers, preachers and missionaries.<sup>46</sup> In 1769, the Quaker Betty Fothergill recorded in her diary that after receiving a letter from the ironmonger Alexander Chorley, she unabashedly wrote to instruct him on how to improve his faults:

in my last letter I ventured to give him some advice upon a few things I had observd [*sic*] with respect to himself...and as acting the part of a real Friend, I thought it my place to remark them. which I did in the manner my real regard suggested. & not with the acrimony of a severe Critict...

However, Betty reacted with shock when her criticisms were not well received:

but how was I mistaken in my Congectures..when, instead of tender acknowledgements. I recieved [*sic*] a few cool thanks. & several accusations of want of affection...It shockd me to see such spirit of mistaken pride, which I plainly saw Was the source.<sup>47</sup>

These passages demonstrate how Betty's Quakerism and education had made her confident in expressing her views, to the detriment of her beleaguered suitor.<sup>48</sup>

Betty's language also reveals additional discourses shaping Quaker attitudes to courtship, with Betty saving particular disdain for Alexander's sinful pride. Pride was a popular topic in letters between nonconformist couples, with James Nicholson

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<sup>46</sup> Quakers paid assiduous attention to their children's schooling, educating them in Quaker ways and enabling them to use written texts as devotional aids. All Quaker ministers were expected to be able to read The Bible, while reading and writing were vital for their spiritual development. Women were allowed to practice as ministers from founding of Quakerism in c. 1652, while a small minority also published theological texts. See Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of the Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad 1700-1775* (London, 1999), esp. pp. 82-5 on literacy, and Christine Trevett, *Quaker Women Prophets in England and Wales 1650-1700* (Ceredigion, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Diary of Betty Fothergill, December 1769, MS. Vol. 5, 51/1, p. 13, LSF.

<sup>48</sup> When Alexander later apologised for his harsh words, Betty recorded that 'This proof of AC<sup>s</sup> flexibility gave me pleasure.' *Ibid.*, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1769 (2<sup>d</sup> Day), p. 14.

and Elizabeth Seddon repeatedly condemning ‘that Cursed bitter root of pride.’<sup>49</sup> As Betty’s Uncle Samuel (1715-72) advised a young woman shortly before her marriage, ‘Pride is its own punishment; fly from it as from a contagion which it strangely resembles: it infects and corrupts the soul.’<sup>50</sup>

While devout couples were brought together by their shared beliefs, certain writers in the late eighteenth century came to view romantic love as a religion in its own right.<sup>51</sup> The idolising of the lover stood in direct tension with the rise of Evangelicalism. Men such as Captain Richard Dixon described a complete inability to *exist* without their sweethearts, writing that ‘I am now convinc’d you are inseparably connected with my existence – without you Life would be burthensome and distressing.’<sup>52</sup> Total absorption in love reached its peak in the letters of the poet John Keats (1795-1821) in 1819, where he described how ‘My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again – my Life seems to stop there – I see no further. You have absorbed me.’<sup>53</sup> Such discourses would have been completely alien to men at the beginning of our period, undeniably demonstrating transformations in the lexical expression of love. Whilst the majority of men would have struggled to master the poetic ardour of Keats, suitors such as Richard Dixon also described being consumed by their love. Despite such men deifying their sweethearts, the individual absorbed in love was consistently represented as a female figure. R.J. Lane’s lithograph in Figure 35 depicts a young woman languishing in a chair; in idolising the material artefacts of love she turns her back on Christianity, and the closed Bible and crucifix behind her. Below the image, a quotation reads, “‘For thee I pray, for thee I sigh and weep”, Shakespeare’, as her sinful behaviour defies the love of God. The image demonstrates how absorption in love was represented as a female preoccupation, despite primarily appearing in letters by men.

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<sup>49</sup> Seddon to Nicholson, July 24<sup>th</sup> 1738, MS 1041/2, JRL.

<sup>50</sup> Transcript of letter from Samuel Fothergill to a young woman in R. Hingston Fox, *Dr. John Fothergill and his Friends* (London, 1919), Appendix C, p. 415.

<sup>51</sup> Lystra has also argued that in nineteenth-century America, romantic love ‘contributed to the displacement of God by the lover as the central symbol of ultimate significance’, as romantic relationships became ‘more powerful and meaningful’ than religious loyalties. See *idem*, *Searching the Heart*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Dixon to Esther Maria Cranmer, May 7<sup>th</sup> 1782, 8215/7, SHC.

<sup>53</sup> Keats to Brawne, postmark 13<sup>th</sup> October 1819, Letter VII in Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, pp. 35-6.





**Fig. 35 – R.J. Lane after G.S. Newton, *A Girl at her Devotions*, London, 1824, lithograph, image 24.5 x 20.5cm, Wellcome Library, London, 672767i.**

Impassioned men such as John Eccles used courtship letters to conceptualise the physicality of their love. As John wrote to the novelist Mary Hays in August 1779, ‘Will he no more with eager haste, / Fly from the world to my embrace? / This hand, will he not softly press? / These lips, will he no more caress?’<sup>54</sup> Such language was mirrored in The Bible, which portrayed romantic love as an all-encompassing physical force, particularly in the ‘Song of Songs.’<sup>55</sup> The book created numerous connections between love, wine, fruit, honey and fire which provided an early model for the expression of passion. Passages such as ‘O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk *are* under thy tongue’ transformed the raw unrefined substance of milk into a natural carrier of love.<sup>56</sup> Milk was later adopted as a symbol of constancy in Mary Wollstonecraft’s letters to Gilbert Imlay, describing his fickleness as ‘milk and water affection’, almost forty years before the *Oxford*

<sup>54</sup> ‘A Poem to Miss Hays’, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1779, Letter XXXII in Wedd, *Love Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> On the fear of loving someone *too much* see Anne Laurence, ‘Godly Grief: Individual Responses to Death in Seventeenth-Century Britain’ in Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.) *Death, Ritual and Bereavement* (London, 1989), esp. p. 74 and Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> Solomon’s Song 4:11, KJV.

*English Dictionary* records the first use of the phrase in *The Times*.<sup>57</sup> While milk represented unblemished love, Imlay's affection had been sadly watered down. Solomon's Song provided readers with a vast range of amorous metaphors for describing love's passion:

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.<sup>58</sup>

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.<sup>59</sup>

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.<sup>60</sup>

Eighteenth-century letter-writers such as John Eccles and Mary Wollstonecraft selected different metaphors such as milk and water in describing their affection. However, the continuing emphasis upon the hands, lips and physical embraces of the lover reveal the continued influence of the Song of Songs in expressing the immediacy of desire.

The Song of Songs leads us to the second part of this chapter, which focuses upon physical understandings of love beginning with the 'great luminary of medicine' Galen of Pergamum (AD c. 129-c. 216). His works on circulation and the heart are important to this thesis as they constituted an authoritative source of medical knowledge until the emergence of physicians such as William Harvey (1578-1657) in the late seventeenth century.<sup>61</sup> Galen was a student of both Hippocrates and Plato, and from his arrival in Rome in AD 162 he was able to treat senators for disorders

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<sup>57</sup> The Promised Land was also described as 'a land flowing with milk and honey' in Exodus 3:8, KJV. Ingpen, *Love Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, Letter VI, December 1793, p. 11. See 'milk-and-water, v.' OEDO: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/234165?rskey=MdusMw&result=2&isAdvanced=false>

<sup>58</sup> Solomon's Song 5:3, KJV.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:7.

<sup>61</sup> Albrecht von Haller, *Dr. Albert Haller's physiology; being a course of lectures upon the visceral anatomy and vital oeconomy of human bodies*, Vol. I (London, 1754), p. xxxv. 'Galen has supplied to us the common fountains from whence the physiology of the human body has been taught, for near fifteen ages after him, down even to the times of Harvey...he is still a very deserving and professed anatomist, the last of the Greeks, the most eminent of all the ancients', p. xxxvi.

such as lovesickness by cooling their overheated humours.<sup>62</sup> He rejected Aristotle's view that the heart was the controlling organ of the body, arguing that it mirrored the tripartite division of heaven, sky and earth – between the head, the breast and the lower body.<sup>63</sup> Within this system there were four elements or 'humours' – blood, yellow bile (choler), phlegm and black bile (melancholy). While blood was hot and moist like air, yellow bile was hot and dry like fire, phlegm was cold and moist like water, and black bile was cold and dry like earth.<sup>64</sup> In his treatise *De Temperamentis* (*On Mixtures*) Galen argued that the 'well-balanced' body should have a perfect mixture of hot, cold, dry and wet; deviations from this model caused imbalance, illness, and extreme displays of particular emotions such as anger or melancholy.<sup>65</sup>

The central consequence of Galen's model for romantic love was that men and women were thought to have different emotional tendencies, determined by the balance of their humours. Whilst men were thought to be generally hot-natured, women were seen as cold-natured.<sup>66</sup> As he argued in *De Usu Partium* (*On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*) this was because 'it was better for the female to be made colder so that she cannot disperse all the nutriment she concocts', creating the perfect environment in which a foetus could grow.<sup>67</sup> The preponderance of water in women's physical make-up made them more prone to tears and sudden irrational rages, whilst their greater passivity made them more subject to emotional extremes such as hysteria and lovesickness.<sup>68</sup> The connection between women's wet physical make-up and hysteria was a key legacy of Galenism, and was still evident in eighteenth-century notions of female melancholy and the 'vapours.' These were

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<sup>62</sup> Christopher Gill, Tim Whitmarsh and John Wilkins, 'Introduction' in *idem* (eds.) *Galen and the World of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 4-5.

<sup>63</sup> Bound Alberti, *Matters of the Heart: History, Medicine, and Emotion* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 18-19. For a masterly overview of the transition from a cardio-centric to a cranio-centric body see Chapter 1, pp. 16-40.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18. See Galen, *Causes of Diseases* (*De Causis Morborum*) in RJ Hankinson, 'Philosophy of Nature' in *idem* (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Galen* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 219. 'Yellow bile is naturally hottest, phlegm coolest. Of the other humours, blood is the next hottest after yellow bile, black bile is the next coolest after phlegm', *On Uneven Distemper* (*De Inaequali Intemperie*) in *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>65</sup> Galen, *Mixtures* (*De Temperamentis*), Book I, in PN Singer, *Galen: Selected Works* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 202-31.

<sup>66</sup> Galen, *The Art of Medicine* (*Ars Medica*) in *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>67</sup> Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* (*De Usu Partium*), trans. Margaret Tallmadge May (Ithaca, 1968), p. 631.

<sup>68</sup> See Bound Alberti, 'Emotions in the Early Modern Medical Tradition' in *idem*, *Medicine, Emotion and Disease*, pp. 3-4. This reflected Aristotle's theory that men possessed more heat than women, whose bodies retained more moisture. See Robert L. Martensen, *The Brain Takes Shape: An Early History* (Oxford, 2004), esp. Chapter 7, pp. 153-74, at 154-5.

defined by Johnson as a ‘Mental fume’, while illnesses caused by ‘hypochondrical maladies’ and melancholy were attributed to ‘the *vapours* to which the other sex are so often subject.’<sup>69</sup>

During the early modern period, the work of René Descartes (1596-1650) was instrumental in reorienting scientific study to focus upon the mind, replacing Galen’s humoral model with a mechanistic notion of the human body.<sup>70</sup> Certain aspects of Cartesian thinking reflected older notions of the ‘animal spirits’ utilised by Galen.<sup>71</sup> In his *L’Homme (Treatise of Man)* in c. 1637, Descartes argued that ‘animal spirits’ retained the speed that the heat of the heart had given them, but ceased ‘to have the form of blood’ and became more like ‘a wind or a very subtle flame.’<sup>72</sup> His crucial intervention was to reinstate the mind as the central means of perceiving particular emotions, introducing a new system involving the ‘nerves’, ‘spirits’ and ‘brain.’ Descartes’ work meant that romantic love ceased to be seen as a physical entity embedded in the heart, but led to a nervous result in the body when it was perceived by the mind. In his final book *Les Passions de l’âme (The Passions of the Soul)* in 1649, Descartes described how upon viewing a loved one,

the impression this thought forms in the brain guides the animal spirits via the sixth pair of nerves toward the muscles around the intestines and...toward the heart; and that, being driven there with greater force than [the blood] in other parts of the body, it enters [the heart] in greater abundance.<sup>73</sup>

The central Cartesian legacy for eighteenth-century love was the prioritising of the mind as the key means of processing one’s emotions, which subsequently caused a physical response in the body.

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<sup>69</sup> Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 1072.

<sup>70</sup> For his research into the pineal gland as the seat of the soul see Descartes, *Treatise of Man*, trans. Thomas Steel Hall (Cambridge, 1662; 1972). Although this text was written before 1637, it was not published in Latin until 1662, and the original French until 1664, fourteen years after his death.

<sup>71</sup> Galen cited Herophilus’ use of ‘psychic pneuma’ in coining the term ‘animal spirits.’ See Edwin Clarke and Charles Donald O’Malley, ‘Nerve Function’ in *idem, The Human Brain and Spinal Cord* (London, 1968), p. 144, 147.

<sup>72</sup> Descartes, *Treatise of Man*, pp. 21, 28. When these spirits were ‘abundant’ they made humans prone to generosity, liberality and love, whereas when they were ‘lacking’ they excited malice, timidity, inconstancy, tardiness, and ruthlessness, pp. 72-3. Also see *idem, The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Cambridge, 1649; 1989), pp. 25-7.

<sup>73</sup> Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, Article 102, p. 74.

Scientific advances gave rise to new ways for individuals to conceptualise their feelings, such as by describing the ‘sparks’, ‘electricity’ and ‘chemistry’ of their attachment. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the earliest use of ‘electricity’ in a figurative sense to mean ‘a feeling of excitement’ was by Edmund Burke in 1796.<sup>74</sup> The term also appeared in novels the same year, with the heroine of Mary Hays’ *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) describing how, ‘I perceived the starting tear. – It touched, it electrified my heart.’<sup>75</sup> The connection between love and electricity was forged with the discovery of static electricity by William Gilbert (c. 1544-1603) in the seventeenth century, which gave birth to a language of ‘electricity’ and love.<sup>76</sup> The relationship between love and chemistry was far older, and was first used to denote an ‘instinctual attraction or rapport between two or more people’ in 1656.<sup>77</sup> These two discourses demonstrate how the lexical innovations of particular discoveries filtered into public consciousness, providing innovative new ways for lovers to formulate their emotions.

The evolution of diseases such as lovesickness reveals the interrelationship between love, science and medicine. Suffering from love was historically the domain of lovesick troubadours, who declared that ‘to love truly and not to suffer – would make me in my own eyes a cheat.’<sup>78</sup> Lovesickness was redefined as a degrading female disease in the sixteenth century, becoming exclusively female by the eighteenth century. This affected how the disease itself was construed. It historically consisted of two stages: a hot, moist and sanguine stage characterised by fiery passion, and a cold, dry and melancholy stage defined by fear and sorrow.<sup>79</sup> However by the eighteenth century lovesickness had shed its fiery stage, and the only remaining symptoms were the tears, fainting, meekness, melancholy and languishing of the second stage. These reflect the feminising of lovesickness, plus

<sup>74</sup> Ambassadors ‘will become true conductors of contagion to every country which has had the misfortune to send them to the source of that electricity’, Edmund Burke, *Two Letters Addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament, on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France*, No. I, p. 35, ‘electricity, n.’ OEDO: <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy01.rhul.ac.uk/view/Entry/60259?redirectedFrom=electricity#eid>

<sup>75</sup> Hays, Mary, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (Oxford, 1796; 2009), p. 92.

<sup>76</sup> See Gilbert, William, *De Magnete (On the Magnet)* (London, 1600).

<sup>77</sup> ‘How can [you] by the Chemistry of your wits extract from these places any drop...of a morall command?’, *A Discourse of Auxiliary Beauty, or Artificial Handsomeness*, p. 18, ‘chemistry, n.’ OEDO: <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy01.rhul.ac.uk/view/Entry/31274?redirectedFrom=chemistry#eid>

<sup>78</sup> Giraut de Borneil, ‘Can creis la fresca fueil’els rams’ in Ruth Sharman (ed.) *The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil: A Critical Edition* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 166.

<sup>79</sup> Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 20-1.

the growing influence of nervous debilities in the evolution of the disease.<sup>80</sup> Nervous maladies and lovesickness shared similar causes, namely youth, ‘depressing passions’ such as love and a ‘sedentary life.’ Those under thirty were seen as particularly vulnerable, clearly isolating courting women as a high-risk group.<sup>81</sup> The disease acquired an increasingly prominent role in popular culture from the mid-1750s, becoming irrevocably associated with the weakness of the female body.<sup>82</sup>



**Fig. 36 – *Love Sick: The Doctor Puzzled*, undated (c. 1820), lithograph with watercolour, Wellcome Library, London, 11202i.**

The women studied in this thesis would have been particularly vulnerable to lovesickness due to the large volume of letters they exchanged. The direct correlation between love letters and lovesickness is dramatised in the lithograph *Love Sick: The Doctor Puzzled* (Fig. 36) where a baffled doctor takes the pulse of a young woman. While this particular lithograph remains undated, other copies have

<sup>80</sup> Nervous illnesses were thought to begin with ‘a general debility; languour, and depression of spirits...lassitude; anxiety; oppressed breathing...loss of appetite; nausea...a pale sunk countenance; vertigo, or slight head-ach; disturbed sleep.’ A patient became ‘unable to sit out of bed’ and ‘often lies in a kind of stupor’ John Gregory, *Elements of the practice of physic* (Edinburgh, 1772), pp. 41-2.

<sup>81</sup> Passionate love ‘in old Persons’ was characterised as ‘ridiculous’ by writers such as Castiglione in *The Courtier* (London, 1528; 1724), Book I, p. 17. The figure of thirty is drawn from Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>82</sup> See Chapter 6, pp. 211-18.

been dated to c. 1820.<sup>83</sup> It depicts a languid young woman with glazed eyes, a drooping head and pale lily-white skin, contrasting with the ruddy cheeks of her doctor. As she slumps in an armchair with a dazed expression on her face, her mischievous maid secretly slips a love letter into her hand. The print enjoyed such lasting influence that it was parodied almost fifty years later in 1865, with a humorous reversal of gender roles as female physicians take the pulse of a languishing man.<sup>84</sup> It testifies to the power of letters in fuelling romance, and the cultural construction of women in love as both physically and mentally weak.

Women's languishing from lovesickness was mimicked by the effeminate and over-refined fop. It is unsurprising that the variety of eighteenth-century masculinity displaying the most pronounced 'feminine' qualities should also be the most susceptible to lovesickness. As Michèle Cohen has noted, a foppish man 'seeks the company of ladies, whom he resembles.'<sup>85</sup> When not vainly ogling himself in the mirror, the fop was engaged seeking and suffering from love. In 1736, *The Modern Poet. A Rapsody [sic]* began by explaining,

I tell no Tale of some poor Love-sick Maid,  
Nor call the Fabled *Muses* to my Aid.  
Let Love-Sick Fops attempt, in whining Strains,  
The Pow'r of *Love*, his Darts, and burning Pains.<sup>86</sup>

While the lovesick maid was portrayed as a 'poor' woman, the 'whining' fop receives no sympathy for imitating her suffering. Later in the century, *A Dictionary of Love* cruelly portrayed the fop's languishing as 'a state of stupidity', illustrated by a scene where 'a soft fop gives himself the air of languishing metaphorically, and

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<sup>83</sup> For example the lithograph *Love Sick: The Doctor Puzzled* in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard, olvwork383585. For an additional depiction of the lovesick woman see *The art of fainting in company* showing a young woman in a swoon with her eyes closed and head thrown back, wearing a miniature of her suitor around her neck, 1797, 797.05.27.08, LWL.

<sup>84</sup> 'Punch, or the London Charivari: Lady-Physicians', December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1865, *Punch*, Vol. 49, p. 248, WC.

<sup>85</sup> Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England' in *idem* and Tim Hitchcock (eds.) *English Masculinities 1660-1800* (London, 1999), pp. 44-62, at p. 51. Also see Susan Staves, 'A Few Kind Words for the Fop', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer, 1982), pp. 413-28.

<sup>86</sup> *The Modern Poet. A Rapsody [sic]*, second edition (London, 1736), p. 3.

ogles amorously a gay coquette, who laughs at his white hand and flimsy figure.’<sup>87</sup> The ‘love-sick maid, and dwindling beau’ were again presented as a natural pairing strolling through the streets of London in John Gay’s *Trivia* (1795).<sup>88</sup> Languishing was constructed as a female manifestation of suffering from love, and could only be displayed by men who were uncomfortably close to femininity themselves.

While languishing from love was chiefly a feminine malady, men could legitimately share the sighing, sleeplessness and dreaming which characterised romantic love. *A Dictionary of Love* described ‘sighs’ as ‘useful interjections in the love-language’ whereby a lover ‘plays the slave in order to become the master.’<sup>89</sup> The definition illuminates both the role of bodily symptoms in the conception of love, and the power struggles concealed within individual relationships. Ballads dramatised how one sailor ‘sigh’d & cast his Eyes below’ while thinking of his sweetheart, while a man courting a nobleman’s daughter ‘found by her sighs and languishing eyes’ that she loved him.<sup>90</sup> Lovers often used sighs to denote an emotional interlude in letters and diaries. The Quaker Betty Fothergill recorded her lover’s activities in her diary ‘with an accompanying sigh’, describing how ‘Sighs woud force thier [*sic*] way...Tho I knew AC was too far of [*sic*] to recieve [*sic*] them.’<sup>91</sup> The Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II repeatedly heaved a ‘painful sigh’ in his letters to Elizabeth Grey, compared to his ‘sigh of pleasure’ when thinking of her.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the poet Paul Moon James regularly sighed in his love poems to Olivia Lloyd, describing how ‘I smiled to mark thy gentle breast, / Soft trembling to the sigh of mine.’<sup>93</sup>

The sighing, trembling lovers studied in this thesis also described experiencing visions of their beloved. In 1759, the tailor’s daughter Sarah Hurst wrote a paean to Henry Smith that ‘sleeping or waking he posses [*sic*] my thoughts.’ Henry appeared frequently in her dreams, causing her to muse ‘how perplexing are

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<sup>87</sup> *Dictionary of Love*, p. 87.

<sup>88</sup> John Gay, *Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (London, 1795), p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> *Dictionary of Love*, p. 126.

<sup>90</sup> Ballad by John Gay in misc. poems on love and marriage by Princess Amelia, 1744, LWL Mss Vol. 14, LWL, ‘The LADY’s Garland’, 1763-75, Roxburghe Collection, C.20.f.9.(320-1), EBBA.

<sup>91</sup> Diary of Fothergill, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1770 (fifth Day), MS. Vol. 5, 51/1, pp. 26-7, LSF.

<sup>92</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Thun, August 1<sup>st</sup> 1787, W1/6567, No. 21, BLARS.

<sup>93</sup> James, ‘To Olivia Lloyd’, undated, pre-1808, TEMP MSS 403/9/19/1/1/15, LSF.



these Chimeras of the Brain.’<sup>94</sup> The term ‘chimera’ implied an ‘unreal creature of the imagination, a mere wild fancy.’<sup>95</sup> Sarah’s chimeras extended to hearing Henry ‘talk & feel his caresses, sweet delusion, but I wake & it fleets away.’<sup>96</sup> While Sarah’s fantasies were described in the relative privacy of her journal, certain men boldly described their dreams in love letters. While the apothecary John Lovell dramatised how ‘My Imagination frequently conducts me into your Presence when I am asleep’ in 1757, the brewer Francis Cobb wrote to Charlotte Mary Curwen in 1805 that ‘My thoughts, both sleeping & waking, have been intirely with you.’<sup>97</sup> While the symptoms of love could be shared by men, lovesickness remained solely a female malady. The disease involved an extension of these ailments, as sighing, languishing women were consumed by their fantasies to sink into a semi-permanent languor.

The signs and symptoms of love were dramatised in literature, which is the subject of the third section of this chapter. The enduring impact of classical poetry meant that certain phrases used in the eighteenth century had routinely been employed by lovers for centuries before. New editions of *Ars Amatoria* (*The Art of Love*) by the Roman poet Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) (43BC-17CE) claimed that his advice could ‘with very little force of imagination, be made applicable to love affairs of the present day.’<sup>98</sup> His suitors were enrolled in ‘Cupid’s school’, inscribing their names in ‘Cupid’s Rolls.’<sup>99</sup> Men were advised to use their linguistic flair to flatter ‘hollow’ women into marriage:

By flatteries we prevail on woman-kind,  
 As hollow banks by streams are undermin’d.  
 Tell her, her face is fair: her eyes are sweet:  
 Her taper fingers praise, and little feet.  
 Such praises e’en the chaste are pleas’d to hear;

<sup>94</sup> Diary of Hurst, January 27<sup>th</sup> and September 28<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Chimera / chimaera, *n.*’, OEDO, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/31708?redirectedFrom=chimera>

<sup>96</sup> Diary of Hurst, November 12<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM.

<sup>97</sup> John Lovell to Sarah Harvey, Bath, August 28<sup>th</sup> 1757, 161/102/2, WSA. Cobb to Curwen, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1805, EK/U1453/C287/1, EKAC.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Notes on Ovid’s Art of Love’, p. 275.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2. Cupid was invoked in a wide range of eighteenth-century ballads, where lovers were described as being ‘under Cupids Banner’, ‘in Cupids yoke’, ‘of Cupids fold’ and ‘shot by Cupids arrow.’ Based on key-word search of EBBA on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

Both maids and matrons hold their beauty dear.<sup>100</sup>

The success of flattery was a historical variable, with the culture of sensibility in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries placing increasing emphasis upon the *avoidance* of flattery. When the politician Henry Goulburn wrote a love poem to his sweetheart Jane Montagu in 1811, he deliberately eschewed flattering her physical features, promising, ‘I will not say that thou art fair, / Nor praise the lustre of thine eye...But when I sing, my theme shall be / The matchless beauty of thy mind.’<sup>101</sup>

Compared to his advice for men, Ovid’s recommendations for courting women were more superficial. Tips included dressing to emphasise their best features, adopting a feminine poise, and generally being well turned-out for when a man made his advances.<sup>102</sup> The paradoxical nature of Ovid’s advice reveals the unambiguous dichotomy between male activity and female passivity during courtship.

Ovid’s guide laid the foundation for texts such as Andreas Capellanus’ *De Arte Honestae Amicitiae* (*The Art of Courtly Love*), known as *De Amore* (c. 1185). Courtly love (*amour courtois*) was crafted by troubadour poets in twelfth century France, spreading throughout the courts of Europe and becoming a guiding force in the idea of romantic love as a heroic pursuit.<sup>103</sup> The troubadour phrase *fin’amors* (‘true love’ or ‘refined love’) represented an idealised relationship where the male lover worshipped an unattainable noble lady with almost religious fervour, performing chivalrous deeds to win her favour. By subordinating desire to love, troubadours believed they could create a joy ‘a hundred times’ better than desire alone, incorporating an ‘enduring dualism’ between love and sexual longing into romantic love in Western culture.<sup>104</sup> Courtly romance was enshrined in manifold tales such as Chrétien de Troyes’ *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart* in c. 1170 and King René d’Anjou’s *Le Livre du Cœur d’Amours Espris* (*The Book of the Heart Possessed by Love*) in c. 1457.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ovid, *Art of Love*, p. 26.

<sup>101</sup> Goulburn to Montagu, 1811, 304/D/Box 2, SHC.

<sup>102</sup> Ovid, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-76.

<sup>103</sup> On Ovid and Capellanus see Jennifer G. Wollock, *Rethinking Chivalry and Courtly Love* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 32-3, 40-3. In line with Dronke and Goody, this thesis does not argue that the troubadours *invented* love, rather that they created influential new ways of expressing it. See Chapter 1, pp. 23-4.

<sup>104</sup> Reddy, *Making of Romantic Love*, p. 2 and Pamela Norris, *Words of Love: Passionate Women from Heloise to Sylvia Plath* (London, 2006), p. 124.

<sup>105</sup> On courtly love also see Pamela Porter, *Courtly Love in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 2003) and Bernard O’Donoghue, *The Courtly Love Tradition* (Manchester, 1982).

Courtly modes of expression fell in and out of vogue; when the Quaker flour merchant Thomas Kirton wrote to his future wife Olive Lloyd in 1734, he recognised that,

I know Heroick Love, and Friendship are things out of Fashion, and thought fit only for Knights Errant, and to Love with discretion or in plain English...is the most generally rec<sup>d</sup> Notion: But I condemn their low Ideas, 'Tis thy Noble mind, as well as comely Personage, I so much admire.<sup>106</sup>

As Thomas noted, heroic love was out of fashion as a means of romantic expression at the beginning of our period. Nonetheless, this did not stop him from using chivalric language anyway, demonstrating how individuals adopted or rejected particular conventions as they pleased. Heroic knights and angelic maids enjoyed a renaissance in the late 1770s and 1780s, appearing with increasing frequency in the letters of lovers.<sup>107</sup> The resurgence may have been inspired by Gothic novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), discussed later in this chapter.<sup>108</sup> Fifteen years after the novel's publication in 1779, John Eccles praised Mary Hays as 'A maid of pure, angelic mind', mirroring the historic construction of courtly maidens such as Guenevere.<sup>109</sup> In return, she praised his knightly qualities, as 'the guard of my honor [*sic*] and character.'<sup>110</sup> Contemporary obsession with chivalry inspired Walter Scott's (1771-1832) best-selling poem 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' in 1802, ensuring the continuing domination of chivalrous knights and fair maidens in perpetuating the heavenly power of love.<sup>111</sup>

Lovers such as Troilus and Cressida were invoked by writers to encapsulate the torment of unfaithful love.<sup>112</sup> The novelist Mary Hays dramatically likened

<sup>106</sup> Kirton to Lloyd, Rimpton, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1734, TEMP MSS 210/2/96, LSF.

<sup>107</sup> This supports Mark Girouard's notion of a 'Return to Camelot' in British art, architecture and literature from c. 1788. See *idem*, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (London, 1981), esp. pp. 16-38. For the language of gallantry in fiction see Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp. 35, 39.

<sup>108</sup> See Chapter 5, p. 184 for further discussion of Gothic fiction.

<sup>109</sup> Eccles to Hays, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1779, Letter XXXII, in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 67.

<sup>110</sup> Hays quoted in a letter from Eccles, Letter XLI, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>111</sup> As Scott famously wrote, 'Love rules the court, the camp, the grove, / And men below, and saints above; / For love is heaven, and heaven is love', Canto Third, II, *The Select Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (London, 1802; 1849), p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> The couple had been widely known from the twelfth century, where Troilus was a Greek warrior rather than a lover in histories of the Trojan War. See Barry Windeatt (ed.) *Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde* (London, c. 1381-6; 2003), p. xvi.

herself to Cressida in 1779, writing that ‘If I am false, or swerve from truth and love....To stab the heart of perjury in maids, / Let it be said, “false as Maria Hays.”’<sup>113</sup> The romantic poet John Keats also empathised with Troilus’ predicament in 1819, describing how his ‘greatest torment’ was that Fanny Brawne was ‘a little inclined to the Cressid’, as he was constantly fearful of her infidelity.<sup>114</sup> The romance of ‘Troilus and Criseida’ and her affair with the warrior Diomedes was the subject of Giovanni Boccaccio’s poem ‘Il Filostrato’ in the early fourteenth century, inspiring Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1381-6) and William Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), which subsequently became the most popular version of the tale. By adopting these characters in their love letters, Mary and John simultaneously demonstrated their learning whilst articulating complex emotional states. They may have used guides such as *The Beauties of Shakespeare* to select the most emotive passages, which recommended the description of Cressida’s falsehood as chosen by Mary Hays as a fitting ‘Protestation of Love.’<sup>115</sup> Through using these figures to understand the changing dynamics of their relationships, writers applied the drama and deceit of courtly love to their own lives.

Shakespeare’s plays enjoyed continued popularity over the eighteenth century, with *Romeo and Juliet* becoming the apogee of tragic love. The play was watched by the tailor’s daughter Sarah Hurst in London on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1761, remarking in her diary that David Garrick and Mrs. Cibber were ‘both inimitable in the Characters, what a man was Shakespear.’<sup>116</sup> Public interest reached its peak with the creation of John Boydell’s (1719-1804) Shakespeare Gallery on Pall Mall in 1792. The Gallery contained four iconic scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*; the lovers’ first meeting,<sup>117</sup> Juliet anxiously awaiting her wedding,<sup>118</sup> Romeo climbing from

<sup>113</sup> As Cressida proclaimed, ‘Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood, / As false as Cressid.’ *Ibid.*, Act III, Scene 2, p. 75. Hays to Eccles, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1779, Letter LXVI, in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 128.

<sup>114</sup> Keats to Brawne, undated, c. February 1820, Letter XII, in Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, pp. 47-8. Also see Wollstonecraft to Godwin, teasing ‘whether you ever kissed a maiden fair’, August 6<sup>th</sup> 1796, Abinger MS c40, fol. 11, BLO.

<sup>115</sup> *The Beauties of Shakespeare Selected from his Plays and Poems* (Dublin, 1783), p. 137.

<sup>116</sup> Diary of Hurst, November 7<sup>th</sup> 1761, MS 3544, HM. Sarah watched *Hamlet* and *Othello* (twice) in 1759, *King Lear* in 1761 and *Henry VIII* in 1762, reading *As You Like It*, *Henry IV, Part I*, *Henry VI, Parts I and II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II* and *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1762, MS 3542-5.

<sup>117</sup> Act I, Scene V, ‘Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much...For saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch’, No. XXXII, John Boydell, *A catalogue of the pictures, &c. in the Shakespeare Gallery, Pall-Mall* (London, 1796), p. 72.

<sup>118</sup> Act II, Scene V, ‘Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that; Say either, and I’ll stay the circumstance’, No. XXXIV, *ibid.*, p. 198.

Juliet's balcony,<sup>119</sup> and Romeo poisoning himself.<sup>120</sup> The star-crossed lovers were invoked in newspaper reports of breach of promise trials as the epitome of doomed romance, dramatising how Juliet waited 'at the tomb of Capulet, lamenting her lost Romeo.'<sup>121</sup> Writers such as John Keats referenced Romeo in their love letters, who confirmed the image of the impetuous suitor 'going off in warm blood' in pursuit of love. Keats also cited passages from *The Tempest* such as "'I cry to dream again.'"<sup>122</sup> Such usages were typical of professional writers, who repeatedly referenced luminaries such as Shakespeare in conceptualising their romantic struggles. As Keats wrote to Fanny Brawne in c. 1819-20, 'What would Rousseau have said at seeing our little correspondence!...I don't care much – I would sooner have Shakespeare's opinion about the matter.'<sup>123</sup>

At this point in his relationship, Keats had been reading Rousseau's famous adaptation of the romance of the philosopher Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and his beautiful young pupil Héloïse (c. 1101-64).<sup>124</sup> The tale had a profound impact upon eighteenth-century couples, with John Hughes' translated paraphrase of their letters in 1714 inspiring Alexander Pope's poem 'Eloisa to Abelard' in 1717. The poem brought to life the emotional power of Abelard's letters when read by Heloise:

SOON as thy letters, trembling, I uncloze,  
That well-known name awakens all my woes.  
Oh name for ever sad! for ever dear!  
Still breath'd in sighs, still usher'd with a tear.<sup>125</sup>

Pope's poem revelled in romanticism and increased the public's appetite for France's most famous couple, whose letters were already published in eleven new editions by

<sup>119</sup> Act III, Scene V, 'Farewell, farewell! one kiss, and I'll descend', No. XXXV, *ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>120</sup> Act V, Scene III, 'Here's to my love! – [Drinks.] O, true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick. – Thus, with a kiss I die', No. LVI, *ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>121</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, June 19<sup>th</sup> 1801, Issue 10237. Also quoted in Chapter 7, pp. 244-5.

<sup>122</sup> Keats to Brawne, undated and 19<sup>th</sup> October 1819, Letters IX, XXXI in Forman, *Letters of John Keats*, pp. 38, 83-4.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter XXVIII, pp. 77-8.

<sup>124</sup> Abelard was also a theologian, musician and poet, entering the Benedictine monastery of Saint Denis after his relationship with Héloïse resulted in his castration. Keats recognised the dangerous influence of these letters in encouraging hyperbole, admitting that, 'I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a Letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night – 'twas too much like one out of Rousseau's Heloise. I am more reasonable this morning.' Keats to Brawne, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1819, Letter I, in *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>125</sup> Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard' in *idem, A collection of Essays, Epistles and Odes* (London, 1758), p. 124. The letters were also quoted in Mary Hays' novel *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, p. 71.

1773. Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) made an apt romantic gift, with Mary Wollstonecraft sending William Godwin the last volume in 1796 'to remind you, when you write to me in verse, not to chuse the easiest task, my perfections; but to dwell on your own feelings – that is to say, give me a bird's-eye-view of your heart.'<sup>126</sup> Mary's letters reveal the hope that *Héloïse* would help William to actualize his feelings. The tailor's daughter Sarah Hurst was equally moved by the candour of the letters in 1761, praising how 'the tenderness of these letters pierces my very soul.' Sarah's identification with Héloïse was encouraged by her own fraught romance with Henry Smith, writing that 'none who have not experienc'd the enthusiasm of lov [*sic*] can relish their beauties.'<sup>127</sup> She mused that 'much ought to be imitated & much avoided; one sees in Eloisa, a hapless victim to youthfull [*sic*] folly called love & the false step it caus'd her to make.'<sup>128</sup> While readers identified with the romances of literary couples, these also provided a warning of the dangers of love and potentially fatal consequences for those involved.

The eighteenth century witnessed the birth of the epistolary novel, prioritising the role of letter-writing in the formation of a person's identity and actualization of their emotions.<sup>129</sup> Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) presented letters as vehicles for a person's innermost thoughts, with Pamela recording and developing her feelings for Mr. B in letters to her parents.<sup>130</sup> The letters provide a vehicle for the novel's power struggles, and are hidden under a rosebush by Pamela in an attempt to conceal them from Mr. B. Pamela's parcel is later discovered by Mrs. Jewkes and given straight to him, causing Pamela great angst that 'he will see all my private thoughts of him, and all my Secrets.'<sup>131</sup> The seizure of her letters displays Mr. B's power over Pamela, as her voyeuristic master, suitor and social superior. The novel developed the notion of women as virtuous, chaste, modest and sincere, whereas

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<sup>126</sup> Wollstonecraft to Godwin, July 1<sup>st</sup> 1796, No. 1, MS Abinger c40, fols. 1-2, BLO. Also quoted in Chapter 2, p. 85. For the impact and popularity of the text see Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (Middlesex, 1985), pp. 225-49.

<sup>127</sup> Diary of Hurst, November 18<sup>th</sup> 1761, MS3544, HM.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, November 28<sup>th</sup> 1761.

<sup>129</sup> Robert Adams Day has found that 200 out of every 500 works published between 1660 and 1740 (40%) used an epistolary structure. See *idem*, *Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction before Richardson* (Michigan, 1966), p. 2.

<sup>130</sup> In a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson later described this style as 'writing, to the moment', 14<sup>th</sup> February 1754 in John Carroll (ed.) *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1964), p. 289.

<sup>131</sup> Richardson, *Pamela*, pp. 226-8, 241-2.

Richardson's male characters were governed by their strong passions.<sup>132</sup> These drove them to impetuous acts such as kidnap, as committed by Lovelace in *Clarissa* (1747-8) and Pollexfen in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4).

In Richardson's *Clarissa*, the sheer volume of letters means that they 'replace the narrated events; it is the act of writing them that forms the action of the novel.'<sup>133</sup> Like the concealment and seizure of Pamela's missives, control over Clarissa's letters is used as a means of power, with the heroine's family confiscating her pens and ink in an attempt to isolate her and force her to marry the boorish Roger Solmes.<sup>134</sup> Richardson's *Clarissa* was the victim of love, with her kidnap and isolation causing a slow, painful decline and eventual death. Her symptoms included frailty, fainting fits, 'dimmed' eyesight and tremors in her limbs. The author broke down the gradual onslaught of her illness for readers:

Who would have thought that...I should be so long a dying! – But see how by little and little it has come to this. I was first taken off from the power of *walking*: then I took a *coach* – a coach grew too violent an exercise: then I took a *chair*...Next, I was unable to go to *church*; then to go *up* or *down stairs*; now hardly can move from one *room* to *another*...My *eyes* begin to fail me, so that at times I cannot see to read distinctly; and now I can hardly *write* or hold a pen.<sup>135</sup>

Clarissa's untimely death left Richardson inundated with letters from critics demanding that the novel end happily, as with Pamela's marriage to Mr. B. However he insisted that Clarissa's death provided a Christian model of how to live and die which would be rewarded in heaven.<sup>136</sup> As with notions of female passivity disseminated in courtly romances, Richardson's novels played a guiding role in

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<sup>132</sup> For the key doctrines of sentimentalism presented in *Pamela* see Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, pp. 157-8. For an in-depth analysis of the novel's publication and reception see Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, *Pamela in the Marketplace: Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005).

<sup>133</sup> John Preston, 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses: Epistolary Narrative and Moral Discovery', *French Studies*, Issue 24, No. 1 (January, 1970), p. 24. For readers' reception of the text see Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>134</sup> However their efforts were unsuccessful, as she had hidden 'half a dozen crow-quills...in as many different places' to enable her to continue communicating with Lovelace and her friend Anna Howe. Richardson, *Clarissa*, L79, Clarissa to Howe, p. 324.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, L464, Belford to Lovelace, pp. 1336-7.

<sup>136</sup> Jocelyn Harris, 'Introduction' in Keymer (ed.) *Samuel Richardson's Published Commentary on Clarissa 1747-65*, Vol. I (London, 1998), p. xviii-xix.

propagating the view of women as victims of love, whereas the sexually voracious man was a ‘beast of prey.’<sup>137</sup>

Gothic novels once again adopted the mantle of virtuous women as the victims of scheming men, beginning with Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Gothic texts were owned by suitors studied in this thesis such as the cotton-trader Joseph Strutt, who later bequeathed Ann Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) to his daughter Isabella Galton.<sup>138</sup> Like the dramatic kidnaps and elopements in Richardson’s novels, Adeline in Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest* makes a number of theatrical escapes to avoid marrying the depraved Marquis de Montalt before eloping with her ‘handsome’ suitor Theodore.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Emily St. Aubert in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is almost forced to marry the abhorrent Count Morano by the scheming Montoni, and is encouraged to elope by the courtly ‘chevalier’ Valancourt before finally escaping with another admirer.<sup>140</sup> As Robert Miles has argued, Radcliffe’s most significant innovation was to expand Walpole’s characterisation of ‘the heroine in flight from a patriarchal ogre in a European setting.’<sup>141</sup> Through the lens of a young woman’s marriage, the novels attacked tyrannical fathers and marriages of convenience as ‘feudal remnants.’ In contrast, the eventual union of chivalrous heroes and virtuous heroines revelled in the ideology of marriage for love.<sup>142</sup>

The rise of sensibility from the late 1770s revelled in weeping emotional lovers such as the protagonists of Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) and Mary Hays’ *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796).<sup>143</sup> The heroine of Hays’ novel recognised the impact of romances such as Abelard and Heloise in feeding her

<sup>137</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, L317, Howe to Clarissa, p. 1016.

<sup>138</sup> Inventory and valuation of goods bequeathed from Jos. Strutt to Isabella Galton in 1844, D3772/E42/2/3, DRO. Unfortunately due to the nature of inventories as sources it is impossible to know when and how Joseph acquired these books. For an exemplary study using inventories as sources see Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*.

<sup>139</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* (London, 1791), Vol. II, p. 176 and Vol. III p. 283.

<sup>140</sup> Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (London, 1794), Vol. I, p. 350, Vol. II, p. 94.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Miles, ‘The 1790s: the Effulgence of Gothic’ in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.) *Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 46.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48. Also see Hogle, ‘Gothic’ in Joel Faflak and Julia M. Wright (eds.) *A Handbook of Romanticism Studies* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 195-212 and Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh, 2005).

<sup>143</sup> On the literature of Sensibility see Susan Manning, ‘Sensibility’ in Keymer and Jon Mee (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 80-99, Frevert, *Emotions in History*, pp. 108-12 and Julie Ellison, ‘Sensibility’ in Faflak and Wright, *Handbook of Romanticism Studies*, pp. 38-53.



sensibility, as her school friends ‘procured for me romances from a neighbouring library, which at every interval of leisure I perused with inconceivable avidity.’<sup>144</sup>

She spent the majority of the novel crying:

After the rude stare of curiosity...was gratified, I was left to sob alone.<sup>145</sup>

I wept, I suffered my tears to flow unrestrained.<sup>146</sup>

I burst into tears – I could not help it.<sup>147</sup>

I endeavoured in vain to repress its sensations, and burst into a flood of tears.<sup>148</sup>

The novel was shaped by Mary’s own doomed romance with John Eccles between 1779 and 1780, where she described how ‘The tears which flow from reading a tragical tale are not unpleasing, they soften while they distress. – Sensibility, be thou ever mine!’<sup>149</sup> Such language was by no means confined to literary women, with the Quaker banker Paul Moon James also declaring that ‘sensibility must be Love’s best advocate.’<sup>150</sup> Mary and Paul’s letters demonstrate how particular social movements brought new modes of expression into fashion, which were eagerly adopted by lovers to characterise the intensity of their emotions.

The heroines of Jane Austen’s novels were each in ardent pursuit of love, with Julia Bertram ‘quite ready to be fallen in love with’ and Marianne Dashwood ‘so desperately in love’ that she was ‘quite an altered creature.’<sup>151</sup> A search of

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<sup>144</sup> Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp. 20, 25. ‘In the course of my researches, the Heloise of Rousseau fell into my hands. – Ah! with what transport, with what enthusiasm, did I peruse this dangerous, enchanting, work!’

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>149</sup> Hays to Eccles, November 21<sup>st</sup> 1779, Letter CI in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 176. For further examples see letters from Wollstonecraft to Imlay, such as Letter IV, Paris, September 1793 and Letter XI, Paris, January 1794 in Ingpen, *Love Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, pp. 8, 22-3. Goethe also encouraged his readers to shed tears over Werther’s fate, using the term on fifty separate occasions to describe ‘a thousand tears’, ‘a torrent of tears’ and ‘delicious tears.’ Even in the preface he asked readers, ‘to his fate you will not deny your tears.’ Based on key-word search of Project Gutenberg e-book on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

<sup>150</sup> James to Lloyd, June 29<sup>th</sup> 1806, TEMP MSS 493/9/19/1/3, LSF.

<sup>151</sup> Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 134, *Mansfield Park* (London, 1814; 2007), p. 33. Kathryn Sutherland has drawn parallels between *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and Mary Hays’ *Emma Courtney*, arguing that female protagonists drafted in the 1790s created a timely criticism of ‘the patriarchal family and of the vulnerability within its structures of the romantic and dependent young woman.’ In contrast, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* represented ‘the shift in the novel...towards a more complex siting of the individual in society’, *idem*, ‘Jane Austen and the Serious Modern Novel’ in Keymer and Mee, *Cambridge Companion to English Literature*, pp. 250-2.

Literature Online reveals that the word ‘love’ appeared 76 times in *Sense and Sensibility*, 92 times in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and an overwhelming 124 times in *Mansfield Park* (1814). On this criterion alone, Austen’s novels outweighed even Goethe’s *Sorrows of Young Werther* (61 instances) and Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest* (75 examples).<sup>152</sup> Austen’s romantic tales were shaped by characters such as Richardson’s impetuous Lovelace and Radcliffe’s villainous Montoni, with certain literary scholars interpreting the brooding Mr. Darcy as an ‘enigmatic Gothic hero.’<sup>153</sup> Love and the letter continued to be inextricably linked, with the courtship of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* confirming the indispensable role of letters in constructing a person’s identity. After Elizabeth refuses his proposal, Darcy’s letter justifies his actions, causing her ‘a contrariety of emotion’ and ‘perturbed state of mind, with thoughts that could rest on nothing.’ After studying every sentence, Elizabeth cries “‘How despicably have I acted!’”<sup>154</sup>

The popularity of these romantic tales demonstrates the immense influence of literature in raising the expectations of couples and helping particular linguistic strategies to flourish. David Perkins argues that in their daily lives, ‘the Romantics heard poetry more than most of us do’, encouraging a climate of romantic idealism, as individuals read poetry aloud with family and friends.<sup>155</sup> Henry William Bunbury’s *A Tale of Love* (Fig. 37) was published in 1786 during the first flourish of Romanticism.<sup>156</sup> It encapsulates the escapism of romantic tales, as a group in fancy dress gather on a balcony to hear a love story. The combination of the men’s costumes and balcony setting suggests that they may have been reading Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The woman reading frowns as the seated listeners tilt their heads in a communal expression of sympathy for the plight of the heroine.

<sup>152</sup> Based on key-word search for ‘love’ and particular authors under category ‘Prose’ on Literature Online. Figures taken from original editions rather than subsequent Penguin Classics where possible.

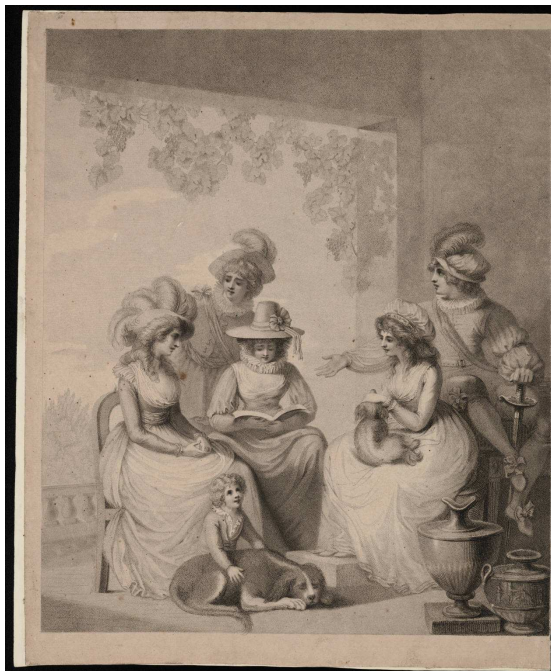
<sup>153</sup> Paul Giles, ‘The Gothic Dialogue in *Pride & Prejudice*’, *Text and Context*, 2 (1988), pp. 68-75 and Sarah Wootton, ‘The Byronic in Jane Austen’s “Persuasion” and “Pride and Prejudice”’, *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (January, 2007), pp. 27-8.

<sup>154</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London, 1813), Vol. III, pp. 165-6.

<sup>155</sup> David Perkins, ‘How the Romantics Recited Poetry’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1991), p. 656. Nonetheless as Vickery reminds us, while novels ‘glamorized romantic experience...new idioms do not necessarily connote new behaviour’, *Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 41. Similarly, Judith Schneid Lewis describes how by 1860 ‘a young woman might well feel obligated to be “in love,” since that had come to be expected as necessary for marital success’, *In the Family Way: Childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Jersey, 1986), pp. 19, 30-1.

<sup>156</sup> In their introduction to *A Handbook of Romanticism Studies*, Faflak and Wright date English Romanticism as a literary movement to c. 1785, with the publication of early volumes by William Blake, Robert Burns, and Charlotte Smith. See *idem*, p. 3.

The sleeping dog in the foreground can be interpreted as a symbol of masculine virility or a sign of devotion, invoking the loyalty of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers.



**Fig. 37 – Henry William Bunbury, *A Tale of Love*, London, 1786, stipple engraving and etching, sheet 44.4 x 35.7cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 786.03.03.01.1.**

The swooning, lovesick heroines analysed in this chapter only fuelled the idea that love was a female preoccupation, when in reality most romantic poetry was written by men. The men studied in this thesis repeatedly quoted poetry to demonstrate their education and convey their passion with literary flair. The Derbyshire cotton-trader Joseph Strutt selected a dramatic passage from James Thomson's 'Winter' (1726) to evoke life as a 'scene of toil.'<sup>157</sup> The Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II chose Edward Young's melancholic 'Night Thoughts' (1742-5) to conceptualise his love for Elizabeth Grey, changing Young's 'Think'st thou the theme intoxicates my song' to 'Think'st thou the Theme intoxicates my Pen.'<sup>158</sup> He also adapted Oliver Goldsmith's *The Traveller; or, A Prospect of Society*, replacing the word 'brother' with 'Bessy': 'My heart untravelled

<sup>157</sup> Strutt to Douglas, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1787, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/9, BCA.

<sup>158</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Bordeaux, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6555, No. 10, BLARS.

fondly turns to thee / Still to my Bessy turns with ceaseless pain / & drags at each remove a lengthening Chain.' Goldsmith's prose was selected as 'a Quotation that is truly descriptive of my Feeling', allowing Samuel to express his romantic agony in the style of fashionable new authors.<sup>159</sup> Neither Joseph nor Samuel named their source, flattering the recipient by presuming their knowledge of the author.

A notable proportion of men also composed poetry of their own. In 1757 the Quaker gentleman Richard How II wrote 'a verse compos'd on the death of a Lady's Lapdog' during the breakdown of his relationship with Elizabeth Johnson. He eulogised, 'Mourn all ye Nymphs, the fatal Loss deplore, Tho frdshps Lost to be regain'd no more', writing, 'whether sufficiently expressive let others judge.'<sup>160</sup> Educated gentleman such as Richard would have been familiar with a range of classical authors. He may have been inspired by the Roman poet Gaius Valerius Catullus' lament on the death of his lover's sparrow, which also began 'Mourn and wail, O ye Venuses and Cupids!'<sup>161</sup> The London gentleman John Eccles (1779), Derbyshire cotton-trader Joseph Strutt (1786), Quaker banker Paul Moon James (1808) and politician Henry Goulburn (1811) also composed original poetry for their sweethearts, illuminating the role of romantic verse as a key vehicle for masculine wooing.<sup>162</sup> It enabled men to set themselves apart from competing suitors by showcasing their education and refinement, as in Ovid's *Art of Love*, reinforcing our view of courtship as a decidedly masculine pursuit.

Given the prevalence of conduct literature in society as a whole, it is highly likely that writers would have been aware of prescribed forms of expression in published letter-writing guides. These were widespread as early as the sixteenth century, with practically-minded *Secretaries* appearing c.1687, *Letter-Writers* proliferating c.1750 and *Arts of Correspondence* c.1790.<sup>163</sup> Manuals were cheaper than novels, costing just one shilling in London until the 1790s, when they rose to

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, Clarges Street, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6546, No. 1.

<sup>160</sup> How II to Johnson, c. 1757, HW87/224, BLARS.

<sup>161</sup> Catullus, Song 3 in Dorothea Wender, *Roman Poetry: From the Republic to the Silver Age* (Carbondale, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>162</sup> Eccles to Hays, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1779, Letter XXXII, in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 68, Jos. Strutt to Douglas, January 25<sup>th</sup> 1786, MS 3101/C/E/4/8/1, BCA, James to Lloyd, pre-1808, TEMP MSS 403/9/19/1/1, 2, 15, 19, LSF, and Goulburn to Montagu, 1811, 304/D/Box 2, SHC.

<sup>163</sup> Bannet, *British and American Letter-Writing Manuals, 1680-1810*, Vol. I, Academies of Complement, 1680-1806 (London, 2008), pp. xiii-xiv. For manuals in America see Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 15-16 and Spanish America see Earl, 'Letters and Love', pp. 32-40.

two shillings.<sup>164</sup> Manuals for love letters formed a distinct genre of their own, and were repeatedly reissued under the belief that that there were ‘no kinds of epistolary writing requiring so much attention as those relating to Love and Marriage.’<sup>165</sup> Others such as Reverend Thomas Cooke’s *The Universal Letter-Writer; or, New Art of Polite Correspondence* (1788) contained an entire section over thirty pages long dedicated to ‘Love, Courtship, and Marriage.’<sup>166</sup> Awareness of these conventions was vital, with the poet Eleanor Anne Porden threatening to buy the explorer John Franklin a second-hand copy of *The Complete Letter Writer* during their courtship in December 1822. The text was intended ‘for your especial use’ after John dared to send his literary lover a number of lacklustre letters which were overtly factual, concise and uninspiring.<sup>167</sup>

These ‘template’ letters reinforced traditional gender roles during courtship as men made their first gallant addresses, which were received with caution and surprise. The female author of Letter LXIX described how ‘I Received your letter last night, and as it was on a subject I had not yet any thoughts of, you will not wonder when tell I you [*sic*] I was a good deal surprized.’<sup>168</sup> She then declared that,

there is one particular to which I have a very strong objection, which is this: You say that you live along with your mother, yet you don’t say that you have either communicated your sentiments to her, or your other relations...If you can clear this up to my satisfaction, I shall send you a more explicit answer.<sup>169</sup>

In reality, women would not have used such direct or challenging language, and would certainly not have promised to be more ‘explicit’ after a man had resolved particular issues. The letter suggests that writing guides were read more for entertainment than education, as readers could follow the story of a particular couple from their first meeting to their eventual marriage.<sup>170</sup> The courtship analysed above resulted in blissful matrimony, with the woman praising that ‘I never knew

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<sup>164</sup> Bannet, *Empire of Letters*, pp. xi, 12.

<sup>165</sup> Anon, *The New lover’s instructor; or, Whole art of Courtship* (London, c. 1780), p. 6.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas Cooke, *The Universal Letter-Writer; Or, New Art of Polite Correspondence* (London, 1788), pp. 61-99.

<sup>167</sup> Porden to Franklin, Hastings, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1822, D3311/8/1/10, DRO. It led her to complain that ‘you are glad to fling the pens in the fire, and seek amusement in any other form – nevertheless I must confess you have a little disappointed me.’

<sup>168</sup> Letter LXIX, ‘The Lady’s Answer’ in Cooke, *The Universal Letter-Writer*, p. 62.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> For a similar view see Whyman, *Pen and the People*, pp. 28-9.

happiness till now.’<sup>171</sup> Such guides are valuable to this thesis as they construct courtship as a man’s game while extolling the virtues of marriage.<sup>172</sup> However they by no means represent the epistolary realities of romantic love.<sup>173</sup> The connection between conduct literature and fiction is demonstrated by Richardson’s *Pamela*, which was initially constructed as a conduct book before being refashioned into a novel.

Nonetheless, letter-writing manuals still reflect the dominant themes of romantic culture. *The Art of Courtship; or, the School of Love* (c. 1775) listed three pages of ‘Witty and ingenious Sentences’ for men to use during courtship:

You walk in artificial Clouds, and bathe your Lips in sweet Dalliances.  
 Report could never have got a sweeter Air to fly in than your Breath.  
 Not the Mountain Ice congeal’d to Crystal, is more bright than you.  
 The Sun never met the Summer with more Joy.<sup>174</sup>

The purpose of these phrases was to help potential suitors impress women with their knowledge of romantic conventions and extravagant metaphors. These likened women to the stars, angels, crystals, and a warm summer’s day. Such phrases were designed to entertain readers with their sparkling wit, and perhaps inspire flights of fancy of their own. The extravagant metaphors printed in *The Art of Courtship* strongly reflect the language used by men in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, influenced by the emergence of romanticism. The Yorkshire bridle-maker John Fawdington drew liberally upon ambient metaphors in his letters to Jane Jefferson in 1787, proclaiming, ‘Many a time have I wander’d alone in the Fields by Moonlight & in my usual Romantic Way whisper’d to the Passing Breeze a tender

<sup>171</sup> Letter LXXVI to her unmarried cousin remarked that ‘To have a real friend to whom I can communicate my secrets, and who, on all occasions, is ready to sympathize with me, is what I never before experienced. All these benefits, my dear cousin, I have met with my beloved husband’, Cooke, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>172</sup> Guides hinted at the various reasons a man or woman should marry, with the writer of Letter LXXVII asking a woman to be his wife as ‘if business continues to increase, I shall be greatly in want of one of your prudence, to manage my domestic affairs’, p. 70. She responded in Letter LXXVIII to her brother that ‘I have another reason for entering into the marriage state, and that is, I would chuse, as I advance in years, to have a friend to whom might at all times be able to open my mind with freedom’, pp. 70-1. Also see Fig. 1, Chapter 1, p. 26.

<sup>173</sup> Leonie Hannan has discovered that certain manuals paraphrased letters published several decades earlier, while others reproduced them wholesale, demonstrating that they by no means represented genuine exchanges between writers. See *idem*, ‘Women, Letter-Writing and the Life of the Mind’, pp. 66-70. For an opposing view see Bound, ‘Writing the Self?’, pp. 4-7.

<sup>174</sup> *The Art of Courtship; or, the School of Love* (London, c. 1775), pp. 14-16.

tale...thou art all my Riches and all my Hope.’<sup>175</sup> Similarly, the Quaker banker Paul Moon James wrote numerous poems to his sweetheart likening her to a ‘beauteous flow’r’ and their love to an ‘opening bud.’<sup>176</sup> The dramatic metaphors used in these letters demonstrate how men’s romantic language had become particularly prone to hyperbole towards the end of our period, drawing upon natural metaphors which were well-known among literate lovers.



**Fig. 38 – *The Tunbridge Love Letter & The Lady's Answer to the Tunbridge Love Letter*, London, 1794, printed 1815, etching, plate mark 25.5 x 35cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 794.05.12.20.**

Other publications such as *The Tunbridge Love Letter* (1794) provided romantic puzzles for readers to complete, costing just sixpence to purchase (Fig. 38). It began with a relatively simple phrase for individuals to decode:



‘Your Ladyship may well be in a maze’

The puzzle then progressed to more complex images based on widely-known models of romantic love:

<sup>175</sup> Fawdinton to Jefferson, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1787, Z. 640/7, NYRO.

<sup>176</sup> ‘To Olivia Lloyd’, undated, pre-1808, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1807, TEMP MSS 403/9/19/1/15, 19, LSF.



'had I wings I would fly to your feet'



'neither time nor will can alter my heart'

The puzzle reveals popular interest in the expression of love, and widespread knowledge of the conventions of romance. The overblown language satirises the melodramatic gestures of romanticism, with images proclaiming, 'had I wings I would fly to your feet' and 'neither time nor will can alter my heart.' *The Lady's Answer* would have been especially comical because of her frank rejection of the gentleman's advances. She disposed of the usual conventions of female modesty to blast her suitor for being 'Dull as death' and accused him of having 'lost your senses' in propositioning her. The puzzle demonstrates that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the conventions of romantic love were widely understood, allowing them to be parodied for readers' amusement and decoded by writers to reveal the dominant themes of romance.<sup>177</sup>

To conclude, the themes analysed in this chapter have clearly illustrated that the language of love was neither innate nor unchanging, but a learned style crafted within a number of historically specific frameworks. Just because particular modes of expression were deemed 'in vogue' or 'fashionable' at a particular moment, they were not necessarily embraced by all writers at the same time, as individuals consciously selected or rejected the tropes which best reflected their own identity and emotions at a given moment. Texts such as *The Bible* and *Book of Common Prayer* were only invoked by particularly devout lovers, providing a fruitful means of developing a mutual bond through theological debate. Romantic love in Quaker letters is marked by its interiority, as writers eschewed physical declarations to locate their emotions in the soul. While certain writers used *Paradise Lost* to formulate romantic resentment, others utilised the same text to declare their love, adapting the

<sup>177</sup> For additional linguistic puzzles see *An hieroglyphic epistle from a [macaroni] to a modern fine [lady]*, 1770, 799.10.21.02, *The answer An hieroglyphic epistle from a modern fine [lady] to a maccaronny [sic] [gentleman]* 1770, 799.10.21.03, *An hieroglyphic epistle from a [sailor] on board a [ship] [to] his sweet [heart]*, 1776, 799.10.21.06, and *An hieroglyphic poetical epistle from [a gentleman] to [a lady]*, 1770, engraved 1814, 799.10.21.04, LWL.



verse to their own purposes. A person's mood determined the literature they chose; jealous or insecure writers might select Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, while the melancholic could opt for Young's 'Night Thoughts.' Citing these texts was a mark of education and refinement, and they were frequently quoted without explicitly naming the source, flattering the recipient by presuming their shared knowledge of romantic literature.

The overarching principle of these sources is that courtship was a man's game, as suitors assumed the character of chivalrous knights and hot-blooded heroes to emphasise their rampant masculinity. It is surprising just how many eighteenth-century men put pen to paper in penning original poems for their sweethearts. These included a wide range of suitors from manufacturers to politicians. In contrast, not one of the women studied in this chapter composed a love poem to send in return. While it is possible that these women wrote love poems during courtship which they subsequently destroyed, it would be impossible for historians to know with any certainty due to the lack of surviving manuscripts.<sup>178</sup> The masculine nature of love is further confirmed by the *Symptoms of the Shop* prints depicting men declaring their love on bended knee. While men in epistolary, sentimental, romantic and Gothic fiction were constructed as being in hot pursuit of love, women were depicted languishing from fainting fits and tremors caused by their emotions. While the pursuit of love was definably male, suffering from love was explicitly female. The sole exception to this model was the effeminate fop, who was derided for imitating a languishing woman's suffering.

The chapter has argued that romantic love was shaped by a number of quintessential couples in fiction: Adam and Eve, Romeo and Juliet, Troilus and Cressida, Abelard and Heloise, Pamela and Mr. B, Clarissa and Lovelace, Werther and Charlotte, Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy. While these figures were repeatedly referenced in courtship letters, individuals suffering the agony of heartbreak drew upon new models in conceptualising their turmoil. The reinterpretation of Armida's

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<sup>178</sup> Women certainly published love poetry during this period, including Elizabeth Teft, Martha Fowke Sansom and Ann Yearsley, among others. As the work of Elizabeth Singer Rowe demonstrates, female love poetry was usually couched in pious terms. See Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore, 2005) and Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia (eds.) *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Anthology* (Baltimore, 2009), esp. Section C, 'Love Poems', pp. 359-90.

sorcery, Queen Dido's suicide and Ophelia's madness is addressed in the next chapter of this thesis. Using eight stormy relationships, it extends the analysis of lovesickness to investigate the mental agitation, disquiet, fluttering spirits, melancholy, despondency and depression of unhappy love.

## Chapter Six

### ‘Oh fatal love, what mischiefs dost thou occasion:’<sup>1</sup> Heartbroken Women and Suicidal Men

Heart-ach. *n. s.* [*heart* and *ach.*] Sorrow; pang; anguish of mind.

Heart-break. *n. s.* [*heart* and *break.*] Overpowering sorrow.

Heart-burned. *adj.* [*heart* and *burn.*] Having the heart inflamed.

Heart-rending. *adj.* Killing with anguish.

Heart-sick. *adj.* 1. Pained in mind. 2. Mortally ill; hurt in the constitution.

Heart-sore. *n. s.* Struck with sorrow.

Heart-wounded. *adj.* Filled with passion of love or grief.

When Samuel Johnson published the second edition of his *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755-6, it contained twenty-four separate terms prefixed with the word ‘heart,’ taking up almost three columns of his book. The dictionary featured adjectives such as ‘heart-rending’ and ‘heart-wounded’ to describe being consumed by love, grief and anguish, and nouns such as ‘heart-sore’ to characterise those who were ‘Struck with sorrow.’<sup>2</sup> These words were illustrated using ‘beautiful descriptions’ from authors such as Shakespeare, who created the lovelorn heroine Ophelia.<sup>3</sup> A surprising number of terms involved the torment of love, imagined through emotive words such as ‘heart-robbing’ and ‘heart-burned.’ Heartbreak was almost given the same precedence as love itself, which was analysed in the previous chapter of this thesis.<sup>4</sup> The pervasive presence of the language and archetypes of the broken-hearted demonstrates the contemporary obsession with tormented lovers and their aching, breaking, sick, sore and wounded hearts.

This chapter investigates how couples conceptualised their feelings during the breakdown of a relationship, examining the rites and rituals of the broken hearted. It is divided into four sections, firstly analysing how heartbreak was perpetuated through archetypal heroines such as Armida, Queen Dido, and Ophelia. The second section focuses upon physical descriptions of romantic woe, analysing

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<sup>1</sup> Diary of Hurst, February 18<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM. ‘Mischiefs’ is erroneously transcribed as ‘misery’ in Djabri, *Diaries of Sarah Hurst*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. I, pp. 983-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 70-1.

how the multivalent language of the heart provided lovers with a unique vocabulary to evoke the nuanced stages of romantic breakdown. It considers the cultural construction of diseases such as lovesickness, melancholy and hysteria, arguing that these became solely the preserve of women from the mid-1750s. The third section studies the ‘crimes of passion’ and suicide attempts made by traumatised men who had been deserted or rejected by their sweethearts. The final section focuses on rituals of disintegration such as the return of love letters and tokens.

Primary evidence of romantic disappointment is often obliterated, as women in the aftermath of failed relationships destroyed letters describing their turmoil to protect their reputation. Letters of the women Sarah Hurst (1736-1808), Anne Louisa Dalling (*c.* 1784-1853), Jane Townley (1761-1825) and Lady Elizabeth Grey (1798-1880) studied in this chapter were all destroyed. This act would have provided a ritual of purification to erase the memory of heartbreak. While Sarah’s torment can be accessed through the diaries she kept between 1759 and 1762, precious letters have survived from Anne, Jane and Elizabeth’s suitors. The chapter also takes advantage of significant cultural commentary found in conduct literature, medical treatises, criminal trials, novels, poems, ballads, songs, plays, paintings and prints.

Eight relationships have been selected to span the period from *c.* 1730 to 1830 as evenly as possible, including individuals of widely varying social backgrounds. Three couples overcame immense parental opposition to be married; the soldier Henry Smith (1723-94) and tailor’s daughter Sarah Hurst (*m.* 1762), the reverend’s daughter Elizabeth Reading and Edward Leathes (*m.* 1774) and the Reverend Charles Powlett and chaplain’s daughter Anne Temple (*m.* 1796). The remaining five couples engaged in fraught and ultimately unsuccessful relationships; after the death of Edward Leathes in 1788, Elizabeth Reading re-married Edward Peach (d. 1805) in 1790 but left him in 1793. Lord Orford’s daughter Mary Berry (1763-1852) was deserted by her fiancé Lieutenant Charles O’Hara (*c.* 1740-1802) in 1796, while Anne Louisa Dalling’s fiancé Sir Gilbert Stirling (*c.* 1779-1843) ‘disappeared’ in 1805 just hours before their wedding. Jane Townley ceased contact with her suitor Richard Law as she devoted herself to the prophetess Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), causing him to angrily pursue her between 1807 and 1822.

Finally, John Kerr, Earl of Ancram (1794-1841) was forced to break off his engagement to Lady Elizabeth Grey in 1823 after his father declared his opposition.<sup>5</sup>

Despite extensive research concerning the making of marriage, the history of heartbreak is in its infancy. It is surprising that academic fascination with courtship and marriage has not translated into further work exploring the darker side of romantic entanglements, questioning what happened when love went awry. While a significant proportion of courtships resulted in matrimony, an equal or greater number did not. Monographs analysing the inexorable progress of couples towards marriage are therefore misleading in assuming that matrimony was a *fait accompli*, which was certainly not the view of couples themselves. Studying failed relationships is indisputably as important as studying love itself, as every romance was shaped by social awareness of failed matches, fallen women, lovesickness and melancholy.

For eighteenth-century scholars, analysis of heartbreak is closely related to psychological and neurological research into hysteria, the vapours, nerves and mental illness. It was during this period that an extensive vocabulary was created to describe and categorise particular ‘nervous illnesses.’<sup>6</sup> These have been studied in texts such as George Rousseau’s *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility* (2004), Harry Whitaker’s edited collection *Brain, Mind and Medicine: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Neuroscience* (2007) and Andrew Scull’s *Hysteria: The Biography* (2009). The nerves were notably absent from conceptions of love as a ‘passion’, entering discourses in the mid-eighteenth century through the culture of sensibility. Sensibility created a new moral association between nerves and ‘communal sensitivity’, encouraging refined and educated individuals to ‘cultivate’ their nerves.<sup>7</sup> Lovers were particularly vulnerable to nervous disorders, as their nerves could be ‘shaken’, ‘spun’ or ‘shattered’ by distress, inactivity could cause low spirits in women, whilst their vapours could rise up and cause hysteric fits.

Studying the social construction of illnesses such as hysteria reminds us that ‘emotional performances’ were learned rather than innate, and owed their ‘meaning

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<sup>5</sup> A full biographical index of each couple is provided in Appendix 2.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York, 1997), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> George Rousseau, *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 15, 30-2.

and coherence to a series of social rules.’<sup>8</sup> The men and women studied in this chapter conceptualised their romantic disappointment using culturally-embedded notions of heartbreak, the mind, body, sexual difference and social rank. They experienced, perceived and described their symptoms using culturally-defined terms such as ‘spirits’ and ‘vapours’ which presupposed women’s physical weakness. David Harley has provided a pertinent example of this theory, arguing that even if early modern diseases such as greensickness have similar physical symptoms to modern ailments such as anorexia nervosa, their ascribed causes, cultural meanings and treatment are ‘so different that they are not the same disease.’ In this way, heartbreak was shaped by ‘the rhetoric structuring and constituting the experience.’<sup>9</sup>

The broken or wounded heart has been subject to increasing scrutiny from historians and literary scholars, reflecting burgeoning scholarly interest in the history of medicine and the body. Recent publications include Eric Jager’s *Book of the Heart* (2000), Louisa Young’s *Book of the Heart* (2002), Kirstie Blair’s *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (2006), James Peto’s edited collection *The Heart* (2007) and Fay Bound Alberti’s *Matters of the Heart* (2010). Young’s study is divided into four ‘chambers’ like the heart itself, analysing the anatomical, religious, artistic and romantic heart. Most significantly for this chapter, Young argues that the spiritual and emotional importance granted to the image of the broken or wounded heart in Christianity has contributed to its development into ‘one of the most striking images in human history.’<sup>10</sup> The ubiquity of the broken heart is all the more fascinating because the heart as an organ is physically incapable of ‘breaking’: ‘it fails, it suffocates for lack of oxygen, it becomes old and flabby and incapable, it turns to stone – but it does not break. It’s a muscle.’<sup>11</sup>

However Jager and Young’s descriptions of the ‘lover’s heart’ or ‘romantic heart’ as a homogenous whole are problematic because the language of the heart –

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<sup>8</sup> Bound Alberti, ‘Introduction’ in *Medicine, Emotion and Disease*, pp. xvi-xvii. Also see Ludmilla Jordanova, ‘The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge’, *Social History of Medicine* (1995), Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 361-81.

<sup>9</sup> David Harley, ‘Rhetoric and the Social Construction of Sickness and Healing’, *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1999), pp. 418-21. The concept of ‘framing’ allows historians to recognise both the imagining of disease and ‘the diurnal reality of doctors, hospitals, diagnoses.’ See Rousseau ‘Introduction’ in *idem*, Miranda Gill, David Haycock and Malte Herwig (eds.) *Framing and Imagining Disease in Cultural History* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 10-14, at p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Louisa Young, *The Book of the Heart* (London, 2002), p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

like the language of love – was historically and culturally specific.<sup>12</sup> The ‘semantic networks’ used to describe brokenheartedness changed over time, and cannot be treated as an ahistorical or undifferentiated mass.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the language used by lovers varied dramatically according to the type of relationship they were engaging in. While lovers enjoying the contentment of successful courtships were apt to declare how ‘in Possessing your Heart, I shall have every thing desirable to me, in this World’, those experiencing romantic breakdown harnessed entirely different tropes in describing how ‘my heart burned with anger against you.’<sup>14</sup> Letters written during failing courtships were defined by noticeably different concerns to those produced on the path to matrimony, as writers described experiencing throbbing pains and fits of sickness caused by their turmoil. Other linguistic forms describing the heart aching or wounded by arrows developed new connotations and changed in popularity over time.

The first part of this chapter outlines the cultural influence of archetypal heroines such as Armida, Queen Dido, and Ophelia. This approach was inspired by Elaine Showalter’s study of the archetypes of madness in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (1985). It deliberately focuses upon women, as their romantic strife assumed an increasingly dominant role in characterisations of heartbreak from the mid-eighteenth century. In contrast, heartbroken men were relegated to their shadow. This represents the reversal of an earlier trend, as until the Renaissance lovesickness was predominantly seen as a male illness.<sup>15</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century, men featuring in descriptions of heartbreak were usually associated with a heroic masculinised act such as suicide, as discussed later in this chapter. These three women were selected after conducting a survey of contemporary literature to discover which figures were described with the greatest frequency when dramatising unhappy love.

The dominant examples of heartbreak were predominantly drawn from Shakespearean and classical texts. As the author of *The Adventurer* noted in 1766, despite the novelties of ‘modern’ times, ‘every exasperated hero must rage like

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<sup>12</sup> See Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (London, 2000), Chapter 4, pp. 65-102, and Young, *Book of the Heart*, Chamber 4, pp. 379-431.

<sup>13</sup> Kagan, *What Are Emotions?*, p. 122.

<sup>14</sup> Martin to Rebow, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1772, A12691/16, Vol. II, ERO, and Law to Townley, Gravesend, June 29<sup>th</sup> 1816, Add Mss. 47796/5, BL.

<sup>15</sup> Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, p. 5. Also see Chapter 5, pp. 173-4, 178.

ACHILLES, and every afflicted widow mourn like ANDROMACHE: an abandoned ARMIDA will make use of DIDO's execrations.'<sup>16</sup> Such texts provided centuries-old guidance on how a broken-hearted person should act, outlining social expectations of the deserted lover. If you did not sigh, faint, cry and court death, could you really claim to be broken-hearted? Interpretations of particular figures changed over time, with Armida's sorcery, Dido's suicide and Ophelia's distraction reinterpreted by each generation in light of contemporary beliefs about love, femininity, masculinity and madness.

Armida was a sorceress who fell in love with the Christian soldier Rinaldo in the Italian poet Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581), Handel's opera *Rinaldo* (1711) and *Armida; A Serious Opera* (1774) directed by Signor Giordani and translated by Bottarelli.<sup>17</sup> Armida trapped Rinaldo in an enchanted garden and 'Wav'd all the witcheries of love', but he was recalled by fellow soldiers to fulfil his Christian duties.<sup>18</sup> Armida was left deserted, raging and destroying the magical garden she had created. Potential love-interests in novels such as *Masquerades; or, what you will* (1780) were judged according to their sympathy for Armida's plight. When Lady Louisa Sydney sang her favourite air from the opera, she was pleased that the 'superlatively handsome' Lord Osmond 'seemed to feel the tender sentiments I sung, for he sighed once or twice.'<sup>19</sup> While Georgian audiences praised Armida for her beauty, they disapproved of the 'strange coquetry' of her love. In contrast, the love of Princess Erminia (or Herminie) of Antioch was praised as 'a soft and agreeable tenderness.'<sup>20</sup> Armida thus posed a challenge to Georgian conceptions of the 'soft' and meek woman in love, due to her 'artful and violent' tendencies.<sup>21</sup> The discordant elements of her character were tempered in paintings such as Angelica Kauffman's *Rinaldo and Armida* (1771), depicting a sensual Armida

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<sup>16</sup> The text argued that contemporary writers found it almost impossible to differentiate new works from those produced by Homer or Sophocles. John Hawkesworth, *The Adventurer* (London, 1766), Vol. II, pp. 228-9.

<sup>17</sup> *Jerusalem Delivered* was first translated into English in 1600, and republished in 1718, 1726, 1738, 1749, 1761, 1763, 1764, 1767, 1772, 1774, 1783, 1787, 1788 and 1792. Based on key-word search of ECCO on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

<sup>18</sup> *Temple spectacles! By the author of The prelateiad* (Dublin, 1789), p. 8.

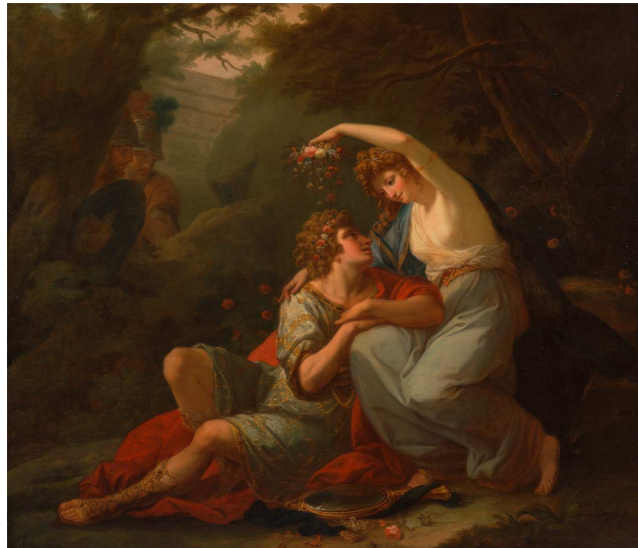
<sup>19</sup> *Masquerades; or, what you will. By the Author of Eliza Warwick* (London, 1780), Vol. I, pp. 227-31.

<sup>20</sup> *Anecdotes of polite literature* (London, 1764), Vol. I, pp. 88, 97-8, *Temple spectacles!*, p. 8 and Hugh Blair, *Lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres*, Vol. III (London, 1785), pp. 268-9.

<sup>21</sup> Blair, *Essays on rhetoric: abridged chiefly from Dr. Blair's lectures on that science* (Albany, 1798), p. 266 and *Lectures on rhetoric*, p. 215.



feeding her lover grapes (Fig. 39). The opera further diminished her violent nature, as a weakened Armida sighed, repined, turned pale and fainted away like a true Enlightenment heroine. The end of the tale provided a warning of the dangers of lost love, with ‘the intire transformation of *Armida*’s palace into an horrible wilderness.’<sup>22</sup>



**Fig. 39 – Angelica Kauffman, *Rinaldo and Armida*, Britain, 1771, oil on canvas, 130.8 x 153cm, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, B1981.25.383.**

The plight of Queen Dido of Carthage was even more ubiquitous. Her tragic romance with Æneas was dramatised in the fourth book of Virgil’s *Æneid* (29-19BC), Christopher Marlowe’s play *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594) and Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate’s opera *Dido and Æneas* (1688). In the tale, Dido fell in love with the Trojan prince Æneas (son of Anchises and Venus) when his ship landed at Carthage. She was distraught when he was called by the Gods to fulfil his duty in Italy, leading her to stab herself atop a funeral pyre as she could not bear to be without him. Ballads such as ‘The Wandering Prince of Troy’ (1763-75) dramatised her plight:

<sup>22</sup> Giovan Gualberto Bottarelli, *Armida; A Serious Opera* (London, 1774), pp. 2, 21, 30, 33-4.

And then the Queen with bloody knife,  
 Aimd at her heart as hard as stone;  
 Yet somewhat loath to lose her life,  
 Unto herself did make great moan;  
 And rolling on her careful bed,  
 With sighs and sobs these words she said,

O wretched Dido Queen, quoth she,  
 I see thy end approaching near;  
 For he is gone away from thee.  
 Whom thou dost love and hold so dear!  
 Is he then gone and passed by?  
 O heart, prepare thyself to die.<sup>23</sup>

Eighteenth-century accounts of Dido's death emphasised her 'sighs and sobs,' which had become requisite features of 'feeling' introduced by the cult of sensibility.<sup>24</sup> The Georgian Dido was representative of broken-hearted women as a whole, as she suffered more from love than Æneas, and was too emotionally fragile to cope with her disappointment.

Dido was invoked as the archetypal heartbroken heroine in novels such as Richardson's *Clarissa*, with the rake Lovelace asking John Belford:

Dost thou not think that I am as much entitled to forgiveness on Miss Harlowe's account, as Virgil's hero was on Queen Dido's?...Should Miss Harlowe even break her heart (which Heaven forbid!) for the usage she has received...what comparison will *her* fate hold to Queen Dido's? And have I half the obligation to her that Aeneas had to the Queen of Carthage?<sup>25</sup>

The eighteenth-century Dido was thus comparable to Richardson's languishing heroine for falling prey to men's scheming, dying 'a victim to her love.'<sup>26</sup>

Richardson's vulnerable Dido stands in stark contrast to the passionate Dido of

<sup>23</sup> 'An Excellent OLD BALLAD, entitled, / The Wandering PRINCE of TROY', 1763-75, London, Roxburghe Collection, C.20.f.9(730-731), EBBA.

<sup>24</sup> See discussion of sighing as a symptom of love in Chapter 5, p. 176.

<sup>25</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, L370, p. 1142.

<sup>26</sup> Hays to Eccles, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1779 in Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, p. 66.

classical texts. As the Greek author Apollonius Rhodius argued in *The Argonautic Expedition*, ‘Dido destroys herself through disappointment; too generally experienced by mankind from the prevalence of ungoverned passion.’<sup>27</sup> Rhodius’ account reflects the classical belief that women’s physical weakness made them less able to control violent passions than men. As Dabhoiwala has argued, this view began to change in the late-seventeenth century, and was ‘already well advanced’ with the publication of novels such as Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa* in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Eighteenth-century texts also marginalised the violence of Dido’s suicide, which was at odds with notions of ‘tender’ and ‘sensitive’ Georgian women. Instead, writers attributed Dido’s bravery to the overtly masculine side of her personality, with Adam Alexander’s *Classical Biography* (1800) reminding readers that ‘Elisa was her proper name; she was called Dido from her masculine courage.’<sup>29</sup>



**Fig. 40 – Henry Fuseli, *Dido*, Britain, 1781, oil on canvas, 244.3 x 183.4cm, Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, B1976.7.184.**

<sup>27</sup> See Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautic Expedition* (London, 1780), Vol. I, p. 128 and *The Arcana of polite literature* (Dublin, 1789), pp. 24-5.

<sup>28</sup> Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex*, p. 142.

<sup>29</sup> Adam Alexander, *Classical Biography* (Edinburgh, 1800), p. 159. This lovelorn Dido was at odds with Virgil’s original creation, where a fierce Dido had bloodshot eyes and blotched cheeks, making a frenzied ascent up the funeral pyre. See Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis, 2005), Book IV, p. 98.



**Fig. 41 –James Gillray, *Dido Forsaken: sic transit Gloria reginae*, London, 1787, hand-coloured etching with stipple, 27.3 x 37.5cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 787.5.21.1.**

Continuing fascination with Dido inspired countless paintings and prints of the Queen including Henry Fuseli's *Dido* (1781), James Gillray's *Dido Forsaken* (1787) and *Dido in Despair* (1801). Fuseli created a typically romanticised portrait of Dido, comparing her suicide to Christ's sacrifice with her arms forming the shape of a cross. She is dressed in virginal white robes, and the scene is noticeably absent from blood, despite her violent death and the sword at her side (Fig. 40). Gillray also depicted forlorn women Mrs. Fitzherbert and Lady Emma Hamilton as Dido, as their lovers the Prince of Wales and Admiral Horatio Nelson sailed into the distance. Mrs. Fitzherbert sits on a pile of phallic logs as her chastity belt breaks, while Dido's sword has become a crucifix to represent her Catholicism (Fig. 41). The print of Hamilton is particularly cruel, depicting her as an obese sobbing wretch (despite Emma being seven months pregnant when the print was issued). She is surrounded by trinkets from her lover as her husband sleeps beside her (Fig. 42). It was intended as a parody of one of her famous 'attitudes', where she posed as particular characters from classical mythology. Dido's tragic love affair had an enduring presence in popular culture, and was embedded in the material world through wall hangings, fans, watch cases, cups and saucers depicting her first meeting with Æneas.<sup>30</sup> In the 1730s, plebeian visitors dressed up as Queen Dido to visit the raucous Bartholomew

<sup>30</sup> Embroidered wall hanging, 1710-20, T.570-1996, embossed gold pair case, c. 1730, 288-1854, stoneware cup and saucer, c. 1803-6, William Turner & Co, 2516&A-1901, undated fan depicting the meeting of Anthony and Cleopatra or Dido and Æneas, T.177-1920, V&A.

Fair in London, whom they may have learned about through satirical prints, ballads and songs.<sup>31</sup>



**Fig. 42 – James Gillray, *Dido in despair!*, London, 1801, etching, engraving & stipple engraving, 25.2 x 35.8cm on sheet, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 801.02.06.01.**

Shakespeare's Ophelia provided a further archetype of female suffering from love, with countless songs and poems describing her heart as 'sway'd by tenderness' and 'soften'd into Love.'<sup>32</sup> Benjamin West's depiction of a distracted Ophelia took centre stage in John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery in 1792, showing her 'fantastically dressed with straws and flowers' while ranting 'nonny hey nonny.' Ophelia's flowing white robes became a by-word for female insanity, with characters in novels emphasising the 'risibility' of Ophelia's 'gypsey [*sic*] manner of dress.'<sup>33</sup> Elaine Showalter and Helen Small have presented Ophelia as the 'supremely manipulable' heroine, allowing Georgian audiences to dismiss the 'erotic and discordant' elements of her character. Instead, they chose to see her as a young, innocent, harmless, pious and beautiful victim.<sup>34</sup> She was variously described as

<sup>31</sup> Ordinary's Account, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1732, OA17321009, OBO.

<sup>32</sup> 'Ophelia' in *Apollo's Cabinet: or the muses delight* (Liverpool, 1757), p. 215, *The belles of Bury, a poem* (Bury, 1779), pp. 15-16 and Lady Sophia Burrell, *Poems. Dedicated to the Right Honourable the Earl of Mansfield* (London, 1793), Vol. II, pp. 101-2.

<sup>33</sup> Boydell, *A catalogue of the pictures, &c. in the Shakespeare Gallery*, p. 176, and *The adventures of a hackney coach* (London, 1781), p. 158.

<sup>34</sup> Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London, 1985), p. 10, and Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, The Novel, and Female Insanity 1800-1865* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 8-9.

‘fair,’ ‘very pathetic’ and ‘poor Ophelia.’<sup>35</sup> While writers emphasised Dido’s passion over the love of Æneas, they also described Ophelia’s love as all-encompassing, whereas ‘Hamlet’s love forms so trifling part of the piece, that it cannot be regarded in that light.’<sup>36</sup> The enduring influence of Ophelia was reflected in eighteenth-century characters such as ‘Bess of Bedlam’ (c. 1700), who rolled her eyeballs while embracing a phantasmal lover, and Clementina in Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4) who was so ‘wild’ that she had to be confined in a straitjacket.<sup>37</sup> The trend continued in Sir Herbert Croft’s *Love and Madness* (1780) where the female protagonist complained that love letters had ‘drove me mad’ as ‘such tenderness distracts me.’<sup>38</sup>

The second part of this chapter focuses on the physical dimensions of romantic strife, as both sexes wrote at length about their ‘wounded’, ‘throbbing’ and ‘aching’ hearts.<sup>39</sup> These terms were not used interchangeably, but were invoked in particular ways to denote the various *stages* of romantic breakdown. Hearts in love did not suddenly break, but went through a number of distinct phases. These began when the heart was initially cut or pierced by love, beginning to pull on the heartstrings when matters took a turn for the worse. Continued suffering from love resulted in disease or damage to the heart, which had been left vulnerable to attack. The final stage of lovers’ distress was the breaking or death of the heart, which represented the ultimate sign of suffering.

The initial damage to a lover’s heart was caused by a metaphorical weapon such as an arrow, dart or dagger which was said to cut, prick or pierce the organ. The injuries caused by these pointed weapons signified the beginning of love whilst also foreshadowing the heart’s destruction. As an anonymous butler wrote to a housekeeper in the same residence in Norfolk in c. 1830, ‘there is a chain of love /

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Ophelia’, *op. cit. Ancient songs, from the time of King Henry the Third, to the Revolution* (London, 1790), p. lxxix, Robert Bage, *The fair Syrian. A novel* (Dublin, 1787), Vol. I, p. 149 and Bage, *Mount Henneth; a novel* (London, 1788), Vol. I, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Anecdotes of polite literature*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> *A Fifth grand selection of music. As performed at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden* (London, 1793), pp. 9-11 and Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1753-4; 1780), p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> Sir Herbert Croft, *Love and Madness* (London, 1780), pp. 12, 44.

<sup>39</sup> Every incidence in love letters was linked back to the heart; their wishes were ‘heartily’ desired, their lovers had honest and sympathetic hearts, they wished them every delight the heart could aspire to, with *all* of their hearts. Lovers also visibly suffered from grief of heart, softened hearts, and full hearts which had to be relieved through tears. Terms used in letters from Elizabeth Reading to Edward Leathes and Edward Peach between 1772 and 1790, BOL 2, NRO.

Fast in the middle of my heart / I have stricken a Fatal dart / From whence fresh showers of blood did flow.<sup>40</sup> The arrows of love constituted one of the oldest tropes of the language of the heart, described by troubadours who marked the beginning of love by declaring that ‘I have an arrow in my heart.’<sup>41</sup> Heroines such as Dido were metaphorically transformed into deers pierced by the arrows of love. Book IV of Virgil’s *Aeneid* used the metaphor to characterise Dido falling in love, wandering ‘all through the city in her misery, / Raving mad, / like a doe pierced by an arrow / Deep in the woods of Crete...as she runs all through the Dictaeon forest / The lethal shaft clings to her flank.’<sup>42</sup> The unfortunate ‘Bess of Bedlam’ was also wounded by venomous arrows, decrying ‘How sharp’s the pointed arrow / which flew at my poor breast!’<sup>43</sup>



**Fig. 43 – William Heath, Extract from *Little Cupid's a Mischievous Boy*, London, 1829, hand-coloured etching with stipple, plate mark 20.3 x 25.3cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 829.07.02.01.**

The symbolism of the wounded heart was shaped by competing religious and classical discourses, centring on the spear which pierced the heart of Jesus and the arrows fired by Venus’ son Cupid, which inspired love in unsuspecting individuals.<sup>44</sup> In the selected extract from William Heath’s *Little Cupid's a Mischievous Boy*

<sup>40</sup> Copy of letter from a butler to a housekeeper, watermark 1830, BUL 13/5, 619 x 5, NRO.

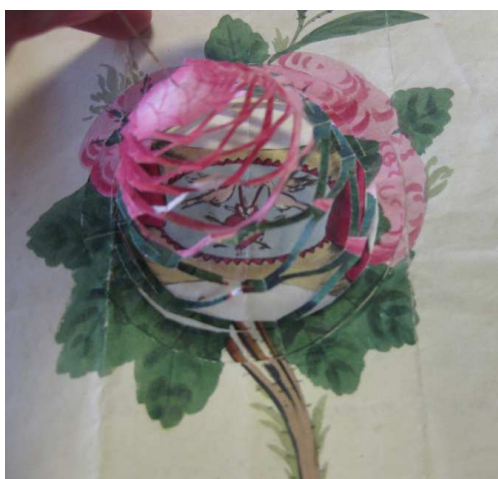
<sup>41</sup> Sordello (c. 1200-c.70), ‘Tant m’abellis lo terminis novels’ in Jager, *Book of the Heart*, p. 69.

<sup>42</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book IV, p. 79.

<sup>43</sup> *Captain Wedderburn's courtship to Lord Roslin's daughter. to which is added, Bess of Bedlam* (Glasgow, 1780), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> ‘The Sinners Redemption’ described how ‘further to augment his Smart. / With bloody Spear they piercd his Heart’, Newcastle, c. 1730-69, C.20.f.9(288-289), EBBA. ‘The Oxfordshire Tragedy: / Or, the Virgin’s Advice’ provided a cautionary tale of how ‘Young Cupid Bending of his bow, / And left a fatal dart behind. / That provd her fatal overthrow,’ London, c. 1763-75, Roxburghe Collection, C.20.f.9(750-751), EBBA.

(1829), Cupid sits on the fence holding an arrow ready to shoot at a milkmaid (Fig. 43). She dangles her heart from a chain held in her hand, while her hapless suitor bears a heart shot through with two arrows on his shirt. The symbol would have alerted viewers that he had received the initial wound of love, while the heart she held in her hand remained vulnerable to attack. The heart wounded by arrows was granted increasing prominence in the celebration of Valentine's Day in the 1820s and 1830s, as demonstrated by the bookseller Westwood and Kershaw's 'flower cage' Valentine's Card (Fig. 44). The heart is initially hidden by a paper lattice, as the wounds of love had secretly taken hold, but were not visible to others. A silk string enabled the recipient to open the cage and reveal the wounds they had caused, represented by a bulging red heart shot through with arrows. These cards would have been sent by suitors wishing to demonstrate an initial attraction, firmly locating the wounding of the heart among the first stages of love.



**Fig. 44 – Lifting the silk string of a ‘flower cage’ Valentine’s Card produced by Westwood and Kershaw, booksellers of City Road, London, 1824-30, London Metropolitan Archives, O/530/63.**

Once the initial wound had been made to a lover's heart, they were particularly vulnerable to becoming diseased or plagued by love. Ballads such as 'Phillida Flouts Me' (c. 1600) likened love to a fatal plague, wailing 'Oh what a Plague is Love / I cannot bear it.' The ballad remained popular throughout the eighteenth century, and was copied into George II's daughter Princess Amelia's



(1711-86) poetry book in 1744, and republished in numerous poetic compendiums.<sup>45</sup> The embittered suitor Richard Law described his heart as ‘plagued’ by the actions of his ex-lover Jane Townley in November 1817, cruelly addressing her as ‘thou inveterate Plague of my heart.’<sup>46</sup> Although Jane’s letters have not survived, Richard’s furious epistles hint that his anger stemmed from being forced to remain a bachelor despite having found a perfectly suitable wife. He described how ‘it is through such proud insolent conceited Nuns as you, That many a brave and proper man goes Wifeless and Childless to the Grave; for there being an equal number of both sex, the foolish celibacy of the one, must deprive the other of his rightfull parthes to love and Multiply by.’<sup>47</sup>

For women such as the tailor’s daughter Sarah Hurst, the trauma of love was enough to ‘rend my Heart strings to part.’<sup>48</sup> Such terminology was part of the legacy of ancient conceptions of anatomy, where the tendons or nerves were thought to brace and sustain the heart.<sup>49</sup> As Abraham Taylor preached in his treatise of 1730, when ‘our heartstrings break, if we rely on Christ by faith, we may have abundant support.’<sup>50</sup> The heart’s ‘strings’ were thus seen to govern the workings of the organ, holding it together and ultimately breaking when it failed. Heartstrings described in poetry were seen to throb, suffer or burst due to the high passions of love; in *As you like it, a poem, addressed to a friend* (1785), the muse experienced ‘Her heartstrings throbbing’ while the protagonist of *Quashiba’s Return* (1791) described how ‘my heartstrings were rent into twain’ as Quashiba had wronged him.<sup>51</sup> Sarah Hurst’s invocation of the parting strings of her heart thus implied that her heart was metaphorically separating and breaking due to her faltering relationship.

The final stage of a lover’s sorrow was the breaking or death of the heart, which only happened when lovers believed that they had parted forever. When Sarah Hurst feared that her suitor would never return from sea in 1759, she wrote ‘Good

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<sup>45</sup> See George Ellis, *Specimens of the early English poets* (London, 1790), pp. 317-20, *The poetical epitome* (London, 1791 and 1792), pp. 414-5 and misc. poems on love and marriage by Princess Amelia, 1744, LWL Mss Vol. 14, LWL.

<sup>46</sup> Law to Townley, November 13<sup>th</sup> 1817, Add Mss 47796/24, BL.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Add Mss 47796/2.

<sup>48</sup> Diary of Hurst, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Heart-strings, *n.*’ OEDO, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/85134?redirectedFrom=heartstrings>

<sup>50</sup> Abraham Taylor, *A practical treatise of saving faith* (London, 1730), p. 318.

<sup>51</sup> *As you like it, a poem, addressed to a friend* (London, 1785), p. 10 and ‘Quashiba’s Return’ in *The attic miscellany; and characteristic mirror of men and things* (London, 1791), pp. 416-7.

God the perturbations I then experienc'd, when will they have an end, my fears hourly increase on his account, my heart dies within me.'<sup>52</sup> Sarah may have been influenced by the book of Samuel in the Old Testament, where the foolish Nabal's 'heart died within him' as he was avenged by God.<sup>53</sup> The expression may also have arisen from ballads such as 'Phillida Flouts Me', where the hero described how love 'so Torments my mind / that my heart faileth.'<sup>54</sup> The breaking of the heart was such a serious occurrence that many ballads were dedicated to the *possibility* that it might break, with one man who 'thought that my Heart would been broken' when he witnessed his sweetheart marrying another, and an additional suitor whose heart was 'ready to break', but not actually doing so. The same discourse was used in the letters of the reverend's daughter Elizabeth Reading in 1772, as her 'almost broken heart' was revived by a love letter.<sup>55</sup> The important terms here were 'thought', 'almost' and 'ready', as these texts hinted at heartbreak in order to reveal the serious nature of a lover's troubles.

While eighteenth-century hearts were frequently wounded or broken, they were rarely described to be 'aching.' The most famous description of 'heartache' was created by Shakespeare, where Hamlet describes 'The Heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks...To sleep? perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub.'<sup>56</sup> The aching heart was mentioned in passing by the tailor's daughter Sarah Hurst in August 1759, as she wondered 'how many thousand heartachs [*sic*] do we experience to one satisfaction.' These 'heartaches' referred to the difficulties of selecting a spouse, after her friend Miss Pigott expressed her determination to marry.<sup>57</sup> However when characterising her changing emotional states, Sarah preferred to describe 'a palpitation' and 'tumult' in her heart, which caused a violent pain in her 'side.'<sup>58</sup> Similarly, General Charles O'Hara described 'a pain in my breast, that never quits me' during separation from his sweetheart Mary Berry in

<sup>52</sup> Diary of Hurst, September 24<sup>th</sup> 1759, *op. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Samuel 1:25, 1:37, KJV.

<sup>54</sup> 'Phillida Flouts Me' in misc. poems on love and marriage by Princess Amelia, LWL Mss Vol. 14.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 'THE FORLORN LOVER', c. 1730-69, Roxburghe Collection, C.20.f.9(324-325), 'Sweet WILLIAM of Plymouth', c. 1736-63, C.20.f.9(332-333), EBBA. Reading to Leathes, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1772, BOL 2/4/18, NRO.

<sup>56</sup> *The works of Shakespear* (London, 1725), p. 400.

<sup>57</sup> Diary of Hurst, August 12<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3544, HM.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1758, January 18<sup>th</sup> 1759, February 8<sup>th</sup> 1759 and March 16<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542.

1795, promising to ‘sooth’ [*sic*] Mary’s ‘throbbing breast.’<sup>59</sup> Whilst a ‘heartache’ denoted a particular difficulty encountered by a couple, their emotional troubles were thus conceptualised as a ‘tumult’, ‘throbbing’ and ‘pain.’ This distinction was reflected in printed texts in the late eighteenth century, where a ‘heart-ache’ could be caused by any unfortunate event, not necessarily romantic strife. It is demonstrated in a conversation between two characters, Ned Shuter and Harry Howard, in *The adventures of a hackney coach* (1781), after Harry had his effects seized by a landlord in lieu of rent:

“I could not stand it, - and stepped here to soften my affliction, and devise some means to rescue my property from the merciless ruffian.” “’Tis very unlucky,” says Ned, “I have a heart-ache this moment myself.” “Ah! but you have no wife and children,” says Harry. “No, but I have four guineas, which I insist you will accept of; - my heart-ache arises from a want of the fifth.”<sup>60</sup>

The term only acquired its modern connotations in the early nineteenth century, when heartache came to denote a pain specifically caused by romantic love. By the early Victorian era, the aching heart had been granted ‘a priori involvement’ in a vast network of cultural and literary references, simultaneously reflecting growing disquiet about ‘heartsickness’, murmurs and heart disease.<sup>61</sup>

While men and women both experimented with the lexical formulations of romantic woe, physical symptoms of heartbreak were solely the preserve of women. The female writers studied in this chapter described a series of bodily symptoms caused by their disappointment which would have been completely alien to their male counterparts. These included feeling lovesick, fits of madness, sickness, headaches and violent throbbing pains in their side. Being heartbroken and being lovesick were two distinct ailments, as a woman could also be lovesick in the midst of a successful relationship.<sup>62</sup> When Elizabeth Reading’s suitor Edward Leathes

<sup>59</sup> O’Hara to Berry, Portsmouth, 27<sup>th</sup> October and 31<sup>st</sup> October 1795, Add Mss. 37727/226, 232, BL.

<sup>60</sup> *The adventures of a hackney coach*, p. 124.

<sup>61</sup> Kirstie Blair, “‘Proved on the Pulses:’ Heart Disease in Victorian Culture, 1830-1860’ in Rousseau *et al*, *Framing and Imagining Disease*, pp. 285-302, at pp. 286-7.

<sup>62</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 173-6. Other traumatic events could cause a similar reaction in the female body, with one young woman admitted to the Edinburgh Infirmary in 1785 experiencing nausea, vertigo, vomiting, headaches, fits, suffocation and tension of the stomach after the death of her parents. Symptoms described by the twenty-four year old Isabel Gray, admitted on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1785 and diagnosed with nervous hysteria by James Gregory. See Diana Faber, ‘Hysteria in the Eighteenth

became seriously ill in 1772, his main concern was that fretting about him would make Elizabeth ill herself, wailing ‘O Betsy how do I fear least [*sic*] you should have made yourself Ill by freting [*sic*] about me let me my Love once more beseech you to make yourself easy.’<sup>63</sup> The letters, diaries, ballads, novels and plays analysed in this chapter demonstrate how emotional hurt was thought to place particular stress upon the female body, which provided both a metaphor and physical manifestation of grief.<sup>64</sup>

The association between women and physical suffering from love changed over time, with the mid-1750s witnessing the resurgence of lovesickness as a demeaning female disease attributed to their heightened sensibility and physical frailty.<sup>65</sup> The languishing lovesick woman acquired increasing notoriety in popular culture, becoming the subject of numerous poems, ballads and novels. These identified the ailment with ‘poor’ or ‘silly’ women, such as ‘Poor Peg’ (1794) who was ‘heart-rent by a sigh of woe’ and died after her lover was killed in battle.<sup>66</sup> Others such as ‘The Lovesick Maid’ (c. 1755) could not stop sobbing and groaning after being rejected:

O why should i commit such folly  
 or why should i so silly be.  
 To set my mind and my Affections  
 upon the man that loves not me...  
 Sighing, moaning, sobbing and groaning  
 sure he’s ungreatful [*sic*] in every part,  
 But if ever i find a man more kinder,  
 ’tis him alone shall ease my heart.<sup>67</sup>

The poem infantilizes lovesick women by suggesting that they were naïve, dim-witted and governed by their affections. Similar sentiments were expressed in the

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Century’ in Harry Whitaker, CUM Smith and Stanley Finger (eds.) *Brain, Mind and Medicine: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Neuroscience* (New York, 2007), pp. 326-7.

<sup>63</sup> Leathes to Reading, London, August 17<sup>th</sup> 1772 BOL 2/44/11, NRO.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Homesickness’ was a further debilitating mental condition resulting in physical symptoms; the term first entered the English language in the 1750s. See Susan J. Matt, *Homesickness: An American History* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 27-35.

<sup>65</sup> See note 62 above.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Poor Peg. By Mr. Dibdin’ in *The Hampshire Syren*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>67</sup> ‘The Lovesick Maid’ in *The Cautious Maid’s Garland* (Bristol, c. 1755), pp. 4-5.

epistolary novel *The history of Miss Harriot Fitzroy, and Miss Emilia Spencer* (1767) when Emilia's mother cautioned her that 'There is not, in my opinion, a more ridiculous creature in nature than a love-sick girl.' In response, Emilia 'burst into tears and left the room.' The text portrays lovesickness as a demeaning disease which women suffered from by 'nature.' It highlights the involuntary nature of their suffering, with the heartbroken Emilia exclaiming, 'What a train of vile attendants is this same love accompanied with!'<sup>68</sup>

As Emilia noted, once women had succumbed to lovesickness they were instantly vulnerable to a 'train' of other diseases. These originated in the mind as well as the heart, with the tailor's daughter Sarah Hurst describing how 'the mind & Body naturally affect each other, so I am doubly unhappy in having a bad constitution & a dull phlegmatic disposition.'<sup>69</sup> Female writers complained of a host of symptoms including mental agitation, disquiet, fluttering spirits, melancholy, despondency and depression. When Elizabeth Johnson broke off her engagement to the Bedfordshire gentleman Richard How II in 1757 after discovering he had a 'former attachment', she believed that 'It is impossible for the Human Mind to feel more distress than I am under.' Elizabeth described how 'no Heart can be more susceptible of y tenderest sensations than mine & to what Purpose but to make me unhappy!' However, she promised to 'endeavor [*sic*] to bear with resignation uncommon wretchedness.'<sup>70</sup> Sarah Hurst was equally distressed during her troubled courtship with Henry Smith between 1759 and 1762. She described how the relationship had caused 'a few years spent in disquietude of Mind', leaving a 'cloud of melancholy' hanging over her which had left her mind 'greatly discompos'd.' It also caused symptoms such as violent headaches and sick fits, and she was 'terribly afflicted' with the pain. A similar account was produced by the chaplain's daughter Anne Temple on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1794, writing that 'My mind is now so totally overcome that I am almost indifferent to my fate; not one ray of light is visible...I must drag on a melancholy existence at a distance from him.'<sup>71</sup> Four months later her situation had not improved:

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<sup>68</sup> *The history of Miss Harriot Fitzroy, and Miss Emilia Spencer* (Dublin, 1767), pp. 117, 121, 123.

<sup>69</sup> Diary of Hurst, July 12<sup>th</sup> 1760, MS 3543, HM. Also see April 19<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3542, HM.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson to How II, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1757, HW87/225, BLARS.

<sup>71</sup> Journal of Temple, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1794, 72M92/5, HRO. For further examples see letters from Jeffreys to Pratt, U840/C9/16, 21, CKS.

I never found my mind in a more uncomfortable unsettled state than it has been for this last month. Nothing amuses, nothing interests me, in short I know not what to do with myself; company only increases [*sic*] the flutter and agitation of my spirits and yet I cannot bear to be alone, solitude makes me brood over my miseries till I am almost distracted. Oh! how I regret the calm serenity I once enjoyed.<sup>72</sup>

Female friends rallied to support others suffering from the trials of love. After Charles O'Hara broke off his engagement to Mary Berry in 1796, Mary's friend Mrs. Chomeley urged her not to 'sink under Passion & disappointment, like a common weak minded Woman!'<sup>73</sup> Women's descriptions of their minds as 'overcome', 'agitated' and 'weak' demonstrate how they expressed their disappointment in written form in accordance with prevailing beliefs about femininity. The symptoms they described were a requisite part of the experience of heartbreak, generated by women's perceived fragility and mental instability. A related change has been identified by Dabhoiwala, who describes how new presumptions about sex, seduction and the natural unchastity of men had become firmly established by the mid-eighteenth century, creating a dichotomy between 'male rapacity' and 'female passivity.'<sup>74</sup>

When at its most extreme, the mental agitation caused by love could lead to hysteria. Charles Perry explained the connection between heartbreak and hysteria in 1755:

The antecedent, or more remote causes of this disease, may be various, and manifold. – As, for example, all the more violent, or irksome passions of the mind. – Such as violent love, despair [*sic*], great losses and disappointments in life, grievous distress, or impetuous rage...All, or any, of those passions, or of those exercises of the mind may, and sometimes do...terminate in madness – or what we call distraction.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1794.

<sup>73</sup> Mrs. Chomeley to Berry, November 20<sup>th</sup> 1796, 37727/246.

<sup>74</sup> Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex*, pp. 178-9.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Perry, *A mechanical account and explication of the hysteric passion, under all its various symptoms and appearances* (London, 1755), p. 102.

The ‘disappointment’ of losing a lover was thus enough to cause hysteria and even madness, particularly in women. The legacy of Galenism meant that female suffering was frequently attributed to their sanguine temperaments, which made their ‘sensibility, and the powers of body and mind’ more ‘easily excited’ than men.<sup>76</sup> In 1784, John Aiken listed hysteria as one of eight diseases peculiar to women, which were not connected with pregnancy.<sup>77</sup> Over the course of the eighteenth century, the nerves were increasingly prioritised over the womb as the central cause of hysteria, mirroring the burgeoning role played by nerves in lovesickness. As James Adair noted in 1772, hysteria was primarily ‘a disease of the whole nervous system...as for the share the uterus has...it is often accidental.’<sup>78</sup>

By the late eighteenth century, lovers’ melancholy, lovesickness and hysteria were all principally female diseases, entrenching the view that women suffered more acutely from romantic hurt. While the melancholic lover was pictured as a man on the cover of Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621, by the mid-eighteenth century the disorder had become effectively ‘feminised.’<sup>79</sup> Women in love were objects of sympathy, whose misfortunes were caused by their tender and feeling hearts. After discovering that a servant girl had fallen for her fiancé in 1772, Elizabeth Reading pitied ‘the poor love stricken maiden,’ also expressing sympathy for a ‘violently smitten...distress’d swain’ in her household.<sup>80</sup> A similar shift took place in conceptions of madness in the late eighteenth century, when the symbolic gender of the insane shifted from the ‘repulsive madman’ to the ‘appealing madwoman.’<sup>81</sup> The transformation of the heartbroken lover from a male to a female figure was thus part of a wider cultural shift. This ‘degrading’ change was criticised in conduct literature, with John Aikin arguing in 1793 that ‘an unnerved frame of body...shrinking timidity of mind, and excessive nicety of feeling’ were ‘too much encouraged under the notion of female delicacy.’<sup>82</sup> By the time Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* was published in 1811, Marianne, Elinor, Fanny Dashwood and

<sup>76</sup> *An account of the various systems of medicine* (London, 1788), Vol. II, p. 114.

<sup>77</sup> John Aitken [sic], *Principles of midwifery, or puerperal medicine* (Edinburgh, 1784), p. 54.

<sup>78</sup> James Makittrick Adair, *Commentaries on the principles and practice of physic* (London, 1772), p. 128.

<sup>79</sup> Roy Porter, *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane* (London, 1987), p. 104.

<sup>80</sup> Reading to Leathes, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1772, BOL 2/4/16, NRO.

<sup>81</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> John Aikin, *Letters from a father to his son, on various topics, relative to literature and the conduct of life* (London, 1793), pp. 339-40.

Nancy Steele were each defined by their propensity for weakness, lovesickness and hysteria. Marianne was seized by a 'death-like paleness' after receiving a letter from Willoughby, causing her sister Elinor 'such a sickness at heart as made her hardly able to hold up her head.' When they later discovered Edward Ferrars' engagement to Lucy Steele, Fanny fell into 'violent hysterics' and screamed while Nancy 'fell upon her knees, and cried bitterly.'<sup>83</sup>

Women were susceptible to dying from love due to their tender and feeling hearts, which were unable to cope with extreme misery. As the rector's daughter Elizabeth Reading wrote to a friend in 1774, this was not a quick process, but a gradual 'gnawing' of gloom and despondency:

A disappointment of this nature I look upon to be the greatest misfortune that can befall [*sic*] a young Person, it throws a gloom upon the spirits which is very rarely ever got the better of, & embitters every pleasure...It is never (like other Troubles) to be eradicated from the breast, but as a worm continually gnawing upon the very vitals.<sup>84</sup>

Elizabeth's letter illuminates how the disappointment of failed romance was perceived as impossible to overcome. While writing their journals during their fraught courtships with Henry Smith and Charles Powlett, Sarah Hurst and Anne Temple both presented death as the only way to end their misery. In 1759, Sarah hoped that 'all my perturbations in the grave shall end', reflecting 'on the happiness of early Death & the troubles avoided by it.'<sup>85</sup> In 1794, Anne also wrote in her journal that she wished 'I had found peace in the silent Grave for there alone, I fear, I shall meet with it.'<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, pp. 134, 194.

<sup>84</sup> Reading to Elizabeth Munbee, Woodstock, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1773, BOL 2/139/1, 740 x 4, NRO. Sarah Hurst made a similar formulation after discovering that a young officer was in love with her, noting 'what is worse than hopeless love', Diary of Hurst, January 17<sup>th</sup> 1762, MS 3545.

<sup>85</sup> Sarah also wailed 'Oh fatal love, what mischiefs dost thou occasion', which is used as the title of this chapter. *Ibid.*, February 18<sup>th</sup>, March 16<sup>th</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup> 1759, MS 3544.

<sup>86</sup> Journal of Temple, June 9<sup>th</sup> 1794, 72M92/5, HRO.





**Fig. 45 – *The maid who died for love*, London, watermark 1807, etching and engraving with stipple, plate mark 22.3 x 27.2cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 807.09.15.01.**

By conflating their torment with the ‘happy’ grave, Anne and Sarah were engaging in a literary tradition dating back centuries. In Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749), Molly Seagrim ‘vowed never to outlive his deserting her’, creating ‘the most shocking postures of death’, while *The History of Miss Harriot Fitzroy* (1767) described love as a ‘fatally serious’ illness. Similarly, James Dodd’s *Satirical Lecture on Hearts* (c. 1770) anticipated that readers would *expect* the disappointed woman to die.<sup>87</sup> This was the fate of the wronged lady in *The Somersetshire Tragedy* (c. 1763-75) who miscarried her child and ‘in sorrow she dyd.’<sup>88</sup> It was also suffered by ‘The Maid Who Died for Love’ (1807) who was depicted languishing beneath an upturned horseshoe clutching at a willow branch (Fig. 45). The text described how ‘No more she said, but droop’d her head, / Death’s curtain clos’d around her eye; Her spirit, from its mansion fled...And breath’d its flight in one short sigh.’ Heartbreak was crafted as a fitting way to die for women susceptible to the vagaries of love, as it emphasised their emotional sensitivity. They were variously described

<sup>87</sup> Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 143, *History of Miss Harriot Fitzroy*, p. 117 and James Dodd, *A Satirical Lecture on Hearts* (London, c. 1770), p. 17.

<sup>88</sup> ‘The Somersetshire TRAGEDY: / OR, THE / Wronged Lady’s Lamentation, and Untimely DEATH’, London, c. 1763-1775, Roxburghe Collection, C.20.f.9(648-649), EBBA.

in letters, diaries, ballads and prints as having ‘poor’, ‘unfortunate’, ‘tender’ and ‘sensitive’ hearts which were consumed with feeling.<sup>89</sup>

In contrast, men were expected to resist the temptation of heartbreak, as it was seen as ‘unmanly’ and revealed their idleness and lack of self-control. John Aikin’s *Letters from a father to his son* (1793) argued that low spirits ‘most easily’ affected ‘persons of a literary turn and sedentary profession,’ and could be easily prevented by ‘*employment, employment, employment!*’<sup>90</sup> Protracted suffering from low spirits therefore demonstrated that a man was idle and not employing himself suitably. Conduct books advised men not to let an unspoken ‘fascination’ with a woman continue for long, as this could potentially ‘extinguish every active vigorous, and manly principle of his mind.’<sup>91</sup> The maxim applied to both unrequited love and after a relationship had come to an end. While women languished from their romantic pain, men were expected to resist, maintaining their pride and demonstrating their self-control. The chaplain Charles Powlett calmly accepted the opposition of Anne Temple’s parents in 1791, recognising that it was difficult for them to know ‘the real disposition of the Man, whose happiness consists in the hopes of marrying their Daughter, Fear & Suspicion are not only natural but meritorious.’<sup>92</sup> Others repeatedly promised to eschew the subject, with John Kerr, Earl of Ancram promising in 1823 that ‘on this subject I will not say more, you must know what I feel, and to enter on it would but annoy you, and be of little relief to me.’<sup>93</sup>

Codes of gentlemanly behaviour also governed the termination of a relationship, as men were expected to notify women immediately rather than prolong their pain. As Lord Orford’s daughter Mary Berry excoriated the faithless Charles O’Hara in 1796, ‘a more decided & a more Gentlemanlike avowal of a change in your sentiments it would have spared me many months of cruel anxiety.’<sup>94</sup> Rather than choosing to end their connection in a gentlemanlike fashion, Charles used ‘a thousand falsehoods’ to conceal the fact that he had simply changed his mind. In this

<sup>89</sup> In 1770, Dodd’s *Satirical Lecture on Hearts* held that ‘women’s hearts are generally tender’, Part II, p. 16.

<sup>90</sup> Aikin, *Letters*, pp. 189-90. As aforementioned, low spirits were a key symptom of female lovesickness, so were something to be avoided by men.

<sup>91</sup> Gregory, *A father’s legacy*, pp. 86-7.

<sup>92</sup> Powlett to Temple, Itchin, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1791, 72M92/7/11, HRO.

<sup>93</sup> John Kerr, Earl of Ancram to Lady Elizabeth Grey and her mother Countess Grey, Halifax Collection, A1/4/30/1, BL.

<sup>94</sup> Berry to O’Hara, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1796, Add Mss. 37727/272, BL.

passage, Mary angrily quoted Charles' own letter back to him to 'be Explicit, in your own words, which as they are generally very Extraordinary ones may perhaps (to yourself) be clearer than any others.'<sup>95</sup> His conduct breached the etiquette of courtship so acutely that friends such as John Barnes were moved to write to Mary and apologise on his behalf.<sup>96</sup> The men of the family also came to the aid of Anne Louisa Dalling after she was jilted by Sir Gilbert Stirling just hours before their wedding in 1805. Anne's brother William Windham wrote to Gilbert to condemn his low behaviour:

The long continued hospitality & friendship of my Mother you have returned with treachery & ingratitude: my own friendship for you...with deceit & insult: my brother was your bosom-friend & introduced you to the family; he may perhaps learn from this lesson not readily to trust again in the appearances of sincerity. For my sister, what shall I say! She has grown up through the last two years of her childhood, countenanced & encouraged by every Act, Expression & Promise of yours that she was to be your wife.<sup>97</sup>

In response, Andrew Stirling replied that he had spoken to Gilbert that morning, who was 'dufily [*sic*] impressed with a sense of the impropriety of his conduct to you & your family.'<sup>98</sup> One week later, Gilbert described how 'There are no words Sir Windham Dalling can use that I shall have any other feeling about than regret for... my unfortunate but I cannot add culpable conduct.'<sup>99</sup> Men were thus expected to act decisively in order to spare women and their families from any unnecessary suffering. When they did not, they were answerable to male friends and family members, who reinforced the rules they had breached and reproached their deceitful behaviour.

The third part of this chapter studies the 'crimes of passion' such as suicides and murders committed by unhappy lovers.<sup>100</sup> While women died from their tender constitutions, heartbroken men unable to conceal their pain were associated with

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 37727/273.

<sup>96</sup> See Mary's reply, Berry to John Barnes, August 30<sup>th</sup> 1796, 37727/243.

<sup>97</sup> W. Dalling to Stirling, Harley Street, March 9<sup>th</sup> 1805, MEA 10/110, 882 x 6, NRO.

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Stirling to W. Dalling, Glasgow, 20<sup>th</sup> March 1805, MEA 10/110, 882 x 6.

<sup>99</sup> Gilbert Stirling to W. Dalling, March 28<sup>th</sup> 1805, MEA 10/110, 882 x 6.

<sup>100</sup> On 'afflictions of the heart' as a motive for suicide see Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 290-8.

violent acts of passion. The suicidal lover of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was usually a woman, who stabbed or poisoned herself when deserted or forced to marry another.<sup>101</sup> However from the 1730s ballads and wider literature increasingly presented the suicidal lover as a male figure. As the *Universal Spectator* decried in 1732, ‘these few Years’ had seen ‘so very many and such shocking Accounts of the Increase of *Self-murder*’ whereby ‘Englishmen *have a Custom of Hanging and Drowning themselves*.’<sup>102</sup> It is telling that the text assumed self-murder was the preserve of ‘Englishmen’ rather than ‘Englishwomen.’ The gendered dichotomy between male suicide and female heartbreak is encapsulated in the ballad ‘The Oxfordshire Tragedy; or, The Death of Four Lovers’ (1736-63). Like the women analysed above, the damsel mourned, sighed, turned pale and then ‘laid her down and nothing spoke / Alas! for love her heart was broke.’ In contrast, her suitor committed a violent suicide with his sword as guilt ‘does my worldly glory blast.’<sup>103</sup>

The prevailing argument against such an act was that suicide was a sin against God; it was ‘a crime against your Creator to wish to throw away your own life’, and appear uninvited before him.<sup>104</sup> Yet this did not deter despairing men such as Thomas Andrews, a journeyman whose romantic turmoil is preserved in the records of the Old Bailey. In January 1732, Thomas was preparing for his wedding day, but ‘the Bride never came’, instead escaping to Newmarket. This led the disappointed groom to try and ‘cut his Throat with a Razor’, but he was prevented by fellow lodgers who broke down his door. After the event, he was never again ‘in his right Senses.’<sup>105</sup> Newspapers brimmed with similar cases of men hanging or maiming themselves after being rejected by women. In 1734, a man named Aldridge

<sup>101</sup> See ‘The Death of Fair Phillis Who Killed her self for loss of her Philander’ (c. 1644-80), ‘The Dying Damsels Doleful Destiny’ (c. 1671-1704), ‘Loves Lamentable Tragedy’ (c. 1671-1704) and ‘The Damosels Tragedy’ (c. 1682-1703) in Paul Seaver (ed.) *The History of Suicide in England 1650-1850* (London, 2012), Part I, 1650-1750, Vol. III, pp. 5-41. Also ‘A Sin to Die for Love?’, *British Apollo*, January 14<sup>th</sup> 1709, pp. 287-8.

<sup>102</sup> Anon, *Universal Spectator*, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1732 in Kelly McGuire (ed.) *The History of Suicide in England, 1650-1850* (London, 2012), Part I, 1650-1750, Vol. IV, pp. 31-6.

<sup>103</sup> While the female protagonist finally runs herself through with the same sword, it is significant that she initially expires by sighing and languishing. See *ibid.*, pp. 315-21.

<sup>104</sup> Trial of Samuel Burt for forgery, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1786, t17860719-31, OBO. Even murder was ‘more possible to be repented of, than a death self-inflicted’, with a rumour spreading in 1758 that certain Danes and Norwegians had committed murder just to receive the death sentence and avoid taking their own lives. This was repeated to the Ordinary of Newgate by a ‘gentleman of credit’, Ordinary’s Account, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1758, OA17580701, OBO.

<sup>105</sup> Trial of Thomas Andrews for burglary, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1732, t17320223-40, OBO.

was rejected by his sweetheart, returning home and attempting to hang himself. He was cut down in time to recover, marrying her the following Tuesday.<sup>106</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1739, a man named Mills cut his throat and ‘ript himself open from the Pit of his Stomach to his Navel’ after his fiancée refused to go ahead with the wedding. Similarly on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1741, a ‘handsome’ man named Dick Priest hung himself from his bedpost after being ‘slighted by his Sweetheart.’<sup>107</sup>

While conduct literature advised men to desist from ‘whining’ about love, suicide provided a means of escape for wounded men who could not conform to the ideal. Male suicide was constructed in popular culture as a masculinised and heroic act of passion – as *The Connoisseur* argued in 1755, ‘it is the most gallant exploit, by which our modern heroes chuse to signalize themselves.’ The means of committing suicide was particularly important, as ‘The poor sneaking wretch, starving in a garret, tucks himself up in his list garters; a second, crost in love, drowns himself, like a blind puppy...and a third cuts his throat with his own razor. But the man of fashion almost always dies by a pistol.’<sup>108</sup> The chief cause was believed to be wounded pride, with the head of a Parliamentary Committee in 1823 attributing it to their ‘wounded shame’ and ‘false pride.’<sup>109</sup> Rejected or slighted men thus chose to end their lives to protect their pride rather than risk damaging their masculinity. Such heroic suicides were dramatised in Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), where the hero shot himself with two pistols,<sup>110</sup> and Fanny Burney’s *Camilla* (1796), where Nicholas Gwigg (alias Alphonso Bellamy) forced Eugenia Tyrold to ‘rescue him from suicide’ by consenting to marriage.<sup>111</sup> Men’s suicide from disappointed love was by no means confined to fiction; the Prince of Wales repeatedly threatened to take his own life to win back his mistress Mrs. Fitzherbert (1756-1837), stabbing

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<sup>106</sup> *Country Journal*, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1734 in McGuire (ed.) *History of Suicide*, Vol. IV, p. 10.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily Gazetteer* and *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, *ibid.*, p. 13.

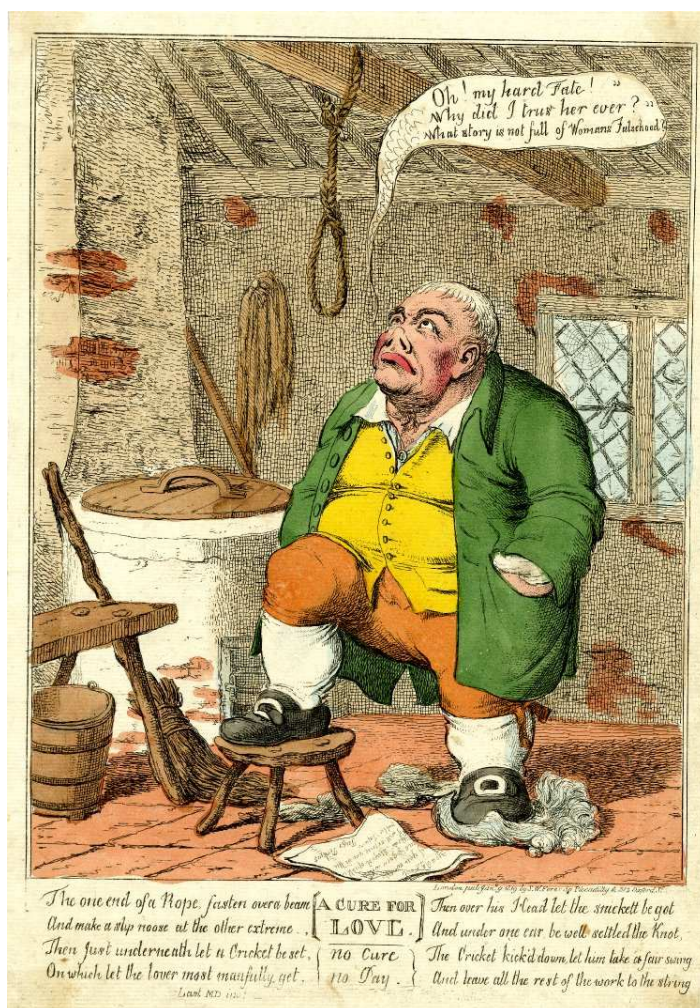
<sup>108</sup> *Connoisseur (Collected Issues)*, London, January 9<sup>th</sup> 1755, Issue L. For aristocrats and gentlemen as the groups most associated with suicide for honour see MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, pp. 276-82.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Pride the Chief Inducement to Suicide’ in *Gentleman’s Magazine*, xxvi, London, 1756, p. 28 and Sir John Mackintosh in *Hansard*, new series, ix (1823), p. 416.

<sup>110</sup> Goethe, *Sorrows of Young Werther*, pp. 84-7.

<sup>111</sup> Burney, *Camilla: or, A Picture of Youth* (Cambridge, 1796; 1999), pp. 283-90.

himself with his sword on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1784 and reiterating his threat whenever she attempted to leave him.<sup>112</sup>



**Fig. 46 – *A Cure for Love*, London, 1819, hand-coloured etching, 35 x 24.5cm, British Museum, London, AN75284001, © The Trustees of the British Museum.**

The suicide of the rejected man is cruelly satirised in the etching *A Cure for Love* (1819) where the protagonist looks up to the noose beside a letter that reads, ‘You old Fool if you ever trouble me again with your Stupid epistles I will expose you in the public Papers.’ The man’s suicide was a direct result of his embarrassment, lamenting, ‘Oh! my hard Fate! Why did I trust her ever?’ (Fig. 46). The grossly overweight man resembles the stout Englishman John Bull, created by

<sup>112</sup> See EA Smith, *George IV* (London, 1999), pp. 34-5, and Valerie Irvine, *The King’s Wife: George IV and Mrs Fitzherbert* (London, 2005), pp. 38, 40, 54.

John Arbuthnot in 1712. His shabby home with bare bricks and cobwebs on the windows clearly sets him apart from the fashionable men he attempts to emulate. The text uses several rhyming terms from northern dialect, with the noose referred to as a 'snickett' and the three-legged stool a 'cricket.'<sup>113</sup> The image is one of ridicule and failed masculinity, as the 'Stupid' overweight man attempts to imitate his fashionable superiors. Even hanging himself from the flimsy beam presents a challenge, as 'The Cricket kick'd down let him take a fair swing / and leave all the rest of the work to the string.' In placing the rejected man below the noose, the image encodes the different cultural scripts governing the experience of heartbreak for men and women. It is telling that while some women physically wasted away from lovesickness, certain men made a conscious *choice* to end their lives. While heartbroken men decided to cut their throats or hang themselves, women were granted no autonomy whatsoever over whether they died or not.<sup>114</sup>

Eighteenth-century plays dramatised men's frenzied crimes of passion; in Voltaire's (1694-1778) immensely popular oriental tragedy *Zara* (1732), the Sultan of Jerusalem murders Zara when he believes she is about to elope with her lover. He then stabs himself like the hero of Shakespeare's *Othello* (c. 1603). A chilling parallel of this case was tried at the Old Bailey in 1785. The 'mulatto' porter John Hogan first met the servant Ann Hunt in 1785 when delivering chairs to her employer Mr. Orrell. Ann 'good naturedly' made him a drink, which he misconstrued as a sign of affection. John bought her a ribbon, creating a 'degree of intimacy' between the couple, and he visited her several times while she was alone, purchasing 'a large nosegay composed of cabbage roses' as a gift.<sup>115</sup> However his romantic advances were unwelcome, and one day when Mr. and Mrs. Orrell returned from church, they found Ann slumped on the floor with her throat slashed, a fractured skull, cut breast and broken fingers. John admitted the murder to his landlady, saying that he had 'no intention of doing any such a thing, but that he wanted to be great with her, and she resisted.'<sup>116</sup> The trial reflects ideas about men's

<sup>113</sup> I am grateful to Helen Berry for this reference.

<sup>114</sup> Janet Oppenheim has made a similar point in arguing that the 'element of personal choice or responsibility' was removed from Victorian women suffering from nervous collapse. See *idem*, *'Shattered Nerves: Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England'* (Oxford, 1991), p. 181.

<sup>115</sup> On the role of gift-giving in the progress of a relationship see Chapter 2.

<sup>116</sup> For how court testimonies reflected ideal notions of masculinity and femininity, see Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987), esp. pp. 74-5, 94-8, 103-4.

jealous temper, which could translate into murderous rage due to the high passions of love. Such acts of violence were thought to proceed from ‘a fiery hot disposition...and a predominancy [*sic*] of choler in their constitution.’<sup>117</sup> John was found guilty and sentenced to hanging and dissection, with the Judge pronouncing Ann ‘the unhappy object’ of his ‘brutal desires and appetites.’<sup>118</sup> The case reinforces the gendered dichotomy between languishing women and passionate men, also revealing how crimes driven by romantic rejection were no mitigation from the noose.

The fourth part of this chapter moves on to rituals of disintegration, as romantic relationships were deconstructed through the return of letters and tokens. John Hogan’s macabre nosegay reminds us that whilst relationships were *made* in objects, they were also *un-made* in objects. Once an attachment came to an end, men were primarily responsible for returning or destroying the physical debris of a relationship in a way which would not prove damaging to either party. The return of love tokens officially marked a couple’s ‘disengagement’ in novels such as Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), with Willoughby returning ‘the letters with which I have been honoured from you, and the lock of hair which you so obligingly bestowed on me’ to formally terminate his connection to Marianne.<sup>119</sup> The novel provides an indication of wider social practices, as readers would have recognised that the return of Marianne’s letters and hair officially ended their connection.

Men were also expected to return women’s love letters with the utmost urgency in order to guard their modesty, virtue and reputation. This was an enormously significant act, as continuing a romantic correspondence provided undeniable evidence that a couple would soon be engaged. Returning a lover’s letters therefore physically and symbolically terminated the possibility of a future marriage.<sup>120</sup> It was also acceptable for women to return a suitor’s missives to formally disengage themselves from a relationship. The convention was already well-established by the early eighteenth century, with the diarist Dudley Ryder’s friend Mr. Whatley unsure about the status of his relationship in 1715 as his

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<sup>117</sup> *Three letters to the young gentlemen of the present age* (London, 1748), pp. 65-6.

<sup>118</sup> Trial of John Hogan for murder, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1786, t17860111-1, OBO.

<sup>119</sup> Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, p. 135.

<sup>120</sup> Also see Chapter 3, pp. 91-2, 108-9, 121.



sweetheart would not commit to keeping or returning his missives. Ryder described how ‘upon his still pressing her she used to tell him that it could come to nothing and that she would give him his letters, she never sent them him, which made him believe he was not quite forsaken neither.’<sup>121</sup> By ending their romantic correspondence but not returning his letters, she left their relationship in an indeterminate state, as Mr. Whatley could no longer be sure whether they were courting or not.

The nobleman John Kerr, Earl of Ancram, swiftly returned Lady Elizabeth Grey’s letters in 1823 in order to protect her virtue and symbolically end their relationship. Her letters exude desperation to retrieve her missives as quickly as possible, beseeching her mother to have them sent ‘enclosed to her under cover to L. Grey.’<sup>122</sup> The whole process was conducted in secret, to minimize social gossip surrounding the affair. It is telling that Elizabeth chose not to write to John personally, perhaps because the two were no longer courting and she did not want to risk further damage to her reputation. She was deeply vexed that their relationship had become known outside of their immediate family, becoming the subject of gossip among Lady Jersey, Lady Sandwich, the Duke of Wellington and Lord Londonderry.<sup>123</sup> The relationship provides a unique example of unsuccessful engagements among the nobility, who would usually have taken great pains to ensure that a match was a success. The decisive factor was that John had acted alone rather than consulting his parents, completely ignoring the prevailing etiquette of noble courtships. John’s transgression forced him to grovel to Elizabeth and her parents for forgiveness, as ‘every circumstance has united to present my conduct in its worst light.’<sup>124</sup> The central role played by John’s father in terminating the relationship, and Elizabeth’s mother in managing its deconstruction, demonstrates the continuing importance of families in making and breaking a romantic match. As Gowing has noted, signs that a couple were ‘resorting in the way of marriage’ were closely monitored by ‘their wider household and community.’<sup>125</sup> Familial guidance

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<sup>121</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> October 1715, William Matthews (ed.) *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715-1716* (London, 1939), p. 127.

<sup>122</sup> Countess Grey to Ancram, June 28<sup>th</sup> 1823, A1/4/30/4, BI.

<sup>123</sup> Countess Grey to Charlotte, A1/4/30/10.

<sup>124</sup> Ancram to Countess Grey, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1823, A1/4/30/6.

<sup>125</sup> Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 146. Also see O’Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, Chapter 1, pp. 30-56, Linda Pollock, ‘An Action Like Stratagem: Courtship and Marriage from the Middle Ages to

was especially pronounced in relationships involving the nobility, in order to ensure the continued rank and social prestige of both dynasties.

Each of the writers studied in this chapter expressed concern over the social implications of ending a courtship that had become well-known in the community, with Anne Temple describing the social ‘punishment’ due to women guilty of ‘broken vows, treachery, and perjury.’<sup>126</sup> The writers studied throughout this thesis were acutely aware that ‘Intimacies of another nature if they are long continued, cannot be broke off without great Uneasiness.’<sup>127</sup> They warned one another that ‘the eyes of all my friends & all my acquaintance [*sic*] are watching my every motion with respect to you.’<sup>128</sup> This meant that ‘If I were capable of so much meanness or dishonour...as to break the engagement I have formed, without a sufficient reason, I should hold myself the most contemptible of beings, & be justly entitled to the severest censure of the World.’<sup>129</sup> The chaplain Edward Peach was concerned that the widow Elizabeth Leathes (*née* Reading) had changed her mind about their relationship in 1790, warning her after a particularly ‘severe’ letter that ‘Our intended Marriage is the general subject of this Country.’<sup>130</sup> This cautioned Elizabeth that the match could not be broken off without potentially harming her reputation. Noblewomen had to be particularly careful not to damage their prospects for an advantageous marriage, with gossip about the romance between Lady Elizabeth Grey and the Earl of Ancram spreading like wildfire in 1823, despite her mother’s attempts to keep it within their ‘immediate family.’ Countess Grey was deeply vexed that the relationship had become public knowledge despite her continued attempts to suppress it, begging her daughter to ‘avoid him as much as possible without affectation.’<sup>131</sup>

The concerns expressed by these individuals are understandable, as novels and conduct books continually warned that a failed relationship could be catastrophic for a young woman’s reputation. After her seduction by the rake Lovelace, the

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the Twentieth Century’, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June, 1987), pp. 483-98 and Vickery, *Gentleman’s Daughter*, pp. 40-6, 49-5, 81-2, 86, 286.

<sup>126</sup> Journal of Temple, 9th April 1794, 72M92/5.

<sup>127</sup> Gibbs to Vicary, undated, 1740s, MS/11021/1/1, LMA.

<sup>128</sup> Strutt to Douglas, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1788, MS3101/C/E/4/8/11, BCA.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1789, MS3101/C/E/4/8/16.

<sup>130</sup> Peach to Leathes, November 4<sup>th</sup> 1790, BOL 2/140/2/39, NRO.

<sup>131</sup> ‘LG’ to Charlotte, undated, c. 1823-4, A1/4/30/10, BI.

heartbroken heroine of Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8) sought refuge in death in order to expiate her faults.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, the protagonist of Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth* (1791) was alienated from her family after her seduction by a soldier, dying alone after giving birth to his child. Rowson argued that her tale was based upon 'real' events under a 'slight veil of fiction' to provide a warning to parents and their daughters of the dangers of seduction.<sup>133</sup> The text was seen as 'dangerously close to the truth' by readers, with one owner writing the poignant note 'So True a Tale' inside her copy.<sup>134</sup> Unfortunately it is difficult to reconstruct an individual's activities after a romantic correspondence ended, as all trace of an alliance vanishes after the letters come to a close. However we do know that several of the women studied in this chapter made advantageous marriages soon after their disappointment. While Anne Louisa Dalling married General Robert Meade (1772-1852) in 1808, three years after she was jilted by Sir Gilbert Stirling, Lady Elizabeth Grey married John Crocker Bulteel (1794-1843) in 1826, two years after she was deserted by the Earl of Ancram. These marriages suggest that despite the inevitable emotional trauma, their prospects were not unduly damaged.

To conclude, this chapter has argued that suffering from love became a definably female malady from the mid-eighteenth century. The dominant archetypes of heartbreak were female figures drawn from Shakespearean and classical texts, with lovers expressing sympathy for 'poor' Armida, 'wretched' Dido and 'pathetic' Ophelia. These tales were interpreted in a new light to portray women's love as an all-powerful force which affected them more than men. Nonetheless the *language* of heartbreak was used by both sexes, who related each of their experiences back to the wounding or revival of their hearts. Such language was not used at random, but provided lovers with a rich vocabulary to pinpoint the exact stages of romantic breakdown. The popularity of particular expressions changed over time, with the heart shot by arrows assuming an increasingly prominent role in the celebration of

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<sup>132</sup> Richardson, *Clarissa*, L339-341, 370, 467, pp. 1076-86, 1142-71 and 1341-3.

<sup>133</sup> This may have been the case, although the same literary device was used by Samuel Richardson, who claimed that the first edition of *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4) was based upon genuine letters, and Horace Walpole, who argued that the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was a genuine gothic manuscript printed in Naples in 1529.

<sup>134</sup> Megan Ledford, "My Treasure:" Novels as Objects of Value in the Early American Republic', Fourth Annual Conference of the York History Research Society: Material Culture in History, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010.

Valentine's Day in the early nineteenth century, and 'heartache' coming to be specifically associated with romantic pain.

The delicate physical disposition of 'unfortunate' women assumed a prominent role in popular culture from the mid-1750s, as they suffered extensively from their 'poor' and 'sensitive' hearts. This manifested itself in ballads and prints where pale women sighed, moaned, sobbed, groaned and died from their broken hearts. It was also reflected in courtship letters, as women wrote at length about their uncomfortable mental state, agitated spirits, gloom and despondency. At worst, this led to melancholy, hysteria, madness and death. Different cultural scripts governed the experience of heartbreak for men, as feminine despondency was replaced with the passionate masculinised act of suicide. While women were granted no control over their experience of heartbreak, these violent and heroic suicides provided a way for men to protect their pride. The gallant suicide of the rejected man was a difficult ideal for poorer men to emulate, as satirised in Figure 46.

Men's expected pragmatic response to the end of a relationship made it an important male duty to return a woman's letters and tokens to spare them additional suffering, before reintroducing themselves into society and resuming the search for a spouse. Men such as Sir Gilbert Stirling who had behaved dishonourably left themselves at risk of a 'breach of promise' suit from the incensed family they left behind. As Anne Louisa Dalling's brother reproached him in 1805, 'in a moment, without a word, without a line, without a whisper in the ear of a friend to tell us any cause, you disappear; & at six weeks end we are still left the subject of town-talk & the newspapers!'<sup>135</sup> These emotionally charged suits are the subject of the next chapter of this thesis.

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<sup>135</sup> W. Dalling to Stirling, Harley Street, March 9<sup>th</sup> 1805, MEA 10/110, 662 x 6, NRO.

## Chapter Seven

### 'Engagement to marry is not merely a spiritual matter:'<sup>1</sup> Breach of Promise Cases in the Common Law

When the gentleman Knox Ward began visiting Sarah Holt 'under the umbrage of Courtship' in 1729, he spoke 'very tenderly and affectionately to her' and repeatedly promised to make her his wife. He soothed the concerns of Sarah's mother by reassuring her that his designs were honourable, while her chambermaid witnessed 'a thousand kind and tender Expressions' between the pair. When Knox abruptly changed his mind and deserted her, Sarah sued him for breach of promise, demanding damages of £4,000. In Knox's defence, he argued that although she was 'a deserving young Lady', he never would have 'undervalued' himself to marry her as she 'had not a competent Fortune', which he believed prohibited her from receiving such a large sum. The Counsel for the Plaintiff justified the damages as by 'having allured and enticed her to permit him to pay Visits to her at sundry Times, upon his Protestation of an inviolable Friendship; and then making a Breach and palpable Violation of his Contract, he certainly had injured the Lady very much in her Reputation, besides giving her a great deal of Uneasiness.' Once Lord Chief Justice Raymond (1673-1733) summed up the depositions and 'delivered an impartial Charge to the Jury', they took half an hour to find for the plaintiff. Sarah was awarded half of the damages she demanded, which still added up to an immense £2,000.<sup>2</sup>

Breach of promise suits such as the dispute between Sarah and Knox have typically been studied in conjunction with other matrimonial causes such as separation, adultery and slander.<sup>3</sup> Although disputes concerning 'a pre-nuptial contract or a promise to marry' are routinely listed as the most common types of matrimonial litigation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they are rarely granted more than a passing mention by historians. However studying these cases in greater detail provides a unique insight into the cultural construction of romantic

<sup>1</sup> *Baker vs. Smith* (1651), 82 *English Reports* (subsequently *Eng. Rep.*), 722 1378-1865.

<sup>2</sup> *The whole proceedings on the tryal between Mrs. Sarah Holt, and Knox Ward, Esq; upon a promise of marriage* (London, 1730), pp. 3-7.

<sup>3</sup> Bound, 'Emotion in Early Modern England', Smith, 'Women and Marriage in the Eighteenth Century', RB Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860* (Cambridge, 2006), Stone, *Road to Divorce and Uncertain Unions*.

love, intimacy, virtue, passion and heartbreak. Since the majority of plaintiffs were women of middling status, breach of promise suits present a unique opportunity to analyse factors such as gender, social status and age in contemporary conceptions of courtship. Cases also shed light on the exchange of love letters, love tokens, and the language of romantic success or failure, which have been studied in detail in the previous chapters of this thesis.

The rare studies focusing exclusively on breach of promise cluster around the Victorian period. These include Ginger Frost's *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class and Gender in Victorian England* (1995), Susie Steinbach's thesis 'Promises, Promises: Not Marrying in England 1780-1920' (Yale, 1996) and Saskia Lettmaier's *Broken Engagements: The Action for Breach of Promise of Marriage and the Feminine Ideal, 1800-1940* (2010). Although Frost claims to cover the period from 1750 to 1970, her research is largely based on the years between 1850 and 1900. This reduces the eighteenth century to only six cases, which she admits leaves only 'scanty records' of the period.<sup>4</sup> Steinbach's work adds greater depth to the neglected eighteenth century, analysing the 'rules' of breach of promise before 1869 and arguing that all cases were 'at base either contractual or sentimental.'<sup>5</sup> Steinbach has since been challenged by Lettmaier, who argues that the action was 'nothing more and nothing less than the legal codification of a powerful cultural ideal: the ideal of the true woman.' Under this ideal, notions of 'female domesticity, modesty, chastity, physical frailty, passionlessness, emotionality, and child-like dependence' came to define the legal and practical 'rules' of the suit from the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> While this chapter supports Lettmaier's notion of breach of promise encoding perceived 'ideal' feminine qualities in law, it also reveals that discourses of

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<sup>4</sup> Frost's cases are *Dickison vs. Holcroft* (1674), *Cork vs. Baker* (1717), *Robinson vs. Cumming* (1742), *Horam vs. Humphreys* (1772), *Ellis vs. Cock* (1776), *Schreiber vs. Frazer* (1780) and *Atcheson vs. Baker* (1796) in *idem, Promises Broken*.

<sup>5</sup> These 'rules' were laid down in cases such as *Dickison vs. Holcroft* which ruled that mutual promises were enough to support an action, *Hutton vs. Mansell* (1704) which ruled that a woman's promise to marry did not have to be spoken, *Potter vs. Deboos* (1815) where a general promise was said to be inferred from a specific promise to marry at a particular time, *Orford vs. Cole* (1818) which ruled that marriage contracts were 'of a different description' to business contracts, and *Gough vs. Farr* (1827) which required evidence that the defendant had refused to marry the plaintiff. Susie Steinbach, 'Promises, Promises: Not Marrying in England 1780-1920', dissertation, Yale University (1996), pp. 127, 131-2, 134, 137.

<sup>6</sup> Saskia Lettmaier, *Broken Engagements: The Action for Breach of Promise of Marriage and the Feminine Ideal, 1800-1940* (Oxford, 2010), p. 57.

female beauty, fragility, nervousness and mental instability were already entrenched in the 1790s, a decade before the beginning of Lettmaier's study in 1800.

The early years of breach of promise remain woefully neglected by historians. Cases make occasional appearances in studies of the church courts; Fay Bound Alberti analysed the suit brought against Ursula Watson by Thomas Mascall at the York Consistory Court (1743-5), while Lawrence Stone's *Uncertain Unions* (1992) reproduced the suits brought against Mary Cudworth by John Brace at the Worcester Consistory Court (1682) and against Jack Lingard by Abigail Harris in the London Consistory Court and Court of Arches (1701-2).<sup>7</sup> The most thorough study to date is Stone's *Road to Divorce* (1990), which analysed sixty cases between 1780 and 1840 using the *English Reports*, *Gentleman's Magazine* and *London Chronicle*, citing fifteen suits in particular.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter focuses on breach of promise cases in the common law, which hugely outnumber ecclesiastical suits yet have received scant attention from historians. Matrimonial suits in the church courts have been subject to detailed analysis in the work of Junko Akamatsu, Susan Amussen, Joanne Bailey, Elizabeth Foyster and Martin Ingram.<sup>9</sup> Breach of promise suits always constituted a fraction of the church courts' business, with only four cases in total heard at the London and York Consistory Courts between 1730 and 1754.<sup>10</sup> This figure reflects the increasing scarcity of matrimonial causes under the canon law. As RB Outhwaite wryly notes,

If the officials who administered the law in the English church courts in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had had to rely on marital causes to maintain their incomes, they would quickly have become eligible for poor

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<sup>7</sup> See Bound, 'Emotion in Early Modern England' and Stone, *Uncertain Unions*.

<sup>8</sup> These are *Baker vs. Smith* (1651), *Mills vs. Middleton* (1670), *Holcroft vs. Dickenson* (1672), *Jesson vs. Collins* (1703), *Webb vs. Webb* (c. 1702-3), *Hemming vs. Freemantle* (1761), *Homans vs. Johnson* (1787), *Elizabeth Chapman vs. William Shaw* (1790), *Atcheson vs. Baker*, *Bond vs. Oliver* (1798), *Foster vs. Mellish* (1802), *Hutton vs. Mansell*, *English Report* 87, *Austen vs. Vereker* (1815), *Abbot vs. Young* (1829) and *Hall vs. Wright* (1858).

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the sources in note 3 see Junko Akamatsu, 'Gender, Power and Sensibility: Marital Breakdown and Separation in the Court of Arches, 1660-1800', PhD thesis, University of London, 2009, Susan Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988) Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 2003), Elizabeth Foyster, *Marital Violence: An English Family History, 1660-1857* (Cambridge, 2005) and Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Smith, 'Women and Marriage', p. 22.

relief. Such causes...were rare at the outset and became rarer still as the period progressed.<sup>11</sup>

Outhwaite attributed this decline to the increasing popularity of church ceremonies, rising female age at marriage, the expansion of other more profitable suits such as testamentary and tithe cases, and judges' unwillingness to enforce unsolemnised unions, which inevitably deterred potential litigants.<sup>12</sup>

Conversely, matrimonial litigation under the common law exploded in popularity, especially after the Hardwicke Marriage Act came into force on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1754. This chapter is based upon a sample of eighty-one cases reported in thirty-four national and provincial newspapers between 1730 and 1830 (see Appendix Three).<sup>13</sup> In addition are *English Reports*, *The Counsellor's Magazine*, pamphlets, advertisements and published accounts of trials. Such a broad source-base is necessary as breach of promise cases were tried in courts across England, in contrast to crim. con. actions which were restricted to London.<sup>14</sup> Since crim. con. cases were only possible *after* marriage, these have been analysed alongside adulterous love letters in Chapter Four of this thesis. Overall, the sheer volume of literature available about breach of promise clearly demonstrates public fascination with the suit long before it assumed its fêted role in popular culture in the early nineteenth century.

Newspaper reports were selected for analysis as only a small number of breach of promise cases were featured in law reports, the majority of which were exceptional cases under appeal.<sup>15</sup> 'Assize Intelligence', 'Legal Intelligence' and 'Law Reports' featured in newspapers are immensely valuable as they frequently provide exact details about the age, social status and reputation of plaintiffs, defendants and their families. They reveal how particular cases were perceived by contemporaries, through the scathing or fawning language used to describe love, desertion and heartbreak. Reports illuminate community interest in cases, noting

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<sup>11</sup> Outhwaite, *Ecclesiastical Courts*, pp. 47-56.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Due to the sheer volume of cases after 1817, Appendix 3 cites the first case of every year reported in the *Morning Post* between 1817 and 1830. Four cases in this chapter are not featured in the Appendix as they were tried later in the year; *Cooper vs. Everton* (1817), *Compton vs. Winkworth* (1820), *Wait vs. Aspinall* (1824) and *Duckworth vs. Johnson* (1828).

<sup>14</sup> Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p. 247.

<sup>15</sup> Lettmaier, *Broken Engagements*, p. 10.



when a courtroom was especially crowded,<sup>16</sup> and when the crowd was satisfied with the judge's verdict, occasionally breaking into applause.<sup>17</sup> The volume of reports also reveals when cases had become a *cause célèbre*.<sup>18</sup> Reporters did not simply recount the facts of cases, but incensed and inflamed readers using portrayals of respectable or promiscuous parties, roguish men and heartbroken women.<sup>19</sup>

This chapter is divided into three sections, firstly outlining the development of breach of promise in the common law, and secondly analysing the nature of the suit including the verdicts, gender balance, damages awarded, age, occupation and social status of plaintiffs and defendants. Thirdly, it asks which objects were commonly used as 'proof' of an attachment, from marriage licences to wedding gowns. The key questions involve how the suit changed over time, how actions, verdicts and damages varied according to gender, and which features, if any, were unique to the eighteenth century. This is the first study to focus exclusively on breach of promise as a common law tort across the long eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> It is also the first to prioritise the role of material objects in these cases, confirming the vital importance of material objects in proving a relationship before the community and courts of law.

The late seventeenth century saw the common law courts gradually usurping the power of the church courts to rule on the validity of matrimonial contracts. Although cases can be traced as far back as the sixteenth century, breach of promise was first tested as a common law action in cases such as *Baker vs. Smith* in 1651.<sup>21</sup> The case was continually adjourned as the court was divided as to whether there was

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<sup>16</sup> See *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1794, 18782, and *The Morning Post and Gazetteer*, February 25<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10418.

<sup>17</sup> See *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, March 30<sup>th</sup> 1787, 77.

<sup>18</sup> For example *Chapman vs. Shaw Esq.* was reported in the *World*, *Whitehall Evening Post* and *Times*, while *Atcheson vs. Baker* was reported in *True Briton*, *Whitehall Evening Post*, *Evening Mail* and *Telegraph*. See Appendix 3.

<sup>19</sup> On newspapers and their readers see Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), esp. pp. 22-42.

<sup>20</sup> A 'tort' is 'the breach of a duty imposed by law, whereby some person acquires a right of action for damages', and was first used in this sense in J. Ferne's *Blazon of Gentry* in 1586. See 'tort, n.', OEDO, <http://0www.oed.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/view/Entry/203665?rskey=5DX6ow&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

<sup>21</sup> SFC Milsom, *Historical Foundations of the Common Law* (London, 1969), p. 289. Charles J. MacColla posited *Palmer vs. Wilder* as the first case 'in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when it was decided that for the value of the marriage, tender was not requisite', *Breach of Promise: Its History and Social Considerations* (London, 1879), p. 3.

a mutual promise between the couple, which was ‘not so plainly expressed in words as it might have been’, and how long this would take to expire.<sup>22</sup> In the case, the judge provided a valuable explanation of breach of promise as a common law tort beyond the ‘spiritual’ powers of the ecclesiastical courts:

Here is a mutual promise made by both parties, and there have been divers [*sic*] actions of late times brought for this cause, and they have been adjudged good, and the engagement to marry is not merly [*sic*] a spiritual matter, and this action is not to compel the mariage [*sic*] upon the contract, but to recover damages for not doing it, and it is like to a wager, and here is a temporal loss, and therefore a temporal action doth lie.<sup>23</sup>

The establishment of this temporal action paved the way for cases such as *Holcroft vs. Dickenson* (1672), where the Court of Common Pleas ruled that since John Dickenson ‘did assume and promise’ to marry Mary Holcroft ‘within a fortnight’, ‘this hindred [*sic*] her preferment to her damage of 100 pounds.’<sup>24</sup> The case is also referred to as *Holder vs. Dickeson* and even *Dickison vs. Holcroft* due to variations in the *English Reports*, leading Steinbach to term the plaintiff ‘Miss Dickison.’<sup>25</sup> When the case was referred to the King’s Bench in 1673, the judges considered whether ‘Marriage being a thing of ecclesiastical conusance, the common law takes no notice of it.’ However, they held ‘that the action well lay; for that here is a mutual contract concerning a lawful act, and though the subject matter be spiritual yet the contract is temporal.’ If there was any suit contesting the lawfulness of a marriage, this remained a matter for the ecclesiastical courts, but the reparation of temporal loss after the creation of a binding contract was firmly within the realms of the common law.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 82 *Eng. Rep.* 729 1378-1865.

<sup>23</sup> 82 *Eng. Rep.* 722.

<sup>24</sup> 124 *Eng. Rep.* 933. John Dickenson’s forename is revealed in reports of 12<sup>th</sup> February 1674 in *Journal of the House of Lords*, Vol. 12, 1666-75, pp. 634-5. See <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=12875#s4>

<sup>25</sup> Steinbach, ‘Promises, Promises’, p. 127. The case is referred to as ‘Mary Holcroft *versus* Dickenson’ at the Court of Common Pleas, 124 *Eng. Rep.* 933, and ‘Dickison and Holcroft’, 84 *Eng. Rep.* 645, ‘Holder v. Dickeson’, 89 *Eng. Rep.* 70-2 at the Court of King’s Bench.

<sup>26</sup> Not all judges approved, with Chief Justice Vaughan demonstrating a ‘strong repugnance...to the introduction of these actions.’ 89 *Eng. Rep.* 70.

The church courts were defenceless against this infringement of their powers, as canon law provided no basis for imposing fines upon wayward lovers. However, they continued to rule on the validity of a small number of marriage contracts, with approximately one case per decade taking place at the York Consistory Court.<sup>27</sup> The suit was remarkably similar in common and canon law, as cases were based upon depositions given by witnesses, who were cross-examined by a judge, and material objects used during or purchased in anticipation of a marriage ceremony.<sup>28</sup> The key difference was that the church courts sought to discover whether or not a couple were legally married in order to dismiss or enforce their union, whereas common law courts focused on the nature of the contract between the two parties in order to impose a fine on the defendant. Judges directed a number of plaintiffs back to the church courts to redress their grievances; *Jesson vs. Collins* (1703) saw the plaintiff contesting that a contract was *per verba de futuro* rather than *per verba de praesenti*, as this would make the matter eligible for common law. However, the suit was sent straight back to the spiritual courts, as the judge ruled that ‘a contract *per verba de praesenti* is a marriage...and this is not releasable.’<sup>29</sup> The typical suit in the church courts is exemplified by the dispute between Thomas Mascall and Ursula Watson at the York Consistory Court in 1745, which hinged upon vows exchanged in the present tense during a ceremony at the home of Ursula’s Uncle in 1742. Whilst Thomas alleged that they decided to ‘marry themselves to each other’ by reading vows out of Ursula’s Common Prayer Book and exchanging a gold ring, she responded that she had taken the book out of her pocket accidentally and ‘did not duely weight or consider the Force or Efficacy’ of what she was doing.<sup>30</sup>

Such cases came to an abrupt halt on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1754, as the Hardwicke Marriage Act swiftly removed the power of the church courts to enforce contracts *per verba de praesenti*, and those *per verba de futuro* after cohabitation.<sup>31</sup> Whilst

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<sup>27</sup> These were *Roskell vs. Knipe* (1707-8), *Massey vs. Ogden* (1713), *Hanswell vs. Dodgshon* (1729), *Mascall vs. Watson* (1743-5) and *Connell vs. Caine* (1754-7). See Smith, ‘Women and Marriage’, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Witnesses’ testimony was paramount in both seduction and breach of promise suits, as plaintiffs and defendants were not permitted to give evidence until 1869.

<sup>29</sup> 90 *Eng. Rep.* 1152.

<sup>30</sup> *Mascall vs. Watson* (1743-5), Consistory Court of York, appealed from Consistory Court of Durham, TRANS.CP.1744/5, BI.

<sup>31</sup> 90 *Eng. Rep.* 1152. Also see Chapter 1, pp. 29-30. Steinbach has suggested that although Hardwicke’s Act made it ‘theoretically impossible to compel marriage on the grounds of pre-contract’, breach of promise suits in the civil courts took on this role after 1754. For example during

Frost argues that cases were ‘primarily brought in the ecclesiastical courts’ until 1640,<sup>32</sup> this does not mean that their business ceased immediately, as breach of promise was not formally removed from ecclesiastical jurisdiction until the mid-eighteenth century. Legal changes subsequently prompted a shift in the focus of the church courts towards cases such as *Chevely vs. Chevely* (1770) at the London Consistory Court, which disputed a couple’s commitment under the guise of restitution of conjugal rights.<sup>33</sup> A related change took place with the shift of crim. con. cases from the church to the civil courts in the mid-eighteenth century, which Susan Staves argues reflected a new willingness ‘to understand seduction as secular rather than religious experience.’<sup>34</sup>



**Fig. 47 – J. Bluck after Thomas Rowlandson and Auguste Charles Pugin, *Court of King’s Bench. Westminster Hall*, from *The Microcosm of London*, London, 1808, coloured aquatint, Government Art Collection, 9417.**

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*Roebuck vs. Dunderdale* (1825) the couple had already had a child together, and the defendant was in no position to pay heavy damages. However the Counsel for the Plaintiff hoped that ‘the Jury would give such heavy damages as would induce him to offer [his] hand’, ‘Promises, Promises’, pp. 113-4.

<sup>32</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Chevely vs. Chevely*, DL/C/176, fols. 73<sup>v</sup>-83<sup>v</sup>, LMA.

<sup>34</sup> Adam Komisaruk, ‘The Privatization of Pleasure: Crim. Con. in Wollstonecraft’s *Maria*’, *Law and Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), p. 36 and Staves, ‘British Seduced Maidens’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Winter, 1980-1), p. 110.

The home of breach of promise in the common law was the Court of King's Bench at Westminster Hall, which also housed the Court of Common Pleas and Court of Chancery (Fig. 47). The King's Bench was the highest court of common law in England and Wales, holding local jurisdiction over Middlesex and Westminster. It heard over one third of the cases in Appendix Three, which were frequently referred from local courts, where the defendant had obtained a *writ of certiorari*. As in church court proceedings, indictments, informations, writs and plea rolls were recorded in Latin until 1733.

Despite its neglect by historians, the middle decades of the eighteenth century were pivotal in creating increasing awareness of breach of promise in popular culture. The phrase 'breach of contract' was first mentioned in the *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal* in 1730.<sup>35</sup> 'Breach of promise' was popularised almost sixty years later, with the first mention in the *World and Fashionable Advertiser* in 1787, followed by 158 examples between 1787 and 1804.<sup>36</sup> Moralistic accounts of 'crowded' courtrooms, 'exemplary' damages and virtuous female plaintiffs exploded in the early nineteenth century, with 158 articles mentioning the suit in the *Morning Post*, 124 in the *Times* and 114 in the *Morning Chronicle* between 1805 and 1830.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Based on key-word search of BND on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2012. *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, June 13<sup>th</sup> 1730, LXXXVIII. The number of articles mentioning 'breach of contract' is difficult to quantify, as the phrase was also used to describe housing, parliamentary and mercantile contracts.

<sup>36</sup> *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1787, 4. However we should not assume that each example concerns a different case, as Issues 9627-54 of the *General Evening Post* between 13<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> August 1795 each reprint the same account of *Brown vs. Harding* (1795).

<sup>37</sup> Quotes from *Forster vs. Hoblin* (1805) and *King vs. Chance* (1822). *The Morning Post and Gazetteer* was renamed *The Morning Post* in 1803. Results based on key-word searches of BND and Times Digital Archive (subsequently TDA) on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011.



**Fig. 48 – Baron Kenyon in *Cocking the Greeks*, London, 1796, hand-coloured etching, sheet 39 x 30cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 796.05.16.02.**

**Fig. 49 – Lord Erskine in James Gillray, *Nelson's Victory: or Good News operating upon Loyal Feelings*, London, 1798, hand-coloured etching, plate mark 25.9 x 36.1cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 798.10.03.01.**

**Fig. 50 – Lord Ellenborough in James Gillray, *The Cabinetical-Balance*, London, 1806, hand-coloured etching, plate mark 35 x 24.9cm, Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT, 806.02.16.01.**

King's Bench lawyers even became celebrities in their own right, with Chief Justice Kenyon, Lord Thomas Erskine and Chief Justice Ellenborough becoming heroes and villains of pamphlets, newspaper reports and satirical prints (Figs. 48 to 50).<sup>38</sup> These men had a significant impact upon the nature of breach of promise actions through their performances in court. The socially conservative Lloyd Kenyon, first Baron Kenyon (1732-1802) was Lord Chief Justice between 1788 and 1802 and was 'abrupt in speech and temper, often rude to counsel, not given to oratory unless it concerned an issue that touched him deeply.' One such issue was matrimony, where he actively encouraged juries to award large damages in suits for adultery and crim. con. Kenyon's stance undoubtedly encouraged the awarding of sizeable damages to plaintiffs in breach of promise suits during his time in office; in

<sup>38</sup> The prints reproduced here depict Kenyon declaring Lady Archer and Lady Buckinghamshire 'silly Women' after they are put in the pillory for gambling, Erskine (who had recently fainted in court) slumping in his chair after hearing of Nelson's victory in the Battle of the Nile, and Ellenborough on the shoulders of Viscount Sidmouth manipulating the Grenville-Fox ministry after the death of William Pitt the Younger.

his fourteen years as Chief Justice the court only went against his recommendation on six occasions.<sup>39</sup> Even when a case was declared a nonsuit, he thought it fit to recommend compensation to plaintiffs, not ‘in his character of Judge, but as a Man.’<sup>40</sup> Kenyon’s protégée Thomas Erskine (1750-1823) was another notorious figure, whose famous defences in court were reprinted in numerous editions for an awed public, heaping him with praise as ‘the first Orator of the British Bar.’<sup>41</sup> Erskine’s oratory secured large damages for innumerable women, solidifying the idea that ‘if there was any case that more deserved attention than another, it was that which involved the consideration of an injury done to a woman.’<sup>42</sup> Kenyon was succeeded as Chief Justice by Edward Law, first Baron Ellenborough, who acted to diminish the level of damages awarded in crim. con. cases, which had been escalated by his predecessor. As Ellenborough warned the jury during *Storey vs. Eagle* (1802), ‘in giving damages, the Jury should take care not utterly to ruin the defendant.’<sup>43</sup>

Cases could even be brought by the parents of individuals; when Cornelius Far promised to marry Mary Atkins in 1732, he executed a bond to her promising that if he did not marry her within twelve months, he would pay her £500. After Mary’s death, her mother brought a suit against Cornelius to recover the money, and won.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, when the plaintiff in *Tawes vs. Jones* was nonsuited for breach of promise in 1796, her father was advised to bring a suit for seduction instead.<sup>45</sup> In 1814, jurors debated whether breach of promise cases should be available to the fathers of disappointed women. The issue arose during *Chamberlain vs. Williamson, Esq.*, as Chamberlain’s daughter was ‘thrown upon a sick bed, lost her reason, and died’ after being deserted by John Williamson. Her death prevented her father from suing for seduction, as she ‘did not live under the parental roof, and performed for him no personal service.’ In response, he took out administration for his daughter, allowing him to sue for breach of promise. The judge directed that he should be

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas Hay, ‘Kenyon, Lloyd, first Baron Kenyon (1732-1802), *ODNB*, online edition October 2009, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>40</sup> *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1787, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Sketches of the characters of the Hon. Thomas Erskine, and James Mingay, Esq.* (London, 1794), p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1801, 10354.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, August 16<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10566.

<sup>44</sup> 25 *Eng. Rep.* 1100.

<sup>45</sup> *Sun*, March 10<sup>th</sup> 1796, 1078.

awarded ‘such damages as they would have given to the intestate herself, had she been alive to bring the action.’<sup>46</sup> Chamberlain’s shift from a suit for seduction to one for breach of promise demonstrates the interconnected nature of the two actions, which were later brought concurrently in cases such as *Settle vs. Crumbleholme* (1820).

The second part of this chapter analysis the nature of the suit, including the age, social status and gender balance of parties. Contrary to Frost’s speculation that the class of people bringing actions in the eighteenth century was higher than in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the majority of suits were fought between plaintiffs and defendants of the middling sort. The average individual bringing a breach of promise suit was inferior to members of the ‘leisured, landed elite – esquires and above’ bringing crim. con. actions, as well as many of the ‘well-to-do’ engaging in seduction actions after 1766.<sup>47</sup> The gentry are also under-represented in breach of promise suits compared to canon-law matrimonial cases as a whole; Joanne Bailey has found that out of 119 matrimonial cases between 1660 and 1800, 41% of couples were of titled or gentry rank, 23% were relatively high-status manufacturers, shop owners, innkeepers or master mariners, and 17% were professionals, often attorneys and clergyman.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, participants in breach of promise cases remained steadfastly ‘middling’ into the nineteenth century, where 31% of suits were between two lower middle-class people, and 21.3% were between a lower middle-class plaintiff and a middle-class defendant.<sup>49</sup>

When used by contemporaries, the ‘middling sort’ constituted an ‘impressionistic’ social category used to denote people in the ‘middle’ of those of higher rank with landed wealth, and others such as ‘journeymen, servants and labourers who lived off wages.’ Nicholas Rogers has argued that in the seventeenth century, the group included ‘independent small producers in agriculture and industry.’ However by the eighteenth century such men were largely classed as labourers, and ‘middling’ men were large-scale farmers and manufacturers and

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<sup>46</sup> *Times*, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1814, 9125. One further action available to the fathers of seduced women was ‘aggravated trespass’, when the seducer came uninvited onto his property. Staves, ‘Seduced Maidens’, p. 128.

<sup>47</sup> Stone argues that seduction actions after 1766 were ‘strictly confined to the well-to-do who could afford to keep their daughters at home’, *Road to Divorce*, p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> Bailey, *Unquiet Lives*, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, p. 189, note 3.



merchants in charge of distribution. To these he adds men in ‘privileged urban occupations’ such as merchants, tradesmen, substantial shopkeepers, and men in medicine, law, teaching, the civil service and armed services. In addition were wealthier freeholders and tenant farmers.<sup>50</sup>

Records reveal that women bringing suits were engaged in running boarding houses, grocers, confectioner’s and chandler’s shops, or were the daughters of shopkeepers, tobacconists, tradesmen, small-scale manufacturers and attorneys. The plaintiff in *Hayden vs. Walker* (1791) ran her own boarding house, while the plaintiff in *Simpson vs. Burton* (1793) was the daughter of a shopkeeper. Others bringing suits in *Andrews vs. Morrison* (1801) and *Graves vs. Innocent* (1803) were described as the daughters of tradesmen. Women were usually defined by the profession of their fathers, who were frequently categorised as ‘middle rank.’ The *Morning Post* described the parties in *Vaile vs. Vandyk* (1821) as ‘persons moving in the middle ranks of life; the Plaintiff lived in the house of her mother, and the Defendant, who was sent from Demerara, in the West Indies, to perfect himself in a knowledge of the commerce of this country.’<sup>51</sup> Members of the upper middling-sort were singled-out in reports as ‘respectable’, ‘eminent’ or ‘master’ tradesmen. For example, the plaintiff in *King vs. Chance* (1822) was the daughter of a fancy dress-maker and a ‘respectable’ manufacturer, who may have had genteel pretensions. Other parties of the lower middling-sort who did not occupy ‘high or exalted situations of life’ nonetheless worked in reputable professions, such as the parties in *Hunt vs. Smith* (1804), ‘a decent woman keeping a small shop’ and a stone cutter with two shops who was ‘of her own rank and station.’<sup>52</sup> Similarly in *Simpson vs. Timperon* (1828), ‘The station of life in which the parties moved was not very elevated; but it was respectable.’<sup>53</sup>

A small number of cases involved the gentry, including ‘lesser esquires, men of respectable lineage who had lost their estates, the better class of professional men, retired military officers, former merchants, and the like.’<sup>54</sup> Only 14 out of 162 parties (8.6%) in Appendix Three were described either as ‘gentlemen’ or a

<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Rogers, ‘The Middling Sort in Eighteenth-Century Politics’ in Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort*, pp. 160-1. Also see Chapter 1, pp. 48-9.

<sup>51</sup> *Morning Post*, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1821, 15565.

<sup>52</sup> *Times*, July 28<sup>th</sup> 1804, 6085.

<sup>53</sup> *Morning Post*, March 10<sup>th</sup> 1828, 17857.

<sup>54</sup> Hunt, *Middling Sort*, p. 17.

‘gentleman’s daughter’, while only 7 men (4.3%) styled themselves ‘Esquire.’ Terms such as ‘wealthy’, ‘of property’ and ‘of fortune’ were applied to 28 parties (17.3%). Their fortunes ranged enormously from ‘small’ or ‘moderate’ to ‘plentiful’ and ‘large.’ Cases such as *Bourdernelle vs. Bamfyld* (1819) were fought between a respectable foreign woman and a gentleman working as an army surgeon, while *Peake vs. Wedgwood* (1826) was between a gentleman’s daughter and a man possessing a large landed estate and collieries. An unusual example of a case between the upper strata of the landed gentry is *Leeds vs. Cooke and Wife* (1803) brought by ‘a young Gentleman of considerable property’ against ‘the daughter of a Gentleman of landed property.’ After they had drawn up a marriage settlement and each party had advanced £4,000, Miss Cadanell eloped over the border to Gretna Green to marry her new lover Mr. Cooke, Purser to an East India Company ship.<sup>55</sup>

Nonetheless, the proportion of genteel participants was matched by the number of labouring parties. These include tanners, farmer’s daughters, women working in milliners’ shops, mantuamakers and domestic servants.<sup>56</sup> Newspaper reports further categorised plaintiffs into ‘humble farmer’s daughters’ and ‘respectable farmer’s daughters’ to indicate their relative social status.<sup>57</sup> Reports in 1802 argued that their ‘humble situation in life’ should not rule them out from receiving large damages, as ‘the feelings of the humblest individual are not wantonly and barbarously to be outraged...without giving that individual a right to appear to a Jury for a compensation adequate to the injury sustained.’<sup>58</sup> The *Morning Post and Gazetteer*’s appeal may have been in response to comparatively low damages received by labouring women in previous cases, with the domestic servant in *Smith vs. Taylor* (1791), the milliner in *Williams vs. Harding* (1793) and the maidservant in *Storey vs. Eagle* (1802) each receiving only £50. The sum represented between three and five times their annual income, meaning that such women only received ‘exemplary damages’ of several hundred pounds in ‘aggravated’ cases involving pregnancy or the refusal of other suitors. While the

<sup>55</sup> *Morning Post*, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1803, 10736.

<sup>56</sup> These were ‘the meer laboring people who depend upon their hands’, described by Peter Earle quoting *Review: A Weekly Review of the Affairs of France* (1709) in *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London, 1989), pp. 3-4.

<sup>57</sup> For example the plaintiff in *Rabbitts vs. West* (1824) was ‘humble’ whereas plaintiffs in *Forster vs. Hoblin* (1805) and *Capper vs. Orton* (1825) were ‘respectable.’ *Times*, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1805, 6293, and *Morning Post*, March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1825, 16927.

<sup>58</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, August 16<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10566.

mantuamaker in *Harris vs. Williamson* (1793) received £200 as she had refused the offers of two respectable tradesmen, the farmer's daughter in *Forster vs. Hoblin* (1805) was awarded £400 after being deserted while pregnant.<sup>59</sup> Courtships between parties of unequal social status were rare, prompting additional questioning in court over whether this was the cause of desertion. As Thomas Erskine asked the upwardly mobile banker's son Benjamin Barnard in 1792, 'You were not ashamed, Sir, to marry the daughter, though the mother was engaged in trade [as a milliner]?' to which he answered, 'Certainly not.'<sup>60</sup>

In exceptional cases where suits were brought by noblemen such as Earls and Baronets, judges were reluctant to pry into the details of their private lives. Calls to shield the nobility's relationships were not unique to breach of promise actions, with Mr. Garrow appealing in the crim. con. trial of Richard Bingham and Lady Elizabeth Howard in 1730 for the nobility to 'take heed to its own security' by letting 'Affection and Prudence lead the way' when selecting a spouse.<sup>61</sup> The rare examples of parties described as 'noble' in Appendix Three were the plaintiff in *Murray vs. Gale, Esq.* (1794) and defendant in *Matchiff vs. Dixie* (1816). In the former, a Baronet's daughter of 'great beauty' and 'accomplishment' sued a gentleman of significant fortune for breach of promise. Lord Chief Justice Kenyon revealed that he 'was sorry to have more of the veil withdrawn than was absolutely necessary' and was 'sorry so much of it had been withdrawn already,' as 'such an exhibition seldom presented itself in a Court of Justice.'<sup>62</sup>

Plaintiffs and defendants were expected to be of a comparable age, with the *London Chronicle* expressing doubt in 1790 that a twenty one-year old had seriously courted a woman nearing forty who was 'old enough to be his mother.'<sup>63</sup> Parties of a similar age were essential for the success of a case, with the judge in *Heyward vs. Arnold* (1796) ruling that 'there ought not to be too great a disparity in the ages of the parties.' Once again, the twenty-two year old defendant had been courting a forty

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<sup>59</sup> *Sun*, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1793, 184 and *Times*, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1805, 6293. An annual income of £50 was enough 'to live a comfortable lower-middle-class life', allowing a family to 'eat well, employ a servant and live comfortably', Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class*, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Trial for breach of promise of marriage, Miss Eleanor Palmer against Benjamin Barnard, Esq.* (London, 1792), p. 24.

<sup>61</sup> *The Trial of the Hon. Richard Bingham, for Crim. Con. with Lady Elizabeth Howard* (London, 1794), p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> *Sun*, December 29<sup>th</sup> 1794, 703.

<sup>63</sup> *London Chronicle*, August 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 1790, 5305.

year old woman.<sup>64</sup> More often, couples were drawn from the same age range, with an absolute maximum of twenty years between the two parties, such as a woman aged thirty and a man aged fifty. Such a large gap was only possible when the man was the elder party, due to the desirability of having a beautiful younger wife who was still able to bear children. The average age of plaintiffs in Appendix Three was thirty-three, compared to the average defendant aged thirty-nine.<sup>65</sup> This figure is increased by the presence of nine defendants aged fifty and over compared to only three plaintiffs. Since 80% of defendants were male, this reinforces our view of men as the elder party during courtship.

The existence of twelve parties over forty reveals that breach of promise suits were not confined to the young, as high mortality rates meant that individuals often remarried several times. Widows and widowers display a strong presence in Appendix Three, with fourteen individuals taking their new lovers to court. Cases were brought by plaintiffs of a wide age-range, including one woman ‘in her *eighty-fifth* year’ in 1797, and another nearing 70 in 1798.<sup>66</sup> However, older women were disadvantaged as both plaintiffs and defendants; judges argued that it was ‘not to be endured, that a woman of full age, with ample time for deliberation, should be allowed thus to trifle with the feelings of a man.’<sup>67</sup> Those bringing suits also had their motives called into question, with Lord Alvanley (1744-1804) explaining during *Vaughan vs. Aldridge* (1801) that it was ‘unlike a connection of youthful affection, where every future prospect in life might be blasted, and the object so deserted be left a sad memento of unrequited love.’<sup>68</sup> The Counsel for the Defendant blasted Miss Vaughan as a fortune hunter, arguing that if she was genuinely distraught at the loss of her suitor, ‘[L]ike other disappointed maidens, she would have been found at the tomb of Capulet, lamenting her lost Romeo...instead of which

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<sup>64</sup> *Sun*, May 14<sup>th</sup> 1796, 1134.

<sup>65</sup> Exact figures are 33.7 for plaintiffs and 39.68 for defendants. When a person was described as ‘20-22’ or ‘35-40’ the average figure was taken, while those ‘nearly 18’ or ‘over 40’ were taken as 18 and 40 respectively to avoid speculation.

<sup>66</sup> *True Briton*, November 16<sup>th</sup> 1797, 1528 and December 6<sup>th</sup> 1798, 1855. While twenty parties were described as ‘young’, plus one ‘infant’, only four were said to be ‘old’, plus one party of ‘maturer age.’

<sup>67</sup> *Morning Post*, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1803, 10736.

<sup>68</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, June 19<sup>th</sup> 1801, 10237. The same sentiments were expressed in *Rabbitts vs. West* (1824).

he perceived she was snugly seated in the gallery of the Court, waiting with greedy expectation the event of the verdict.’<sup>69</sup>

Despite the precedent set in *Harrison vs. Cage and Wife* (1698) that ‘marriage is as much advancement to a man as it is to a woman’, the proceedings of eighteenth-century suits made it increasingly clear that this was no place for a man.<sup>70</sup> This raises the issue of how legal precepts adapted to changing definitions of heartbreak studied in the previous chapter. The scarcity of suits before 1774 demonstrates that it arose in this particular form in response to changing social and cultural mores (see Appendix Three). In all cases, a man was expected to have sacrificed his livelihood in order to justify bringing a suit against a woman. This meant that the women they sued had to be incredibly wealthy. In 1787, newspapers reported that a Lieutenant of Marines was expected to sue a foreign Countess worth over £16,000 after she convinced him to sell his post and then deserted him. Moreover in 1796, a button-manufacturer retired from trade in expectation of his marriage to a widow about to inherit over £20,000.<sup>71</sup> No such requirement existed for women bringing breach of promise suits, who could be even wealthier than the parties they sued. The defendant in *Brown vs. Arnold* (1790) lived at the plaintiff’s expense for fifteen months, and was ‘a little embarrassed in his circumstances.’<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately for Mr. Arnold, his relative poverty in no way prevented his landlady Miss Brown from subsequently suing him for breach of promise.

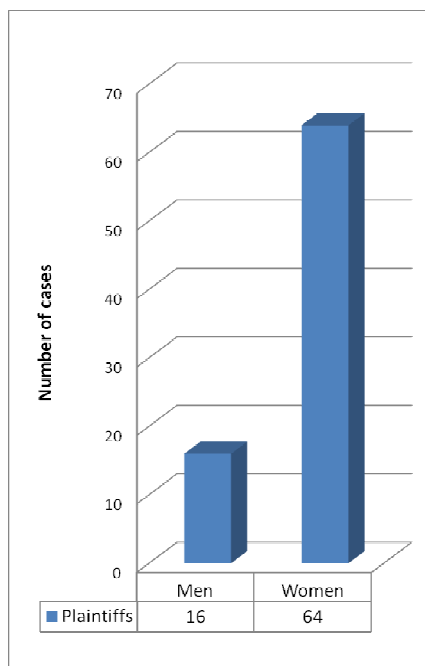
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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* Also cited in Chapter 5, p. 181.

<sup>70</sup> 87 *Eng. Rep.* 736.

<sup>71</sup> *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1787, 4. Also see report of *Shaw[e] vs. Baker* where the plaintiff gave up his job as a distillery clerk in order to live independently as a gentleman, *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1800, 9966.

<sup>72</sup> *London Chronicle*, August 19<sup>th</sup> 1790, 5305.



**Table 1 – Proportion of men and women bringing breach of promise suits between 1730 and 1830, as sampled in Appendix 3**

Eighteenth-century breach of promise suits were dominated by women, as illustrated in Table One. Out of 81 cases studied in Appendix Three, 64 suits were brought by women (80.0%) compared to only 16 suits brought by men (20.0%). Men’s under-representation was replicated in matrimonial suits in the church courts, where they initiated 30% of suits for separation, restitution of conjugal rights, annulment and jactitation between 1660 and 1800.<sup>73</sup> Frost, Steinbach and Lettmaier have found that the number of men suing for breach of promise dropped remarkably over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The later the period of study finishes, the further men’s participation falls, dropping to 8% between 1780 and 1920, and 3.7% between 1800 and 1940.<sup>74</sup> The low number of men bringing eighteenth-century suits suggests that Frost’s argument that men ‘were quite as willing to bring actions as women’ is hugely misleading.<sup>75</sup> However while they were *unlikely* to bring suits in 1730, this became almost *unthinkable* by the end of our period. This makes eighteenth-century suits unique for allowing marginally greater

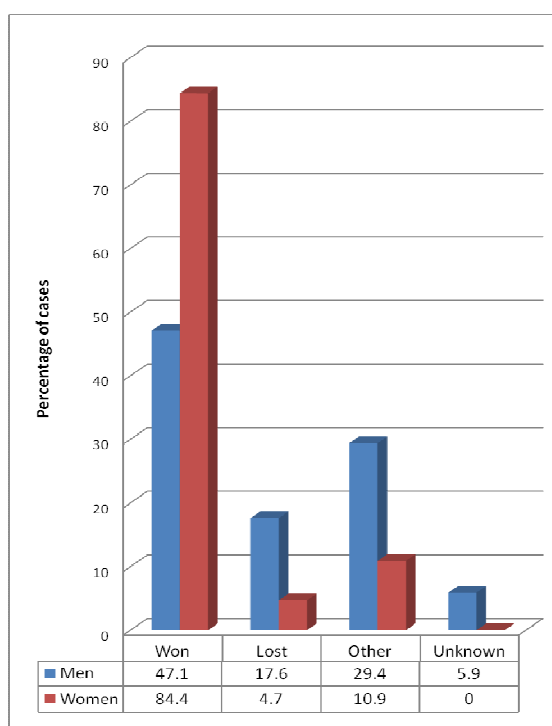
<sup>73</sup> *Chamberlain vs. Williamson, Esq.* (1813) is excluded from this figure as the case was the first to be brought by a girl’s father. See Bailey, *Unquiet Lives*, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Steinbach, ‘Promises, Promises’, p. 210 and Lettmaier, *Broken Engagements*, p. 27.

<sup>75</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, p. 16.

numbers of men to participate, witnessing their rapid decline as the century progressed.

While men were less likely to bring suits, they were also less likely to win, as displayed in Table Two. While 84.4% of women bringing suits won, this fell to just 47.1% of men.<sup>76</sup> Only three men and three women lost their cases, despite male plaintiffs being outnumbered by four to one. Many of these male ‘victors’ were subsequently awarded embarrassing damages of 1 *s.* or 1 *f.* They were also more than twice as likely as women to be nonsuited or have their cases adjourned, settled or withdrawn. These figures again undermine Frost’s argument that early suits were ‘not biased in favour of one sex or the other.’ Nonetheless, almost half of men did manage to win their cases between 1730 and 1830, a figure which falls to only 28% in Steinbach’s study of the period from 1780 to 1920.<sup>77</sup> These figures demonstrate how men gradually brought fewer suits over time, also winning them less frequently.



**Table 2 – Percentage of men and women winning breach of promise suits between 1730 and 1830, as sampled in Appendix 3**

<sup>76</sup> *Atcheson vs. Baker* was counted twice as the plaintiff was first nonsuited before winning on the retrial. The term ‘Other’ includes cases which were adjourned, referred to arbitration, sent for a retrial, nonsuited, settled or had a juror withdrawn.

<sup>77</sup> Steinbach, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

From the 1790s, romantic hurt was presented in court as a uniquely female grievance, and was used by counsels to convince juries that women were seeking redress for emotional distress rather than greed. The shift demonstrates how the law gradually evolved to accommodate the changing understandings of heartbreak which emerged at mid-century. Female plaintiffs were seen to suffer as their affections were ‘deeply engaged’ by dishonourable men, causing the women attending court to express their ‘feelings of tenderness and pity’ by crying over the maiden’s plight.<sup>78</sup> Lawyers representing female plaintiffs were careful to invoke all of the hallmarks of the ‘seduced maiden’, emphasising their client’s simplicity, trustfulness, and affectionate nature.<sup>79</sup>

The archetypal woman bringing a breach of promise suit was also expected to be physically attractive. This reflected arguments in moral essays that the ideal wife should be beautiful, as ‘the object which is always before the eye, should not be disagreeable.’<sup>80</sup> It manifested itself in breach of promise and seduction trials where lawyers emphasised women’s ‘great beauty’, ‘personal beauty’, ‘extreme beauty’ and ‘great personal attraction’ to aggravate men’s wrongdoing. For example the plaintiff in *Wilson vs. Powditch* (1799) was reported to be ‘beautiful’, while the plaintiff in *Hulme vs. Warbrick* (1809) was described as a ‘young’ woman ‘of great personal attraction.’<sup>81</sup> Accounts of women’s beauty increased the likelihood that men would want to debauch them, for ‘nobody would want to seduce an ugly girl.’<sup>82</sup> The destruction of a woman’s beauty necessarily led to higher damages; the plaintiff in *Belchier vs. Thompson* (1799) ‘had been remarkably handsome, though her beauty was now impaired through distress and affliction of mind’, prompting the jury to award the generous sum of £400.<sup>83</sup>

Miss Belchier was further afflicted as ‘[t]his ill treatment had materially affected her health and spirits.’<sup>84</sup> The same dialogue was repeated in numerous suits

<sup>78</sup> *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, March 30<sup>th</sup> 1787, 77, and *Belchier vs. Thompson* in *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1799, 6509.

<sup>79</sup> Staves, ‘Seduced Maidens’, p. 118.

<sup>80</sup> The other two qualities were her fortune and family. Essay IXI, ‘The Choice of a Partner for Life’ in *Moral essays, chiefly collected from different authors* (Liverpool, 1796), Vol. II, p. 22.

<sup>81</sup> *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1799, 22173 and *Times*, August 28<sup>th</sup> 1809, 7760.

<sup>82</sup> Staves, *op. cit.*, *Hulme vs. Warbrick* (1809) in *The Lancaster Gazette*, September 9<sup>th</sup> 1809, 430.

<sup>83</sup> *Belchier vs. Thompson*, *op. cit.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*



such as *Chapman vs. Shaw* (1790), *Marcom vs. Edgar* (1794), *Tyley vs. Deerhurst* (1796), *Wilson vs. Powditch* (1799), *Beattie vs. Pearson* (1820) and *Wait vs. Aspinall* (1824) where women were presented as having an inherently nervous disposition, causing them to fall into a mental disorder after their desertion. These directly parallel women's descriptions of mental agitation in the previous chapter.<sup>85</sup> Witnesses deposed that romantic disappointment had caused plaintiffs acute mental strain, in an attempt to prove aggravated circumstances and secure higher damages. In the case brought against William Chapman by Elizabeth Shaw in 1790, the plaintiff's mother emphasised the mental disorder caused by her abandonment:

*[S]he was out of her mind. She kept her bed, and never slept for seven days. She was ill twice; and this illness was manifestly occasioned by Mr. Shaw's breaking off his visits...My daughter's illness was not a sore throat, nor fever: her's [sic] was a disorder of the mind. She was out of her senses two months.*<sup>86</sup>

Miss Marcom also won her case against the apothecary Devereux Edgar in 1794 after proving that her 'health and peace of mind had suffered' after being deprived of matrimony.<sup>87</sup> These discourses first emerged in breach of promise suits in the early 1790s, far earlier than previously suggested by historians. They reflect prevailing beliefs about women's beauty, fragility, nervousness and mental instability, situating these suits firmly within contemporary notions of womanhood. Nancy Cott has also traced the ideology of female 'passionlessness' back to the 1790s, situating it within the Evangelical emphasis upon women's virtuous nature and lack of carnal motivation.<sup>88</sup> A related change took place in church court cases in the second half of the eighteenth century, where men found it less viable to claim abuse at the hands of

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<sup>85</sup> See Chapter 6, pp. 211-18.

<sup>86</sup> *Miss Elizabeth Chapman, against William Shaw*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>87</sup> *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1794, 18782. A similar account of women's mental instability appeared five years later in *Wilson vs. Powditch* (1799), where 'As soon as the Plaintiff heard of his perfidy and cruelty, the effect it produced upon her was instantaneous; her disappointment, and the insult offered to her feelings, threw her into a paroxysm of phrenzy and distraction, which she only recovered to fall into a state of despondency and affliction, by which her health became daily impaired.' As a consequence, Miss Wilson was awarded £500 in damages, despite her suitor claiming to be worth no more than £600. *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1799, 22173.

<sup>88</sup> Nancy Cott, 'Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850', *Signs*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Winter, 1978), pp. 219-36.

their wives, who were ‘recast as the “gentler sex”; inherently weak, naturally virtuous and sexually passive.’ In turn, men were redefined as sexual predators.<sup>89</sup>

The role of men in breach of promise cases thus evolved simultaneously with the redefinition of female identity. Lawyers from the 1790s onwards increasingly characterised men as overly amorous due to their strong passions, like the suicidal men studied in Chapter Six. Young men were particularly at risk as they had not developed suitable ‘discretion’ and the ability to make prudent judgements.<sup>90</sup> The ‘very young’ tradesman sued in *Williams vs. Harding* (1793) was said to be ‘in the hey-day of blood, and likely to be suddenly prevailed upon to make promise of marriage [*sic*] in the moment of amorous passion; but which could not be supposed he would keep when reason and deliberation returned.’<sup>91</sup> The judge painted a similar picture of men’s impulsive and imprudent nature during *Murray vs. Gale* (1793):

It did not very unfrequently happen...that young men, before they had arrived at the years of discretion, before they had emancipated themselves from the parental affection, had been driven from the impulse of their passions, to make imprudent promises with regard to the subject of marriage...the Law must consider them as responsible for the breach of such a promise, yet he should be ashamed of himself under such circumstances, to call for heavy damages.<sup>92</sup>

While contending that young men should be ‘ashamed’ for deserting their lovers, breach of promise suits provided a way for men to protect their reputation and excuse their ungallant behaviour by paying damages to protect a woman’s virtue. The damages provided some form of compensation to women whose future prospects for marriage may have been significantly damaged.<sup>93</sup> Thomas Erskine connected the issue to the culture of sensibility in *Palmer vs. Barnard* (1792),

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<sup>89</sup> Bailey, *Unquiet Lives*, pp. 112, 129-31.

<sup>90</sup> For the legacy of Galenism and how men’s drier complexions and leaner bodies increased the likelihood of displays of courage and anger, see Chapter 5, pp. 170-2, and Chapter 6, pp. 214-5.

<sup>91</sup> *True Briton*, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1793, 66.

<sup>92</sup> *Sun*, December 29<sup>th</sup> 1794, 703. For a further example see *Page vs. Mont*, *Morning Chronicle*, July 13<sup>th</sup> 1813, 14412.

<sup>93</sup> For the relationship between male reputation and moral conduct see Dabhoiwala, ‘The Construction of Honour, Reputation and Status in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (Sixth Series) (1996), 6, p. 204.

praising the jury as ‘gentlemen of honour’ and imploring them to ‘excite your sensibility’ in comprehending Elizabeth’s loss.<sup>94</sup>

Changes in the nature of the action were hastened by emotional shifts as well as the redefinition of gender roles. The decreasing participation and success of male plaintiffs can be attributed to the fact that cases in the early 1800s came to rely more upon demonstrating the hurt *feelings* of spurned lovers. Although Staves has argued that breach of promise, seduction and trespass actions each involved the demonstration of ‘wounded feelings’ rather than simply ‘out of pocket losses,’ it was not until the early nineteenth century that this notion came to dominate suits. Earlier cases such as *Holt vs. Ward* (1730) did not once mention the plaintiff’s injured feelings, focusing on whether or not the defendant made an explicit promise of marriage. When a retrial of *Atcheson vs. Baker* was granted in 1797, the court was clear that the action ‘was not brought for the loss of any affection’, but solely concerned whether Mrs. Baker had reneged upon her promise to marry James Atcheson within a specific time.<sup>95</sup> However, just three years later in *Shaw[e] vs. Baker* (1800), ‘the injury done to individuals by the breach of a marriage contract consisted in the disappointment of expected happiness, the violation of their feelings.’<sup>96</sup> By the time the disappointed suitor Mr. Leeds attempted to bring a case against his sweetheart and her new husband Mr. Cooke in 1803, the case had come to centre upon the plaintiff’s hurt feelings, which inevitably weighted proceedings in the favour of women. As Thomas Erskine admitted during his case for Mr. Leeds, ‘I do not mean to contend that when a man is thus deceived and disappointed, he suffers the like disparagement as when it happens to a female.’<sup>97</sup> During the trial, Lord Ellenborough explained the importance of the plaintiff’s ‘feelings’ to the jury:

There might be cases where even a man was entitled to a large compensation in damages for a breach of promise of marriage. In all cases of this sort, the

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<sup>94</sup> *Eleanor Palmer against Benjamin Barnard*, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Evening Mail*, May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1797 (no issue number available). Unfortunately Miss Baker failed to learn from her mistakes, and was sued again by a distiller’s clerk called Johnny Shaw in 1800. He was nonsuited and she agreed to resume their relationship, before leaving him standing at the aisle in Battersea Church for four hours and deserting him again. *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1800, 822-369.

<sup>96</sup> It was not ‘at all necessary to prove any specific damages, or even to shew that any pecuniary loss whatever had been sustained.’ *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1800, 9966. Also see Staves, ‘Seduced Maidens’, p. 129.

<sup>97</sup> *Morning Post*, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1803, 10736.

Jury would consider the injury done to the feelings. If the party complaining were themselves indifferent to the event, or expressed gladness at their escape, the smallest compensation was sufficient.<sup>98</sup>

Despite his assertion that ‘even a man’ was theoretically entitled to compensation, men were never able to demonstrate the same emotional hurt described by women bringing suits, as they were not seen to suffer the same turmoil as women when a relationship ended.<sup>99</sup> Thus while divorce, custody and crim. con. actions favoured ‘the already-proprietyed husbands’, breach of promise actions provide a rare example of the courts favouring women.<sup>100</sup>

Lord Ellenborough’s direction for juries to focus on ‘the injury done to the feelings’ provides a stark contrast to petitions for divorce on grounds of cruelty.<sup>101</sup> As Thomas Dixon has argued, parliamentary divorces based on cruelty required expected or actual injury to ‘life, limb, or health.’ In contrast, the feelings of plaintiffs were marginalised, following Lord Stowell’s oft-cited ruling in *Evans vs. Evans* (1790) that ‘What merely wounds the mental feelings is in few cases to be admitted, where it is not accompanied with bodily injury, either actual or menaced.’<sup>102</sup> Exceptions were only occasionally made in later cases such as *Kelly vs. Kelly* (1869) where the petitioner invoked medical evidence attributing nervous disorders to their spouse’s psychological cruelty.<sup>103</sup> Breach of promise cases in the early decades of the nineteenth century were therefore at odds with related matrimonial suits in their prioritising of litigants’ feelings. Judges presiding over breach of promise cases after 1800 repeatedly insisted that their key concern was the ‘violation’ of a plaintiff’s ‘feelings’, that ‘feelings’ were not ‘wantonly and

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> The final example of a man arguing for the emotional distress caused by courtship was in *Forster vs. Mellish* (1802), where Mr. Forster’s ‘health and peace of mind had been deeply affected’ and failure of the relationship had ‘thrown him into a state of despondency, from which he knew now how to extricate himself’, *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, February 25<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10418. The ultimate example of female distress is provided by *Hulme vs. Warbrick*, where Serjeant Cockell described how the case ‘froze his blood with horror’ and the plaintiff ‘was in Court during the whole trial, and shed tears abundantly while the Learned Serjeant was reading the letters’, *Times*, August 28<sup>th</sup> 1809, 7760.

<sup>100</sup> Komisaruk, ‘Privatization of Pleasure’, p. 41.

<sup>101</sup> *Morning Post*, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1803, 10736.

<sup>102</sup> *Evans vs. Evans* (1790) cited in Dixon, “‘My Situation Does Not Allow Me To Indulge Feelings:’ Emotions in the Divorce Court, 1790-1913”, presented at the conference ‘Emotions, Medicine and the Law’ at Queen Mary, University of London, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Reproduced as ‘Feelings, Health, and Cruelty in 19th-Century Divorce Cases’, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013,

<http://emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk/?p=2388>

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

barbarously to be outraged' and that no individual should be permitted to 'trifle with the feelings' of another.<sup>104</sup>

Damages were awarded based on injury to the plaintiff's reputation and their altered situation in life. Frost estimates that the average award in eighteenth-century cases was £500, with Steinbach raising this to £620.10 between 1780 and 1868.<sup>105</sup> While Frost's figure is based on a negligible number of cases, Steinbach's seems significantly inflated by cases later in the nineteenth century. Of the eighty-one suits studied in this chapter, sixty-four record the damages ordered when settled or ruled for the plaintiff. These suits reveal average damages of £554.33 (£554 6 s. 8 d.) between 1730 and 1830. Three defendants were also ordered to pay legal costs, and one child maintenance.<sup>106</sup> However this sum should not be taken as representative, as it is increased by exceptionally high awards of £4,000 in *Atcheson vs. Baker* (1796-7) and £5,000 in *Bishop vs. Robinson* (1810) and *Beattie vs. Pearson* (1820). A more reliable picture is provided by Table Three, which demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of damages were less than £250, with sums of £50, £100 and £140 regularly being awarded. These would have represented a significant sum for most middling people, who had incomes of between £50 and £2,000 per year, mostly concentrated between £80 and £150.<sup>107</sup> Higher damages of between £750 and £1,000 were only marginally more likely than derisory sums of less than a pound, including awards for 1 s. in 1803 and 1 f. in 1832. *Graves vs. Innocent* (1803) provides an example of a case with typical damages, as whilst Lord Ellenborough recognised that a promise of marriage had been breached, there were 'no circumstances of aggravation...She had not been deteriorated in her circumstances, nor degraded in her character. Nor had there been much public exhibition of her mortification.' Since it was only known to one of her acquaintances, she was awarded the average sum of £100.<sup>108</sup> Judges' continual reminders to 'not utterly to ruin to defendant' and to respect their 'situation in life' presents a marked contrast to

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<sup>104</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1800, 9966, August 16<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10566 and *Morning Post*, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1803, 10736.

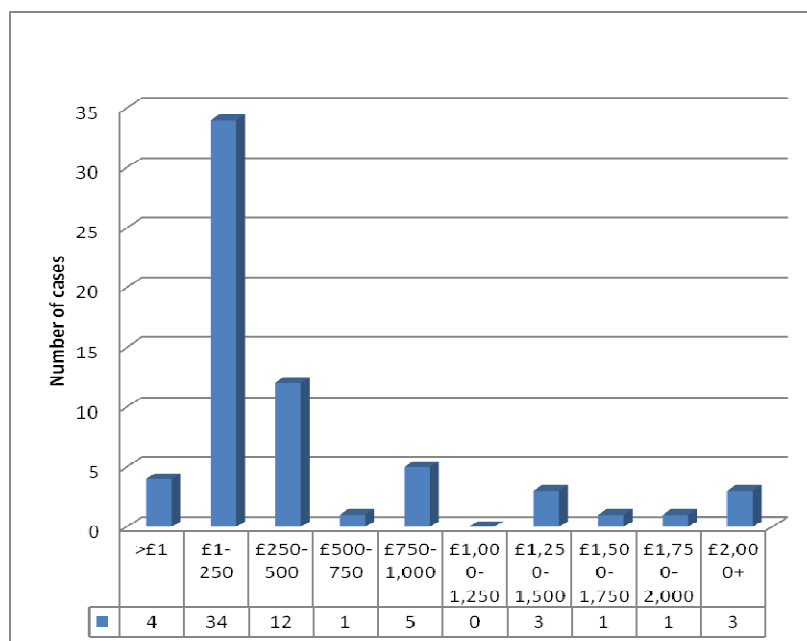
<sup>105</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, p. 16 and Steinbach, 'Promises, Promises', p. 212.

<sup>106</sup> These cases are *Schreiber vs. Frazer* (1780), *Montgomery vs. Evans* (1805) and *Forrester vs. Lyons* (1808). The anonymous fifth case in Appendix Three (1787) was not included in these calculations as the damages awarded to the plaintiff were not recorded in reports of the case.

<sup>107</sup> Hunt, *Middling Sort*, p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> *Morning Post*, February 21<sup>st</sup> 1803, 10728.

damages in crim. con. trials, where juries did not concern themselves with the capacity of the defendant to pay.<sup>109</sup>



**Table 3 – Frequency of damages awarded in breach of promise trials between 1730 and 1830, as sampled in Appendix 3.**

However, when it could be proven that a man was deliberately callous the jury could be more unforgiving. During *Beattie vs. Pearson* (1820), the silk manufacturer Samuel Pearson was charged with deserting a woman and leaving her on the brink of insanity. He went on to behave ‘in a similar manner towards another Lady’, boasting that he could ‘win any woman’s heart’ within one month. The jury were outraged, and ‘convicted his folly’ by forcing him to pay an enormous £5,000 damages, which only happened twice within the sample of cases in Appendix Three.<sup>110</sup> The damages were justified as Pearson was ‘a gentleman of great opulence, at the head of an extensive silk manufactory’, suggesting that he was able to afford

<sup>109</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1801, 10354, *Stone, Road to Divorce*, p. 90. For a similar formulation see report of *Wilson vs. Powditch* in *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1799, 22173.

<sup>110</sup> *Morning Post*, September 9<sup>th</sup> 1820, 15439. The defendants in *Bishop vs. Robinson* (1810) and *Beattie vs. Pearson* (1820) were both ordered to pay £5,000, while the female defendant in *Atcheson vs. Baker* (1796-7) was ordered to pay £4,000. However newspaper reports reveal that she never parted with the sum, privately agreeing to pay Mr. Atcheson an annuity of £200 per year. See *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1800, 9966.

such a sum.<sup>111</sup> Exceptional amounts worth over a year's wages were only charged in aggravated cases; other defendants in *Hayden vs. Walker* (1791) and *Storey vs. Eagle* (1802) were charged two and a half and one month's wages respectively. This compares to the defendant in *Andrews vs. Morrison* (1801) who purchased a gold ring, a wedding license and furniture for the marital home before deserting his bride, justifying the inflated fine of sixteen months wages.<sup>112</sup>

Lawyers such as Mr. Topping of the Lancaster Assizes claimed to perceive geographical variations in the amounts awarded, arguing during *Settle vs. Crumbleholme* (1818) that 'Lancashire juries were famed for setting no bounds to damages, in all cases that had any tendency of this kind.'<sup>113</sup> By 'this kind' he meant aggravated cases where the plaintiff had become pregnant before being deserted by her faithless suitor. He had enjoyed some degree of celebrity after winning £7,000 damages for the plaintiff in *Orford vs. Cole* (1818), who was from a 'well-known and respected' family. The case became a *cause de célèbre* and ladies 'braved every danger' to gain admittance to the crowded 2,000-seater court.<sup>114</sup> However, detailed study of the damages awarded suggests that regional assizes conformed to the precedent set by the King's Bench, where most awards were for less than £250. Nominal amounts of £100 and £10 were regularly awarded in cases such as *Bird vs. Coupland* (1818) and *Duckworth vs. Johnson* (1824) at the Lancaster Assizes which did not feature aggravating circumstances.<sup>115</sup> Mr. Topping was no doubt encouraged to make such an assertion to cement his growing reputation as the guardian of female virtue and chastity, which had become the defining features of the suit in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>111</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1820, 2870. The *Flying Post* reported the damages to be £4,000 compared to £5,000 recorded in the *Morning Post*. His manufactory must have been making incredible profits to make the payment of such an amount possible, which represented about twenty years' earnings for a clergyman in 1827. Figure from Jeffrey G. Williamson, Appendix Table 1 in 'Earnings Inequality in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (September, 1980), p. 474.

<sup>112</sup> Far from growing steadily throughout the long eighteenth century, the damages awarded only show a minor increase between 1730 and 1830. Exorbitant damages remained the exception rather than the rule, only exceeding £3,000 in cases such as *Dillon vs. Vandeleur* (1814) and *Beattie vs. Pearson* (1820).

<sup>113</sup> *Lancaster Gazette*, September 5<sup>th</sup> 1818, 899.

<sup>114</sup> *The Derby Mercury*, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1818, 4483, *Liverpool Mercury*, April 10<sup>th</sup> 1818, 355.

<sup>115</sup> *The Lancaster Gazette*, April 6<sup>th</sup> 1816, 773.

The nature of the suit evolved between *c.* 1730 and 1830, as it drifted away from the principle established in *Holcroft vs. Dickenson* (1672-3) that romantic abandonment caused a temporal loss.<sup>116</sup> This remained the central tenet of cases such as *Hayden vs. Walker* (1791) where the defendant had agreed to settle £900 upon the plaintiff, causing her to lose a significant amount of money after her desertion. Losses could also be sustained by refusing other suitors, as in *Palmer vs. Barnard* (1792), *Harris vs. Williamson* (1793) and *Murray vs. Gale, Esq* (1794). However, in the early years of the nineteenth century, cases became less about remunerating actual financial loss and more about compensating women for their damaged virtue. The change represented a natural progression from the emerging emphasis in the 1790s upon women's affectionate nature, beauty and nervous disposition. Feminine virtue became further entrenched within the suit in the early nineteenth century, as women were first compared to domestic 'angels' during *Andrews vs. Morrison* in 1801. As Thomas Erskine argued, 'Let her be as beautiful as an angel, and as accomplished as possible, she never could appear as she was before she became the object of such an insult.'<sup>117</sup> This was a subtle change rather than an abrupt shift; while heartbreak was initially redefined in society as a whole from the mid-1750s, it became reflected in a legal context in the 1790s, leading to the legal entrenchment of the virtuous domesticated woman in the 1800s.

The final section of this chapter moves on to the material dimensions of breach of promise suits, which were crucial in securing a victory in court. While the courting couples studied in Chapter Two exchanged a cornucopia of gifts, only a select few were produced as evidence during breach of promise trials. These represent the items which plaintiffs believed unequivocally demonstrated that they were on the brink of matrimony. The four items which were uniformly produced by plaintiffs were love letters, wedding licences, wedding clothes, and furniture for the marital home.

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<sup>116</sup> The case held that 'the woman is preferred by marriage, and the loss of marriage hath always been reputed a damage,' 89 *Eng. Rep.* 70.

<sup>117</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1801, 10354.



Among these items, the love letter was undoubtedly the most important, used as proof in 31 out of 81 cases in Appendix Three (38.3%).<sup>118</sup> The supremacy of the love letter in court is unsurprising given the arguments in Chapters Three and Six of this thesis that the exchange of letters signified a forthcoming engagement.<sup>119</sup> Isaac Cruikshank's etching *A new Chancery suit removed to the Scotch bar or more legitimates* from 1819 (Fig. 51) depicts the celebrated breach of promise lawyer Lord Thomas Erskine marrying Sarah Buck at Gretna Green while disguised as a woman. On the wall before them are 'Rings to fit all Hands', confirming the symbolism of rings as the central emblem of the married couple.<sup>120</sup> Erskine holds a piece of paper in his hand that reads 'Breach of Promise.' However he is not alarmed by his sweetheart running down the hill to interrupt the ceremony: 'she may do her worst since I have got my Letters back.' In turn, she cries 'Oh Stop Stop Stop, false Man, I will yet seek redress tho you have got back your letters.' The etching demonstrates how love letters were the central means of proof in attesting to a serious relationship in court.



**Fig. 51 – Isaac Cruikshank, *A new Chancery suit removed to the Scotch bar or more legitimates*, London, 1819, hand-coloured etching, 24.8 x 35.1cm, British Museum, London, AN88074001, © The Trustees of the British Museum.**

<sup>118</sup> *Leeds vs. Cook[e] and Wife* (1803) was discounted as the case relied upon a letter sent after the desertion, as was *Shannon vs. Brandon* (1818) where the letter was a formal note using legal language, rather than a love letter. See *Morning Post*, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1803, 10736 and June 29<sup>th</sup> 1818, 14802.

<sup>119</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 91-2, 108-9, 121 and Chapter 6, pp. 224-5.

<sup>120</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 74-6.

Nonetheless, when letters did not survive, domestic servants such as porters, chambermaids and charwomen could be interrogated as to whether a correspondence was taking place. Such witnesses were asked whether the plaintiff had ‘received any directed to her, from whom, by whom, and whether she heard them read’, and even whether she gave her ‘the liberty of perusing them?’<sup>121</sup> In 1730, a porter hired by the gentleman Knox Ward deposed that he was employed:

[I]n carrying letters frequently to the Plaintiff, Mrs. Sarah Holt, for which he was handsomely rewarded when he returned with an Answer to the Defendant, his good Master; but that he did not know what they contained, or what the Substance of them was, for that as he was only a hired Porter, his Business was only to carry the Letters, and bring back the Gentlewoman’s Answers whenever she sent any...he could not be certain as to the particular Number, because he carry’d a great many, but verily believes them to be above two hundred.<sup>122</sup>

The frequency of exchanges between Knox and Sarah was significant, as the ‘great many’ letters they sent and received acted as a measure of their passion. The content of love letters provided further proof of their intentions and the implied contract between the couple, with the counsel for the plaintiff in *Chapman vs. Shaw, Esq.* (1790) attesting that ‘You will find by his letters, and by the evidence of a great number of persons, it seemed impossible for him to enjoy any happiness in this world without marrying her.’<sup>123</sup> In other cases, the businesslike style of letters undermined the plaintiff’s case, as they ‘contained no expressions of love’, prompting the court to rule for the defendant.<sup>124</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth century, newspapers became increasingly willing to reprint a couple’s love letters in full, scandalously revealing the intimate details of their relationship to a fascinated public. This was the fate of the parties in *Forster vs. Mellish* (1802) where the Counsel for the Plaintiff ‘read an immense number of the Plaintiff’s love letters in support of his reasonings’, which were

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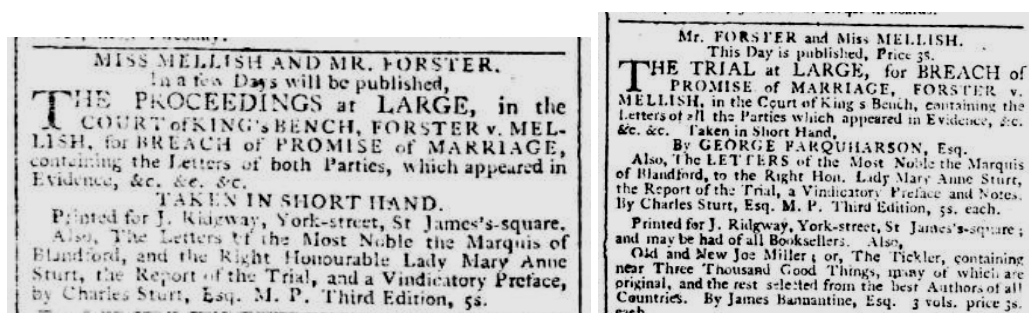
<sup>121</sup> *A Collection of remarkable cases, for the instruction of both sexes, in the business of love and gallantry* (London, 1730), p. 17.

<sup>122</sup> *Tryal between Mrs. Sarah Holt, and Knox Ward*, p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> *Elizabeth Chapman, against William Shaw*, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> *Brown vs. Arnold* (1790), *London Chronicle*, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> August 1790, 5305.

published as a pamphlet the same year.<sup>125</sup> The popularity of the pamphlet is demonstrated by the fact that it had already run to three editions in three months, despite its costly price of five shillings (Figs. 52 and 53).<sup>126</sup> The price was astronomically expensive compared to crim. con. cases published during the same period, which were half the cost at 2s. 6d. for a single trial pamphlet.<sup>127</sup> A similar fate was suffered by the parties in *Storey vs. Eagle* (1802) and *Compton vs. Winkworth* (1820), who had extracts from their letters published ‘As a specimen of their style.’<sup>128</sup> The letters granted readers a teasing glimpse into their relationship, demonstrating public clamouring for every salacious detail of cases in the early nineteenth century.



**Figs. 52 and 53 – Adverts for a pamphlet reproducing the trial of *Forster vs. Mellish*, third edition, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1802 and 18<sup>th</sup> March 1802, *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, British Newspaper Database.**

The Hardwicke Marriage Act meant that couples wanting to be married required either a licence or the calling of banns on three consecutive Sundays in their local parish. Licences would only be granted if one of the parties had resided in the parish for at least four weeks, but once granted the service could take place immediately.<sup>129</sup> Licences were regularly used as proof that a couple were about to marry, setting common law cases apart from church court cases before 1754, as licences were not previously required to exchange vows *per verba de praesenti*. In

<sup>125</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, February 25<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10224.

<sup>126</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1802, 10421.

<sup>127</sup> Komisaruk, ‘Privatization of Pleasure’, p. 43.

<sup>128</sup> *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser*, January 8<sup>th</sup> 1820, 969.

<sup>129</sup> This was not a wholesale change, as banns had been required since at least the twelfth century and licenses had been introduced in the sixteenth. While the Act forbade granting a license in a parish where parties did not live, there were no sanctions for doing so, although surrogates had to give £100 security ‘for the proper performance of their office.’ Furthermore although marriages were void in the absence of a license, there were no requirements that it had to be properly obtained. See Probert, *Marriage Law and Practice*, p. 222-4, 232-3.

the temporal courts, licences were used to prove proximity to marriage by plaintiffs in *Andrews vs. Morrison* (1801), *Barr[y] vs. Dixon* (1813) and *Duckworth vs. Johnson* (1828). Licences would usually have been obtained by men, and presented to women as tangible proof of their intention to marry in the coming weeks. During *Andrews vs. Morrison* in 1801, Thomas Erskine described how Mr. Morrison ‘sanctioned his engagement by obtaining a licence from the Ecclesiastical Court: he presented her with the licence, and left it in her possession.’ After changing his mind, he sent the beadle of the parish to retrieve it, and ‘foolishly supposed, as he had got the licence, there was an end of the contract.’ The defendant’s scheming saw him fined over a year’s wages, as the licence demonstrated that the couple had ‘looked upon each other as bound indissolubly together.’<sup>130</sup>

As the cost and spectacle of weddings began to grow in the early nineteenth century, plaintiffs put increasing emphasis upon preparations for their nuptials. Eighteenth-century brides would not have expected to wear their dresses for a single occasion, and those on a limited budget would have worn their ‘best’ outfits for the ceremony.<sup>131</sup> However by the early nineteenth century, wedding dresses had become the focal point of the event, marking the apogee of commitment in breach of promise trials. The first use of a wedding gown to prove a couple’s commitment was in 1802, where Esther Mellish gave her suitor a warrant of attorney ‘to sell out 300 *l.* for the purpose of buying the marriage clothes.’<sup>132</sup> In the following years they acquired an increasingly central place in breach of promise trials. The ultimate insult was to purchase wedding clothes only to be forced to integrate them into your everyday wardrobe, with the disappointed bride in *Cooper vs. Everton* (1817) describing how ‘I did buy wedding clothes, but I have now begun to wear them.’<sup>133</sup> The purchase of ‘wedding habiliments’ was especially scandalous when the men concerned were already married, such as the defendant in *Wait vs. Aspinall* (1824).<sup>134</sup> Steinbach has argued that preparations for a wedding compelled higher damages between 1780 and 1920 as it was expensive to purchase items such as dresses and bride-cake, whilst the

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<sup>130</sup> Phrase used to describe the marriage contract drawn up by parties in *French vs. Keogh* (1813) at the King’s Bench Dublin, *Morning Post*, July 26<sup>th</sup> 1813, 13265.

<sup>131</sup> Edwina Ehrman, *The Wedding Dress: 300 Years of Bridal Fashions* (London, 2011), pp. 22-95.

<sup>132</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, February 25<sup>th</sup> 1802, 10224.

<sup>133</sup> *Times*, August 4<sup>th</sup> 1817, 10215.

<sup>134</sup> *The Bury and Norwich Post*, September 15<sup>th</sup> 1824, 2203.

cancelling of the ceremony added to the bride's humiliation.<sup>135</sup> The cases studied here demonstrate how the production of wedding clothes had become a central component of cases after 1802, as they unmistakably demonstrated a couple's intention to marry. However, these items lost their potency after a number of years, with the plaintiff in *Duckworth vs. Johnson* (1828) only awarded £10 despite choosing her bridesmaids and planning to marry the next day. The meagre sum was justified as Duckworth had waited three years to bring a suit, suggesting that she 'had not considered herself very grievously injured.'<sup>136</sup>

The purchase of furniture was also interpreted as clear evidence of proximity to marriage. Amanda Vickery has argued that betrothed couples only weeks or days from marriage used the later stages of courtship as a gateway to 'setting up home.' The process involved purchasing domestic goods to furnish a new abode, signifying that a couple was on the 'threshold of matrimony.'<sup>137</sup> While women were expected to take the lead in selecting goods to demonstrate their domestic skill, certain men purchased items for the home as a romantic gesture. In 1801, the defendant in *Andrews vs. Morrison* aggravated his breach of promise by inviting the bride's mother 'to look at the house he had taken, and the furniture he had purchased for his intended bride', before leaving her for another woman.<sup>138</sup> The defendant in *Graves vs. Innocent* (1803) made similar plans for the marital home before deserting his bride, and 'During several visits he talked of the alterations he intended making in his house, and of the cloaths he wished to be purchased for his bride, for he said, he wished to pay every respect and attention.'<sup>139</sup> These objects were seen to aggravate the men's desertion, and they were fined £200 and £100 respectively, which represented roughly a year's wages. This is because the practice of setting up home unequivocally demonstrated that a couple intended to marry in the immediate future.

To conclude, this chapter has argued that breach of promise enjoyed early fame in the 1730s and 1770s before becoming inextricably associated with gendered notions of heartbreak in the final decades of the century. The majority of cases were fought between individuals of the middling sort, not parties of a higher status, as

<sup>135</sup> Steinbach, 'Promises, Promises', p. 146.

<sup>136</sup> *The Lancaster Gazette*, September 6<sup>th</sup> 1828, 1421.

<sup>137</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 88-105.

<sup>138</sup> *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1801, 10354.

<sup>139</sup> *Morning Post*, February 21<sup>st</sup> 1803, 10728.

previously suggested. Furthermore, they were not as young as we might expect, due to the high number of widows and widowers entering the court system. The damages awarded to plaintiffs were also far lower than historians have argued, usually remaining below £250 and only exceeding one year of the defendant's wages in aggravated cases.

The numerous shifts outlined in this chapter are united by changing understandings of masculinity and femininity. These underpin the inexorable rise of the suit from the 1770s, as cases hinged upon women's beauty, fragility, nervous disposition and mental instability. In turn, men were characterised as amorous, impetuous and passionate. The purpose of the suit was to compensate women for their perceived physical and emotional trauma while excusing men for their ungallant behaviour. The chapter has demonstrated how the law gradually adapted to new social mores, as while women became inextricably associated with suffering from love from the mid-1750s, it took almost half a century for this to emerge in a legal context.

Breach of promise suits also provide a unique insight into the material culture of romantic relationships by revealing the items which provided incontrovertible proof of matrimony. While an abundance of gifts were exchanged by the lovers studied in Chapter Two, only a small number were used to invoke proximity to marriage in court. These items changed over time, with wedding licences appearing after Hardwicke's Act was implemented in 1754, and wedding dresses after 1802. This tangible evidence also attests to the sheer power of love letters in symbolising a couple's commitment. These small emotionally imbued missives had the power to prove a serious relationship even when not directly produced in court, as being seen to send, receive and read love letters provided proof enough that a couple saw themselves as bound indissolubly together.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion

During his tour of the Continent ordered by his father from May to September 1787, the Bedfordshire gentleman Samuel Whitbread II developed and intensified his relationship with Elizabeth Grey using a continual stream of love letters and tokens. Samuel was ‘grateful’ to Elizabeth ‘for granting me this permission’ as the correspondence signified that they would soon be engaged.<sup>1</sup> He cited Milton, Goldsmith and Young in conceptualising his romantic pain, with his melodramatic language shaped by the rise of romanticism and sensibility. Their courtship was negotiated through a relative treasure trove of objects including purses, gloves, waistcoats, buttons, tassels, earrings, bracelets, rings, locks of hair and pocket books. As marriage was assured and their correspondence came to a close, Samuel noted ‘What a fortunate dog, to marry the Woman You love.’<sup>2</sup>

The sixty-eight relationships analysed in this thesis have undeniably demonstrated that romantic love was rooted firmly in the material world, mediated by letters, sweet treats, jewellery, furniture, textiles and handmade gifts. Studying these items has provided several valuable examples of what historians can learn from objects which we could not otherwise glean from texts. Material objects provide us with tantalising glimpses of the actual practices of courtship, which have hitherto remained largely unexplored by scholars. Women such as Elizabeth Grey, Mary Martin and Isabella Douglas studied in Chapter Two devoted a significant portion of their courtships to creating textile gifts for their suitors.<sup>3</sup> The thesis has endeavoured to prove that courting practices cannot and should not be detached from the plethora of ribbons, rings and neckcloths which captivated, preoccupied and engrossed individuals engaging in relationships.

Objects such as eye miniatures, glass signets, coins and ribbons have been used to reveal the visual language of love, which was crafted using a rich vocabulary of sign, symbol and colour. Chapter Two combined objects, ballads, paintings and

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<sup>1</sup> Whitbread II to Grey, Clarges Street, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1787, W1/6546, No. 1, BLARS.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, London, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1787, W1/6601, No. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 2, pp. 69-73.

novels to outline the divine connotations of blue and nationalistic implications of red and yellow. It also interpreted hearts, roses, lilies, acorns, ribbons and ships depicted on objects to unlock a multitude of hidden messages. The haptic properties of objects have been used to reveal how they were construed as luxurious or desirable gifts, with the lustre of silk ribbons (Figs. 7-9) providing a sumptuous contrast to coarser woollen and cotton textiles worn by non-elites. While historians have previously overlooked the indispensable role played by material culture in conducting adulterous affairs, Chapter Four has used the practical purposes of objects to argue that they played a crucial role during adultery. While the shrill sound of a whistle united Mary Mainwaring with her amour John Road, the ring of a bell literally brought together Fanny Wilmot and the footman Edward Washbourn. Gifts such as violets also provided a distant means of contact when a couple was unable physically to be together. While adulterous relationships could be dominated by secrecy, jealousy and worry, they were also shaped by objects such as shirt-pins, inkstands and textiles like the courtships studied in Chapter Two.

Unfortunately, the nature of museum collections means that little is known of the people who owned and handled many of the specific items analysed in this thesis. We do not know who purchased the eye miniature in Figure 15, or to whom it was given. While the names of George Rawling and Ann Maddison were engraved onto the coin in Figure 17 in 1787, it would be incredibly unlikely for historians to be able to isolate corroborating manuscripts concerning this particular couple. Nonetheless, these objects provide a rare insight into George and Ann's romance which is not available in other sources, elucidating experiences which would otherwise be lost to history. The small dimensions of the coin suggest that it may have been carried around in the owner's pocket and produced when they were feeling contemplative or sentimental. The date of 1787 may be the date the couple met, married or parted, summoning memories of this particular event. It is possible that George and Ann each owned one of these coins, thinking of its counterpart when bringing out their own token. Furthermore, by inscribing their names upon different sides of an unbreakable object, George and Ann created an item to bind them together and outlast their time on earth. Such objects take this study beyond the level of literacy, featuring couples who may not have recorded their lives in letters, diaries



or inventories. By purchasing, commissioning, designing and creating particular objects, individuals either deliberately or unknowingly left behind precious traces of their emotional experience in the material world.

The thesis has adopted a multifaceted approach to material culture, using objects, manuscripts and published sources to recreate both the meaning of an item and how it was used, constructed and perceived by couples. This method can be clearly displayed through the example of hair-work jewellery. Surviving objects in the Victoria and Albert Museum can tell us about particular designs, styles, symbols and materials (see Fig. 13), while letters, diaries and court records reveal how such jewellery was commissioned, exchanged and used. The reverend's daughter Elizabeth Reading studied in Chapter Two received a ring with her suitor's hair set in 'a Cypher of EL' in 1772, noting that 'I greatly prize it...& always wear it.'<sup>4</sup> In combining material objects with accounts of the role they played in relationships, this thesis has gained unique access to the reflections of lovers gazing at, wearing and handling particular items.

Accounts of touching, smelling, kissing and gazing at letters and tokens have illustrated how they created new forms of behaviour among recipients. While the soldier Robert Garrett smelled Charlotte Bentinck's letters in 1813 to summon memories of Ramsgate, the romantic poet John Keats slept with Fanny Brawne's letters between his legs and beneath his pillow in 1820 to overcome the physical distance between them.<sup>5</sup> The Justice of the Peace Anthony Hamond also kissed his sweetheart's hair while reading her letters and saying prayers in c. 1828.<sup>6</sup> Objects facilitated the development of intimacy by encouraging lovers to think deeply about a relationship, imagine their beloved's physical qualities, conjure the joy of being with them, and renew their romantic promises. Total absorption in the accoutrements of romance was depicted in prints such as William Ward's *The Pledge of Love* (Fig. 14) and Isaac Cruikshank's *The Illustrious Lover* (Fig. 16). Obsessing over tokens was a requisite part of the experience of love, while telling a loved one you had done so reaffirmed your mutual connection.

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<sup>4</sup> Reading to Leathes, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1772, BOL 2/4/16, NRO. See Chapter 2, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter 3, pp. 118-9.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 2, p. 87.

The recurrence of certain items has allowed me to clearly refute Giese's argument that it was the context of giving rather than the objects themselves which were paramount.<sup>7</sup> If this was the case, we would expect to see a multiplicity of non-specific gifts exchanged by different couples. However, the tokens they gave followed a number of distinct patterns. If a woman received a lock of hair, hair-work jewellery or a ring from a man, she would have been in no doubt that he intended marriage. Moreover items such as the gloves sent from Samuel Whitbread II to Elizabeth Grey from Montpellier in 1787 were suffused with the symbolic power of ancient rituals such as winning a lady's hand.<sup>8</sup> It was not just the moment of giving that was important, but the emotionally-invested, hand-crafted and intensely symbolic objects themselves. Nonetheless, certain gifts were imbued with greater value than others. While ephemera such as ribbons, coins, signets and miniatures were used to encourage the development of love (Figs. 10 and 14-18), they did not betoken marriage in the same way as hair or a ring.

In analysing the objects used to mediate romantic love, this thesis aims to have provided a model for investigating the material culture of emotions. Love is not unique in being embedded in the material world; emotions such as anger, anxiety, boredom, disgust, fear, greed, grief, guilt, happiness, horror, jealousy, lust, pity and sympathy could also be studied in the same way. The material culture of emotion is one of the key new fields emerging in emotion history, rooted in a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. In the History of Science, Juan Manuel Zaragoza has explored how modern notions of terminal illness in Spain have been shaped by particular artefacts and spaces.<sup>9</sup> The archaeologist Jenny Nyberg has also used grave materials such as pillows, burial coronets and herbs to explore changing attitudes to death in early modern Sweden.<sup>10</sup> Interest in the emotive power of objects is by no means restricted to academia, with the artist Bharti Parmar using her doctoral

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<sup>7</sup> Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs*, pp. 84, 130-43.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 2, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Juan Manuel Zaragoza, 'Incurable Diseases: A Cultural History of Emotions, 1850-1955', PhD thesis, Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences, Madrid, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Jenny Nyberg, 'A Peaceful Sleep and Heavenly Celebration for the Pure and Innocent. The Sensory Experience of Death During the Long Eighteenth Century' in Fredrik Fahlander and Anna Kjellström (eds.) *Making Sense of Things: Archaeologies of Sensory Perception* (Stockholm, 2010), pp. 15-33.

research on Victorian sentimental jewellery to inspire provocative artworks such as a carpet made from human hair.<sup>11</sup>

The history of emotions can at times be ineffable, with lovers themselves describing language as ‘too feeble to pourtray [*sic*] the sentiments of my heart.’<sup>12</sup> Just as today, relationships in history were enormously complex, and must be allowed to vary. Unless mentioned in letters or diaries, we cannot know if women kissed their love letters or wrote love poems which they subsequently destroyed. It is almost impossible to reconstruct what happened during face to face encounters between couples, unless recounted in writing. Inevitably the most intimate or risqué thoughts will have gone unrecorded. Nonetheless, studying the words and objects used by individuals to formulate their emotions provides us with a window into how they understood and approached their relationships. The thesis has endeavoured to highlight the subtle details which animated individual romances, such as the lemon juice ink used by the Duke of Cumberland in Chapter Four,<sup>13</sup> and one disappointed bride in Chapter Seven integrating her wedding clothes into her wardrobe.<sup>14</sup>

The thesis is the first study to collate a wide selection of love letters spanning the eighteenth century, encompassing a broad range of social groups and geographical regions. Such detailed research permits a closer definition of what exactly a love letter is. In 1756, the second edition of Johnson’s *Dictionary* chose the simple definition of a ‘Letter of courtship.’<sup>15</sup> In 1776, *A Dictionary of Love* defined love letters by their high value, describing how ‘There is no passion so writative as Love. The ill-spelt scrawl of the fair one beloved is worth all the eloquence of Cicero.’<sup>16</sup>

This thesis has discovered that love letters were united by a number of shared features. These include dramatisations of the process of writing, and the suspense and anxiety caused by waiting for further missives. Letters usually ran to several pages, allowing the writer to invest a suitable amount of time in the recipient. If

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<sup>11</sup> See edited discussion between Charlie Levine and Bharti Parmar on Queen Mary History of the Emotions blog, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012: <http://emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk/?p=1970>

<sup>12</sup> Douglas to Strutt, October 1792, MS 3101/C/E/5/16/11, BCA.

<sup>13</sup> Chapter 4, pp. 132-3.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 7, p. 260.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Dictionary*, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> *Dictionary of Love*, p. 95.

missives were unusually short, writers were compelled to apologise for their brevity. The dynamics of a correspondence shifted over time, with men several years into a courtship producing detailed descriptions of their professional activities. Love letters are also defined by their frequency, as they were exchanged in extraordinarily heavy volumes by couples such as the writer Mary Hays and her suitor John Eccles. Such letters are bound together by the language of romantic love, invoking quintessential fictional couples such as Adam and Eve and Romeo and Juliet studied in Chapter Five. Based on these features, a love letter can be defined as a highly valued epistle used to formulate emotion using the shared language of romantic love.

Love letters can be further defined by what they are *not*; sexual activity and contraception were never discussed, with the sole exception of the brazen author Mary Wollstonecraft, whose courtship letters repeatedly defy convention. In her teasing letters to William Godwin she asked, ‘Entre nous – did you feel very lonely last night?’<sup>17</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> November 1796, Mary gave the clearest possible indication that the couple had been physically intimate, describing how ‘the felicity of last night’ had left ‘live fire moving about my features...when recollections – very dear; called forth the blush of pleasure, as I adjusted my hair...I pray thee put this note under lock and key.’<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the remaining men and women studied throughout this thesis would never have dreamed of using such teasing language in their letters, with women’s letters in particular marked by their modesty, piety and reserve. While Rothman has argued that American couples in the 1820s became less hesitant about discussing sexual matters, English couples up to 1830 appear intent on maintaining a determined silence.<sup>19</sup> Whilst it is possible that all suggestive missives were destroyed by English couples, we would still expect to find a small number where the recipient had ignored or forgotten the writer’s plea to burn their letter. Presuming that sexually suggestive letters were written and universally destroyed, this act would also be revealing in light of the survival of their American counterparts. Adulterous men were the only parties liable to fantasise about sexual encounters, with John King writing a surprisingly explicit letter about Mary Robinson’s ‘panting snowy Breasts’ and ‘*Nakedness*’ in Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> Wollstonecraft to Godwin, August 16<sup>th</sup> 1796, No. 11, MS Abinger c40, fol. 16, BLO.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19<sup>th</sup> 1796, No. 64, fols. 90-1.

<sup>19</sup> Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, pp. 45-6, 122-43.

One of the most significant interventions made by this thesis has been to disentangle courting and adulterous letters. These two genres are deeply antithetical, and should not be amalgamated by scholars into one undifferentiated mass. Chapter Four has outlined how the letters of adulterers were defined by a heightened emphasis upon secrecy, codes and covert techniques. The lengths to which adulterers went to correspond have previously been ignored by historians, concealed within an overarching category of 'love letters' which also included courting couples. However, close analysis of precious surviving adulterous letters has revealed a number of key features marking out this genre for closer scrutiny. These include men's sexualised and jealous language, women's preoccupation with their suitors' health, and continual apologies for being unable to meet. Letters by long-term mistresses were different again, as the practical issue of money came to the fore. In presenting long lists of expenses to their married lovers, mistresses implored these men to prove their love by purchasing tables, mirrors, damask and other domestic goods to decorate their homes. However such luxuriance could lead to their downfall if their extravagance began to grate. Love letters were perhaps even more important during adultery than courtship due to the difficulty of arranging personal meetings, and the drastic measures taken to avoid being seen together, should one party unknowingly betray their emotions.

This thesis has repeatedly unearthed dichotomies between the public and private aspects of relationships. Chapter Three argued that the production of love letters was a quasi-public process. While working men often struggled to find time to write, women gossiped about their letters with friends and used them to seek approval from family members. The sharing of love letters was a tool that could be used to men's advantage, by heaping saccharine praise upon a woman's mothers and aunts. Degrees of privacy varied according to types of relationship, with adulterers forced to write and exchange letters while friends, family and even spouses were present. Gift-giving was also a public ritual by definition, as gifts could be purchased from bustling arenas such as fairs. Personalised items such as embroidered neckcloths, handkerchiefs and waistcoats acted to publicise a relationship by directly linking creator and wearer in the eyes of the community. Most important were the rings worn on women's hands, which publicised their marital status either

deliberately or unknowingly, marked by their unwarranted appearance in suits for divorce by means of adultery in the church courts.

Nonetheless, the ritualised process of obsessing over letters and tokens was an important activity which took place in private. Suggestive gifts such as garters remained concealed beneath a woman's shift, while tokens such as eye miniatures ingeniously concealed most of a lover's face. These could be stitched or engraved with secret messages for the recipient's eyes only, such as Georgiana Poyntz's ring featuring an engraving in French 'which I shew to no lady.' As Georgiana noted, she would not have found the hidden message herself 'if I had not been shewn it.'<sup>20</sup> Loveknots were also cryptic gestures which did not bear the name of their creator. Even portrait miniatures and love coins could be worn under a person's clothes or hidden in their pockets to shield them from public view. With the increasing professionalization of hair-work jewellery in the early nineteenth century, individuals could secretly wear pieces made from hair without outwardly revealing that they were doing so. Hair provides a link between courtship and mourning rituals, as grieving individuals also used the hair of lost loved ones to maintain a tangible connection with the absent.<sup>21</sup>

The masculinised construction of courtship has been a recurring theme of this study. Chapter Five highlighted the regularity with which men wrote love poems for their sweethearts, encouraged by courtly notions of brave knights and chaste maidens which enjoyed renewed popularity from the late 1770s. Notions of courtship as a man's game were fuelled by letter-writing guides, which reprinted men's gallant addresses and women's cautious replies. Even in puzzles such as *The Tunbridge Love Letter* (Fig. 38), a woman's letter was always in response to the approach of a man. The pervasiveness of this ideology was also noted in Chapter Two, where gift-giving was presented as a definitively masculine pursuit. It was intrinsic to broadside ballads, and was embedded in material culture through objects such as Giles Grendey's walnut chairs, which were emblazoned with the four stages of courtship (Fig. 6). Nonetheless, Chapters Two and Three have revealed the disjuncture

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> See Pointon, 'Materializing Mourning.'

between advice and practice, as courting women wielded a significant degree of power, as outlined later in this chapter.

While the quest for love was explicitly male, suffering from love was definably female. This thesis has reinserted romantic breakdown into the study of love, as each successful relationship was shaped by awareness of romantic turmoil, broken hearts and fallen women. While twenty-six of the relationships studied in this thesis culminated in marriage, at least nineteen did not. This was either due to the death of a lover or the collapse of a relationship. Added to this figure are the eighty-one failed courtships analysed in Chapter Seven. Nonetheless, an unsuccessful courtship was not as disastrous as novels and conduct literature liked to suggest, as many women made advantageous marriages soon after their disappointment. Like courtship, heartbreak was strongly constructed along gender lines. The women in Chapter Five languished and sighed from love, while those in Chapter Six suffered headaches and low spirits, and the plaintiffs in Chapter Seven described enduring acute mental strain and wounded feelings as a direct result of their desertion.

Shifting constructions of gender raise the issue of whether women were increasingly restrained or emancipated over the century. Barclay has painted a bleak picture of women's role in Scottish courtship by arguing that the rise of romantic love 'silenced women' and left them 'passive and inactive' in relationships.<sup>22</sup> However, this thesis has found that despite bemoaning the mental and physical tolls of love, courting women also wielded a significant degree of power. Women exercised their influence by using love letters to shape their expectations in a future husband. Courting women were not afraid to suggest that men purchase letter-writing guides to improve their wooing techniques, also using their religious devotion as a form of leverage. These letters have provided a number of earlier examples of women's romantic 'testing' as described in Lystra's study of nineteenth-century America. The thesis has also reconsidered women's role in gift exchange. While Barclay's study describes how the Scottish suitor 'bombarded his beloved with gifts', Chapter Two has presented gift-giving as a reciprocal process.<sup>23</sup> Women played an important role in the later stages of courtship by crafting emotionally

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<sup>22</sup> Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*, pp. 90-5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

expressive textile gifts for their suitors. While these did not hold the same obligation in court as a gift given by a man, they nonetheless secured a relationship while creating a material embodiment of female devotion.

Contrary to previous studies, this thesis has analysed breach of promise cases in addition to relationships which did not enter the court system, creating a more representative picture of love, heartbreak and material culture. In rescuing eighteenth-century cases from the shadow of their Victorian descendants, the thesis is the first to discover the distinguishing features of the suit during this period. Compared to historians' previously inflated figures of £500 and £620.10, it has found that the majority of damages awarded were less than £250. Furthermore, while men were unlikely to bring suits at the beginning of our period, it had become almost unthinkable by the end. The shift can be attributed to the emerging emphasis upon women as beautiful, fragile and mentally unstable in cases in the early 1790s, whilst men were recast as overly amorous, particularly during their youth. Further changes include a new emphasis upon hurt feelings in cases from the early 1800s, which could only be sufficiently demonstrated by women. Chapter Seven returned to the love tokens analysed in Chapter Two to discover that love letters, wedding licences, wedding clothes and furniture were the items which unequivocally demonstrated that marriage was imminent, again revealing hierarchies in the material culture of love.

The question remains whether the lexical and emotional shifts outlined in this thesis were solely an English phenomenon? The language of the English poet John Keats was paralleled across the border by the Scottish publisher Robert Chambers (1787-1803). In 1829, Robert described how love 'is my idol thought. It occupies me night and day... I frequently find tears in my eyes when I think of you.'<sup>24</sup> Robert's relationship with Anne Kirkwood has been analysed in Barclay's recent study of over one hundred Scottish couples between 1650 and 1850.<sup>25</sup> It is also worth considering whether concurrent changes took place further afield. Particular trends were certainly shared across Western Europe; Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) had a major influence in France and Germany. Movements such as romanticism and sensibility were also widespread, with the flourishing of German

<sup>24</sup> CH Layman (ed.) *Man of Letters: the Early Life and Love Letters of Robert Chambers* (Edinburgh, 1990), 15<sup>th</sup> April 1829, p. 158.

<sup>25</sup> Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*, p. 79, 90-1.



*Sturm und Drang* in the 1770s and 1790s, and France escaping the shackles of neoclassicism in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>26</sup> It is anticipated that in Catholic countries such as France, variant religious doctrines would have encouraged different linguistic strategies to flourish. European variations in the language of love could provide a promising arena for further research.

One further pertinent issue is how customs continued to change into the Victorian period. The mid-nineteenth century saw the increasing commercialisation of romantic love with the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 and subsequent explosion of Saint Valentine's Day.<sup>27</sup> While items such as love coins were increasingly produced by professionals over the eighteenth century, this trend accelerated with the manufacture of standardised Valentine's Cards by stationers. Objects such as eye miniatures were replaced with other fleeting items such as gemstone jewellery spelling out secret messages in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>28</sup> New objects also entered the economy of courtship, with the popularisation of daguerreotype photography after Richard Beard (1801-85) opened England's first portrait studio on Regent's Street in 1841. These shifts reflect the increasing modernisation and commercialisation of romantic love, also evident in the popularisation of the souvenir over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup>

While romantic love in the twentieth century is enjoying renewed interest from scholars, there remains a dearth of research into the emotion in the long eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Scholars may be hesitant to wade into the long-running debates about marriage for love outlined in Chapter One. By discovering the epistolary, material and gendered conventions of romantic love between c. 1730 and 1830, this

<sup>26</sup> For a direct comparison of England, France and Germany see Lilian R. Furst, 'Romanticism in Historical Perspective', *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June, 1968), pp. 115-43.

<sup>27</sup> The majority of research to date has centred on the tradition in America. See Vivian R. Pollak, 'Emily Dickinson's Valentines', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (March, 1974), pp. 60-78 and Lee Eric Schmidt, 'The Fashioning of a Modern Holiday: St. Valentine's Day, 1840-1870', *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter, 1993), pp. 209-45.

<sup>28</sup> Popular messages include 'LOVE', 'DEAREST' AND 'REGARD.' For example see heart-shaped locket with key, England, c. 1840, 6cm (H) inc. chain, V&A, M.6-1986.

<sup>29</sup> See Kwint, 'Material Memories: a History of the Souvenir', *Tate: the Art Magazine* (Summer, 1998), pp. 44-9.

<sup>30</sup> See Claire Langhamer, 'Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 9, Issue 2 (2012), pp. 277-97, Marcus Collins, *Modern Love: an Intimate History of Men and Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 2003), Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics Between the Wars* (London, 1999) and 'Europe of Love: Re-Centring Intercultural Affairs', *European Review of History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2004), pp. 171-84.

thesis aims to provide a catalyst for further research into the changing conventions of love in different relationships, countries and time periods. Additional work is called for into formulations of love after marriage, or within same-sex relationships. There is also infinite potential for studies of friendly love, godly love, courtly love and erotic love. The history of love is at a nascent stage; falling in and out of love clearly has endless possibilities in revealing social relationships, modes of linguistic expression, and wider emotional shifts.

### Appendix One – Index of Relationships Consulted

This chart records the name, age, religion and occupation of every individual consulted while writing this thesis, plus the date and location of each of their relationships. It also lists the archives where manuscripts can be located. The sources include love letters, family correspondences, court records, diaries, pamphlets and written proposals of marriage. Breach of promise cases analysed in Chapter Seven have been catalogued separately in Appendix Three.

Couples are arranged chronologically according to when a relationship began. The index demonstrates at a glance the distribution of sources over time, between adulterous and courting couples, different social and religious groups, and across the country. The ‘dates of courtship’ begin when a couple exchanged their first letter, and end the year they married or ended their relationship. Large groups of anonymous men who sent love letters to a single woman have been arranged into one group, as have trials for adultery containing affairs with numerous people. A full biography of the key couples chosen for further study is provided in Appendix Two.

	Name of man	Occupation or Social Rank	Religion	Name of woman	Occupation or Social Rank	Religion	Dates of Courtship	Location	Adulterous Affair	Courtship	Source
1	Jacob 'Philip' Da Costa	First cousin of Catherine, son of Esther 'Johanna' Da Costa	J	Catherine 'Kitty' Villa Real (1709-47)	Wealthy widow of Joseph Da Costa Villa Real (d. 1730)	J	1731	London and Totteridge		✓	LPL

2	Thomas Kirton (1682- c.1757)	Flour merchant	Q	Olive Lloyd (1707-75)	Ironmonger / merchant's daughter	Q	1734-6	Birmingham	✓	LSF
3	James Nicholson (1718-73)	Linen merchant	U	Elizabeth Seddon (1721-91)	Gentleman's daughter	U	1738-9	Liverpool	✓	JRL / LIRO
4	Philip Yorke (1720-90)	Politician and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Earl Hardwicke	C	Lady Jemima Campbell, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Marchioness Grey (c. 1722-97)	Daughter of politician John Campbell, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Earl Breadalbane and Holland	C	1740	Bedfordshire	✓	BLARS
5	Lord Augustus Fitzroy (1716-41)	Naval Captain married to Elizabeth Cosby (in 1734)		Lady L-y	Wife of Sir William Morice, Baronet		c.1740	London and Bath	✓	Plt
6	William Bell	Sailor (unaware that Kitty had married in his absence)		Catherine 'Kitty' Williamson ( <i>née</i> Taylor)	First wife of Rector Edmond Williamson	A	1743	Aspley and Aylesbury	✓	BLARS
7	George Gibbs	Physician	A	Ann Vicary (1721-1800/3)	Gentleman's daughter	A	1743-7	Exeter, Biddeford and Exmouth	✓	LMA

8	Staunton Degge			Miss Sanders			c. 1745		✓	LERO
9	Charles Pratt (1714-94)	Barrister and 1 <sup>st</sup> Earl Camden	A	Elizabeth Jeffreys (d. 1779)	Heiress of Brecon Priory	A	1745-9	Kingston, Bedford Row, Bridgewater, Bristol, Dorchester, Lancaster, Plymouth, Taunton, Winchester and Windsor	✓	CKS
10	Richard How II (1727-1801)	Gentleman	Q	Elizabeth Johnson	Richard's cousin	Q ?	c. 1747- 57	Aspley, Woburn and Hamburg	✓	BLARS
11	John Jackson			Eleanor -			1748-9		✓	LA
12	Thomas Hare			Miss Ann Fogg			1748-9		✓	LA

13	Jedediah Strutt (1726-97)	Wheelwright	U	Elizabeth Woollat (1729-74)	Domestic servant	U	1748-55	Derby		✓	DRO
14	John Road	Yeoman		Mary Elizabeth Mainwaring	Daughter of Sir William Dudley		1748-59	Swettenham, Cheshire	✓		BI
15	Richard 'Neddy' Edgcumbe (1716-61)	Son of Richard Edgcumbe, 1 <sup>st</sup> Baron Edgcumbe		Lady Diana West (1731-66)	Daughter of John West, Lord De La Warr		1750			✓	LWL
16	Henry Smith (1723-1794)	Lieutenant in Royal Marines	C	Sarah Hurst (1736- 1808)	Worked in a tailor's shop	C	1752-62	Horsham, Sussex		✓	Pub / HM
17	Richard How II (1727-1801)	Gentleman	Q	Sally			1751	Aspley Guise		✓	BLARS
18	Sir Francis Blake Delaval (1727-71)	Politician, Knight of Bath, husband of Lady Isabella Delaval (from 1750)		Elizabeth Roach (alias Raroche, La Roche, Le Roche and Le Rouch)			1754	Westminster	✓		Plt
19	John Spencer (1734-1783)	1 <sup>st</sup> Earl Spencer	A	Margaret Georgiana Poyntz (1737-1814)		A	1754-5			✓	BL

20	John Lovell	Apothecary	C	Sarah Harvey		C	1756-8	Bath and Cole Park, Malmesbury		✓	WSA
21	Richard How II (1727-1801)	Gentleman	Q	Silena Ramsay (d. 1779)	Wife of linen merchant Robert Ramsay	Q	1759-62	Aspley and Ilford, Bedfordshire	✓		BLARS
22	Sir James Lowther (1736-1802)	1 <sup>st</sup> Earl of Lonsdale		Isabella Carr			1759-69		✓		CRO
23	Andrew Livesay			Mary Orlebar			1762	Bedfordshire		✓	BLARS
24	J.H			Catherine 'Kitty' Wood	Daughter of Thomas Wood of Beadnell		1763	Cumbria		✓	CRO
25	Charles Ly-, James Nelthorpe, Dudley A. Sidney Cosby and two further anonymous suitors			Abigail Way (d. 1793)	Future wife of John Baker Holroyd (1735-1821)		1765-6	Bath and Richmond		✓	ESRO

26	Isaac Martin Rebow (1731-81)	Alderman, MP for Colchester and Colonel in East Essex militia	C	Mary Martin (c. 1751-1804)	Gentlewoman	C	1767-72	Essex and London	✓	ERO
27	Humphrey Senhouse III (1731-1813)	Politician	C	Catherine 'Kitty' Wood	Daughter of Thomas Wood of Beadnell	C	1768	Cumbria	✓	CRO
28	Prince Henry Frederick (1745-90)	Duke of Cumberland and Strathearn, brother of King George III	C	Lady Henrietta Grosvenor (1745-1828)	Wife of Richard Grosvenor, 1 <sup>st</sup> Baron Grosvenor (1731-1802)	C	1769	London	✓	Plt
29	Alexander Chorley (1746-1801)	Ironmonger	Q	Betty Fothergill (1752-1809)	Daughter of Joseph Fothergill of Warrington	Q	c. 1769-70	Hardshaw and Warrington, Lancashire	✓	LSF
30	Edward Leathes (d. 1788)	Rector	A	Elizabeth Reading	Reverend's daughter	A	1771-4	Crown Street, Westminster and Woodstock	✓	NRO
31	John King (c. 1753-1824)	Money broker	J	Mary Robinson (1756/8-1800)	Actress and author		1773	London and Bristol	✓	Plt



32	G.M.L.					1775					NRO
33	Isham Baggs, Mr. Brett, Thomas Cope, Isaac Hatheway and John Ackland	A 'young Oxonian', player at Bath, coachman and footman		Catherine Newton	Daughter of Reverend Lord Francis Seymour, wife of John Newton, Esq.	1777	Bath	✓			Plt
34	John Cater (d. 1781)	Soldier in 89 <sup>th</sup> Regiment		Mary Williamson (née Tipping)	Second wife of Rector Edmond Williamson	A 1779	Portsmouth and Kempston	✓			BLARS
35	John Cater (d. 1781)	Soldier in 89 <sup>th</sup> Regiment		Charlotte Jackson	Friend of John's sister	1779	Portsmouth and Kempston		✓		BLARS
36	John Charles Newby	Musician		Ann, Countess of Cork and Orrery	Wife of Edmund Boyle, Earl of Corke and Orrery in Ireland, and Baron Boyle of Marston in England from 1764	1779	Berkeley Square	✓			Plt / LMA

37	John Eccles (d. 1780)	No profession - considered navy	B	Mary Hays (1759-1843)	Writer	B & U	1777-80	Southwark, London		✓	Pub <sup>1</sup>
38	Augustus Murray Smith, Esq, Captain Buckley, Captain Southby and Reverend Thomas Walker	Officer in the Marines, Captain of the Guards, and Curate of Battersea		Harriet Errington ( <i>née</i> Coren)	Wife of George Errington, Esq.		1780-2	Battersea and London	✓		Plt
39	Thomas Pye	Admiral in the Royal Navy		Anna Maria Bennett	Worked in chandlers shop		1780-5	Tooting and London	✓		WCA
40	Richard Dixon	Captain of 85 <sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, Richmond		Esther Maria Cranmer	Daughter of James Cranmer, who owned the manor of Mitcham Canon		1782	Bedford, Buxton, Epsom and Mitcham		✓	SHC
41	James Altham	Vicar of St Olave Jewry	A	Anne Saunders			c. 1781	Harlow and London	✓		Plt

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I of II is available in The Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley & His Circle at the New York Public Library.

42	William Rathbone IV (1757-1809)	Ship-owner and merchant	Q	Hannah Mary Rathbone I (1761-1839)	Daughter of philanthropist and merchant Richard Reynolds	Q	1785-6	Liverpool	✓	LUL
43	John Fawdington (1757-1817)	Bridle-maker		Jane 'Jenny' Jefferson			1786-7	Asenby, North Yorkshire	✓	NYRO
44	Samuel Whitbread II (1764-1815)	Gentleman, joined his father's brewing business in 1786, elected MP for Bedford in 1790	A	Elizabeth Grey (1765-1848)	Daughter of Charles, 1 <sup>st</sup> Earl Grey	A	1786-8	Cardington, Bedfordshire and Fallodon, Northumberland	✓	BLARS
45	Joseph Strutt (1765-1844)	Cotton-trader and son of Jedediah Strutt	C	Isabella Douglas (1769-1802)			1786-93	Derbyshire	✓	BCA
46	William Atkinson	Linen-draper		Mrs. Conner			c. 1789	Cheapside	✓	Plt
47	Edward Peach (d. 1805)		A	Elizabeth Leathes	Reverend's daughter	A	1789-90	Norfolk	✓	NRO

48	Edward Washbourn	Footman		Fanny Wilmot	Wife of MP John Wilmot		1791		✓		Pam
49	Captain Gilbert Imlay (1754–1828)	Land speculator and author		Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97)	Writer	A & U	1793-6	Paris and London		✓	Pub
50	Reverend Charles Powlett (1764-1834)	Chaplain to Prince of Wales	A	Anne Temple (1772-1827)	Chaplain's daughter	A	1790-6	St Gluvias, Cornwall		✓	HRO
51	Charles O'Hara (c. 1740-1802)	Lieutenant in Coldstream Guards and Governor of Gibraltar	C	Mary Berry (1763-1852)	Author and daughter of Lord Orford	C	1795-6	Kirkbridge, North Yorkshire and London		✓	Pub / BL
52	William Godwin (1756–1836)	Philosopher and novelist		Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97)	Writer	A & U	1796-7	London		✓	Pub / BLO
53	Horatio Nelson (1758-1805)	Admiral in the Royal Navy		Lady Emma Hamilton (1765-1815)	Wife of diplomat Sir William Hamilton (1731-1803)		1798-1805	Naples	✓		Pub / NMM

54	Thomas Lloyd		Q	Hannah Hart		Q	1803-4			✓	LSF
55	Sir Gilbert Stirling (c. 1779-1843)	Later joined Coldstream guards and became a baronet	C	Anne Louisa Dalling (c.1784-1853)	Daughter of General Sir John Dalling	C	1803-5	Chelmsford, Southend and Harley Street, London		✓	NRO
56	Paul Moon James (1780-1854)	Banker, magistrate and poet	Q	Olivia Lloyd (1783-1854)	Banker's daughter	Q	1805-8	Birmingham		✓	LSF
57	Francis Cobb (1759-1831)	Banker and brewer	A	Charlotte Mary Curwen (d. 1823)	Daughter of a Baptist Minister (converted in 1804)	A	c. 1805	Fenstanton and Margate		✓	EKAC
58	Richard Law	Former serge- maker and flax- dresser, follower of the prophetess Joanna Southcott	S	Jane Townley (c. 1761-1825)	Daughter of Colonel Richard Townley, High Sheriff of Lancashire. Companion, patron and disciple of the prophetess Joanna Southcott	S	c. 1807- 22	London		✓	BL

59	Henry Goulburn (1784-1856)	Politician		Jane Montagu	Politician's daughter		1811	Sandleford Priory, Newbury	✓	SHC
60	Robert Garrett (1794-1869)	Son of Captain John Garrett, ensign in 2 <sup>nd</sup> Queen's Foot in 1811	C	Charlotte Bentinck (c. 1789-1819)	Daughter of Lord Edward Charles Cavendish-Bentinck	C	1811-14	Ramsgate	✓	EKAC
61	William Pratt			B.F.	Housekeeper		1814-16	Lincoln and Kegworth	✓	LERO
62	Jason Humberstone			Mrs J. Parker	Widow		1819	Campton and Steponly	✓	BLARS
63	John Keats (1795-1821)	Poet		Fanny Brawne (1800-65)	Businessman's daughter		1819-21	London	✓	Pub
64	John Franklin (c. 1786-1847)	Explorer	A	Eleanor Anne Porden (1795-1825)	Poet, daughter of a distinguished architect		1821-3		✓	DRO

65	John Kerr (1794-1841)	Earl of Ancram and 7 <sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lothian		Lady Elizabeth Grey (1798-1880)	Daughter of Charles, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Earl Grey		1823-4	Bothwell and London	✓	BI
66	Thomas Francis Cobb (1797-1882)	Son of banker and brewer Francis Cobb	A	Miss Torre			1827	Margate and Cheltenham	✓	EKAC
67	Anthony Hamond (1805-69)	Deputy Lieutenant and Justice of the Peace for Norfolk	C	Mary Ann Musters (1806-1900)	Daughter of Lord Byron's first love Mary Ann (1786-1832)	C	1828	Norfolk	✓	NRO
68	-	Butler		-	Housekeeper		c.1830	Norfolk	✓	NRO

### Key

#### Abbreviation

#### Archive

BCA	Birmingham City Archives, Birmingham
BI	Borthwick Institute, York
BL	British Library, London
BLARS	Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service, Bedford
BLO	Bodleian Library, Oxford

#### Abbreviation

#### Religion

A	Anglican
B	Baptist
C	Christian
J	Jewish
Q	Quaker

CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone	U	Unitarian
CRO	Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle	N	Nonconformist
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock	S	Southcottian
EKAC	East Kent Archive Centre, Dover		
ERO	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford		
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office, Lewes		
HM	Horsham Museum		
HRO	Hampshire Record Office, Winchester		
JRL	John Rylands Library, Manchester		
LA	Lancashire Archives, Preston		
LERO	Leicestershire Record Office, Leicester		
LIRO	Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool		
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, London		
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London		
LSF	Library of the Society of Friends, London		
LUL	Liverpool University Library, Liverpool		
LWL	Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, Connecticut		
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich		
NRO	Norfolk Record Office, Norwich		
NYRO	North Yorkshire Record Office, Northallerton		
Plt	Contemporary Pamphlet		
Pub	Published		
SHC	Surrey History Centre, Woking		
WCA	Westminster City Archives, London		
WSA	Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, Chippenham		



## Appendix Two

### Detailed Biographical Index of Key Couples

The twenty-seven key couples studied in this thesis have been arranged in pairs according to romantic involvement, to facilitate a closer comparison of their social backgrounds and geographical proximity. They are arranged in roughly chronological order, beginning with James Nicholson and Elizabeth Seddon, who began courting in 1738, and ending with John William Robert Kerr, Earl of Ancram and Lady Elizabeth Grey, who began courting in 1823.

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|--|---|
| 1. James Nicholson and Elizabeth Seddon                                    | 16. Joseph Strutt and Isabella Douglas                |
| 2. George Gibbs and Ann Vicary   | 17. Edward Washbourn and Fanny Wilmot                 |
| 3. Jedediah Strutt and Elizabeth Woollat                                   | 18. Charles Powlett and Anne Temple                   |
| 4. John Road and Mary Mainwaring   | 19. General Charles O'Hara and Mary Berry             |
| 5. Henry Smith and Sarah Hurst   | 20. Admiral Horatio Nelson and Lady Emma Hamilton     |
| 6. Richard How II and Silena Ramsay  | 21. Sir Gilbert Stirling and Anne Louisa Dalling      |
| 7. Sir James Lowther and Isabella Carr                                     | 22. Francis Cobb and Charlotte Mary Curwen            |
| 8. Isaac Martin Rebow and Mary Martin                                      | 23. Richard Law and Jane Townley                      |
| 9. Prince Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland and Lady Henrietta Grosvenor | 24. Robert Garrett and Charlotte Bentinck             |
| 10. Edward Leathes and Elizabeth Reading                                   | 25. William Pratt and 'B.F'                           |
| 11. Edward Peach and Elizabeth Reading                                     | 26. John Keats and Fanny Brawne                       |
| 12. John King and Mary Robinson  | 27. John Kerr, Earl of Ancram and Lady Elizabeth Grey |
| 13. John Eccles and Mary Hays  |   |
| 14. Admiral Sir Thomas Pye and Anna Maria Bennett                          |   |
| 15. Samuel Whitbread II and Elizabeth Grey                                 |   |

**James Nicholson** (1718-73) of Liverpool

**Elizabeth Seddon** (1721-91) of Bickerstaffe, Lancashire and Liverpool

James Nicholson was the son of the linen merchant Matthew Nicholson (1677-1735/6), attending Stand Grammar School from *c.* 1729. He joined his elder brother John in the family business after his father's death, courting Elizabeth Seddon from 1738 until their marriage in 1740. After John's death in 1741/2 James took charge of the business, focusing especially upon linen, yarn, tallow, molasses, chemicals, and possibly also tobacco and cotton. He travelled extensively for business, and was a partner in the Hurllett and Wigan Copperas Works. The Nicholsons were one of the leading Unitarian families in Liverpool.

Elizabeth Seddon was the daughter of Thomas Seddon of Seddon's House, Bickerstaffe, Ormskirk. After his death in *c.* 1732 she inherited Seddon's House and a seventy-five acre farm. She married James Nicholson in St. Nicholas Church, Liverpool on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1740. Her cousin Reverend John Seddon was an active promoter of the Warrington Academy, with her husband also becoming a trustee. James travelled extensively for work, with Elizabeth helping to run the family business during his absence. They had seven children, Dorothy (1741-85), Margaret (1743-48/9), Matthew (1746-1819), Mary (1748-1833), Elizabeth (1751-84), Thomas (1753-1825) and Ann (1757-98). After she was widowed Elizabeth lived at Richmond Row, Everton from 1783 to 1785, before moving to Manchester in 1785.

**George Abraham Gibbs** (*c.* 1718-94) of Exeter, Devon

**Ann Vicary** (1721-*c.* 1800/3) of Exmouth, Devon

George Gibbs was the son of Abraham and Mary Gibbs (*née* Monke), and the grandson of Abraham and Tryphaena Gibbs (*née* Rowe).<sup>1</sup> His engagement to Ann Vicary lasted four years from the beginning of their correspondence until their marriage in December 1747. George practised as a physician, but was forced to wait to marry Ann until he came into his inheritance. He later became chief surgeon at Exeter Hospital.

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<sup>1</sup> His date of birth has also been given as 1729, and his mother's name as Mary Moyte, in the Gibbs letter-book in the LMA (below). Information taken from *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* (1999), Vol. I, p. 51.

Ann Vicary was the second daughter of Antony Vicary Jr and his wife Elizabeth (*née* Munckley) of Exeter, and the granddaughter of Antony Vicary Sr (1682-1747) and Sibella (*née* Sterring), said to be descended from the Vicaries of Dunkeswell in County Devon.<sup>2</sup> She appears to have been of higher social status than George Gibbs, as her father delayed their marriage until he had received his inheritance. Ann's letters have not survived, and it remains unknown how the couple first met. Their first surviving son Vicary Gibbs (1751-1820) was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge before entering the law and later politics. The couple had two further children, Mary Gibbs (d. 1819) and Antony Gibbs (1756-1815).

**Jedediah Strutt** (1726-97) of Alfreton, Findern, Derbyshire

**Elizabeth Woollat** (1729-74) of Findern, Derbyshire

Jedediah Strutt was the second son of William Strutt (b. c. 1700), a small farmer and maltster, and his wife Martha (*née* Statham) (b. c. 1701), a yeoman's daughter. He was born in Alfreton in Derbyshire. Jedediah was apprenticed to the wheelwright Ralph Massey at Findern in 1740, boarding with the Woollat family, where he met his future wife Elizabeth. He left to work as a journeyman wheelwright in 1747, inheriting his Uncle's farm stock and becoming a farmer wheelwright in 1754. After a long courtship, he married Elizabeth on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1755 in Blackwell parish church. Jedediah is best known for inventing the 'Derby rib machine' for manufacturing ribbed stockings. He was made a freeman of Nottingham in 1762, and the family moved to St. Mary's Gate, Derby. He met Richard Arkwright (1732-92) in 1769, and the two entered into a partnership which lasted until 1782. After Elizabeth's death in 1774 he remarried the widow Anne Daniels in 1781/2, straining relations with his children.<sup>3</sup>

Elizabeth Woollat was born at Findern, near Derby, where she was a member of a prominent Unitarian family. In c. 1745 she became the servant of Ebenezer Latham (c. 1688-1754), headmaster of the Findern Nonconformist Academy, moving to London to work for the minister Dr George Benson (1699-1762) in 1749.<sup>4</sup> She

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<sup>2</sup> Genealogy from nineteenth-century letter book kept by Henry Gibbs, son of George Henry Gibbs and Caroline Crawley. See *Family Letters Collected and Arranged by Henry Hucks Gibbs*, Vol. I, 1744-1782 (London, 1876), MS11021/1, LMA.

<sup>3</sup> See *ODNB*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

corresponded episodically with Jedediah Strutt, eventually marrying him in 1755. She subsequently played an indispensable role in establishing and running the family business.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth and Jedediah had five children together: William (1756-1830), Elizabeth (1758-1836), Martha (1760-83), George Benson (1761-1841) and Joseph (1765-1844). For the courtship of their youngest son Joseph Strutt and Isabella Douglas see below.

**John Road** of Kermincham, Swettenham, Cheshire

**Mary Elizabeth Mainwaring** of Kermincham, Swettenham, Cheshire

John Road was an illiterate yeoman who embarked on an adulterous affair with Mary Elizabeth Mainwaring between *c.* 1748 and 1759, much to the horror of her friends. He was incredibly indiscrete, declaring to several people that he had slept with Mary twenty times and that he knew she would never have a child with her husband. His letters have not survived.

Mary Elizabeth Mainwaring (*née* Dudley) was the only daughter of Sir William Dudley, Baronet and his wife Dame Elizabeth Dudley of Clapton in Northamptonshire. She married Roger Mainwaring on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1745, and for the first year they lived at Hampton Court in Middlesex. The couple subsequently resided at Newcombe in Gloucester until June 1747, before moving to Kermincham, Swettenham in Cheshire. Mary's affair with the yeoman John Road began soon after in *c.* 1748, with the couple meeting in the house of the labourer Peter Darlington, plus numerous cowhouses, outbuildings and fields. Mary's husband brought a suit against her for 'divorce' (or separation from bed and board) by means of adultery at the Consistory Court of Chester in 1761, which was appealed to the Consistory Court of Durham. Her letters have not survived. Roger was the heir of the Mainwaring fortune, but died childless as a result of his wife's infidelities in 1783.

**Lieutenant Henry Smith** (1723-94) of Horsham, Sussex

**Sarah Hurst** (1736-1808) of Horsham, Sussex

Henry Smith was the third son of John Smith, a merchant of London and Horsham, and his wife Elizabeth Smith (*née* Griffith). When he met Sarah Hurst in *c.* 1756 he

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

was serving as a Lieutenant in the Royal Marines, before being promoted to Major in March 1759. Henry retired as Colonel Commandant of the Portsmouth Division on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1791, and was appointed Colonel Commandant in Town the same day, a post he held until his death.<sup>6</sup> He was buried in Horsham Church below a monument with an epitaph written by his wife.

Sarah Hurst was the eldest child of the tailor Richard Hurst and his wife Mary (*née* Tasker), and was baptised on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1736, six months before the marriage of her parents on 29<sup>th</sup> November. She worked in her father's shop, cutting out smocks and sailors' jackets, keeping accounts and corresponding with clients and suppliers. She secretly married Henry Smith by licence on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1762. Although her diary ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1762, it is likely that she confessed her marriage to her parents between 24<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December the same year.<sup>7</sup> While their courtship letters do not survive, the relationship is recorded in detail in Sarah's diary. After her death she was buried beside Henry in Horsham Church.

**Richard How II** (1727-1801) of Aspley, Bedfordshire

**Silena Ramsay** (d. 1779) of Ilford and Aspley, Bedfordshire

Richard How II was the son of the Quakers Richard How I (1689-1763) and Susannah Briggins (d. 1742). When he was nineteen or twenty he went to stay with his uncle Gilbert van der Smissen in Hamburg to learn French, German and counting house business. From *c.* 1747 Richard courted his distant cousin Elizabeth Johnson, becoming provisionally engaged and asking his father to travel to Hamburg to meet her. However their marriage was postponed for two years and their passion began to cool. By the time Elizabeth formally ended their engagement in 1757, Richard had already proposed to another woman named Sally. In 1759 he began an adulterous affair with Silena Ramsay, wife of family friend Robert Ramsay, marrying her in November 1762. In his spare time, he edited the letters of Rachel Lady Russell, made contributions to *The Gentleman's Magazine* and assembled a vast library.

Silena Ramsay (*née* Moore) was the wife of the linen merchant Robert Ramsay (1727-61). After marrying Richard on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1762, the couple set up a shop with Silena's mother Sarah Moore, trading items such as lace, ale and elder wine.

<sup>6</sup> Djabri, *Diaries of Sarah Hurst*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

The couple had five children together; Silena Susannah (1764-90), Richard Thomas (1765-1835), William ‘Billy’ Briggins (1768-1804), John ‘Jack’ Farmborough Cartwright (b. 1769) and Mariabella (1766-1850). Silena’s first son Thomas ‘Tommy’ Ramsay (1756-74) with Robert Ramsay was sent to Germany aged thirteen to learn counting house business like his step-father Richard. Unfortunately Silena’s letters to her husband and lover have not survived.

**Sir James Lowther, first Earl of Lonsdale** (1736-1802) of Northumberland  
**Isabella Carr** of Northumberland and London

Sir James Lowther was the son of the landowner Robert Lowther (1681-1745) and Katherine Pennington (1712-64) and was educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge. In 1751 he inherited estates worth more than £6,000 annually, followed by additional rental estates in 1755 worth £1,200 per year. This gave him an annual income of roughly £45,000, making him one of the wealthiest men in the country. James began a relationship with Isabella Carr in *c.* 1759, although his letters do not survive. After being turned down by the Duke of Marlborough’s daughter, he married Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s daughter Lady Mary Stuart (1740-1823) in 1761. James was a politician and landowner, plus Mayor of Carlisle (1756) and Lord Lieutenant of Westmorland and Cumberland (1758). Surviving likenesses include a portrait by Thomas Hudson in *c.* 1755, painted during his relationship with Isabella.<sup>8</sup>

Isabella Carr was a gentlewoman who stood to inherit at least £4,000 upon the death of her father. In 1762 she moved to London, in a little house next door but one to Lord Egremont. She employed several servants including an ‘under maid’ and a man to care for her horse. Her unpredictable financial situation forced her to sell the house in 1764 and propose moving to smaller lodgings with only one maid. Her relationship with Sir James Lowther appears to have ended when he tired of her continual demands for money. Throughout the affair Isabella was estranged from her family.

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<sup>8</sup> See *ODNB*.

**Isaac Martin Rebow** (1731-81) of Colchester, Essex

**Mary Martin** (c. 1751-1804) of Chelsea, Queen Square, and Duke Street, London

Isaac Martin Rebow was the son of Isaac Lemyng Rebow (1705-1735) and Mary Martin (d. 1776), and was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. His family made their fortune in the woollen trade. Isaac served as Alderman of the Borough of Colchester, Member of Parliament for Colchester (from 1754), Deputy Lieutenant of Essex (from 1762), Recorder of Colchester (from 1763) and Colonel in the East Essex Militia (c. 1759-79). In 1758, he engaged the London architect Thomas Reynolds to design and build the four-story mansion Wivenhoe Park in Colchester, which was completed in 1761. His mother lived there until her death in 1776, after which it became Isaac and Mary's chief residence. His letters to Mary do not survive.

Mary Martin was the daughter of Thomas Martin (1710-76) and Dorothy (1720-77) of Alresford Hall in Essex. She courted her first cousin Isaac Martin Rebow between 1767 and 1772. She was known as 'Molly' by her mother-in-law (and aunt) Mary Martin (d. 1776), and had two lap dogs, named Pompey and Pug, and several tame squirrels. During her courtship with Isaac she supervised his servants at Duke Street, renovated the house, forwarded his mail to Colchester, and wrote a weekly letter to his mother. After their marriage on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1772, she wrote further letters to her husband between 1778 and 1779.<sup>9</sup> They had three daughters together; Mary Hester (c. 1773-1834), Sarah Emma (c. 1777-98) and Frances Mary (1780-93), with only the eldest surviving her mother.

**Prince Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland and Strathearn** (1745-90) of London

**Lady Henrietta Grosvenor** (1745-1828) of London

Prince Henry Frederick was the son of Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales (1701-51) and Augusta (1719-72), daughter of Friedrich II, Duke of Saxe-Gotha-Altenberg. He became Duke of Cumberland and Strathearn and Earl of Dublin in 1766. He entered the Navy as a Midshipman in 1768, being promoted to Rear-Admiral in 1769 and

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<sup>9</sup> See Josephine Asaro Manning, 'The Mary Martin Rebow Letters, 1767-1772', *The Record*, Vol. 32 (1971), WSU.

Vice-Admiral in 1770.<sup>10</sup> After conducting a scandalous affair with Lady Henrietta Grosvenor in 1769, he was sued for criminal conversation by her husband and fined £10,000 in damages. He returned to Henrietta afterwards, before leaving her for Maria Bailey, and subsequently the widow Anne Horton (*née* Luttrell). Henry married Anne on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1771, causing him to be barred from the King's presence and estranged from his mother until her death in 1772. Surviving likenesses include portraits by George Knapton (c. 1748 and 1751), Joshua Reynolds (1773) and Thomas Gainsborough (c. 1773-7 and 1785-8).

Lady Henrietta Grosvenor was the daughter of Henry Vernon of Hilton Park, Staffordshire, former MP for Lichfield and Newcastle under Lyme. She married Richard, first Earl Grosvenor (1731-1802) on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1764, before famously conducting an affair with the Duke of Cumberland in 1769. After Richard's infamous crim. con. suit he could not sue for divorce as he was also guilty of adultery. The couple remained separated until his death on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1802. Henrietta remarried George Porter less than a month later on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1802, who became Baron de Hochepeid in 1819.

**Edward Leathes** (d. 1788) of Reedham, Norfolk

**Edward Peach** (d. 1805) of Sundridge, Kent

**Elizabeth 'Betsy' Reading** of Woodstock, Norfolk

Edward Leathes was the son of Major Carteret Leathes. Edward's courtship of Elizabeth Reading from 1771 caused tensions within his family as his father had always insisted that he take orders before marrying. This led the couple to conduct their relationship without his knowledge, making Elizabeth's parents uneasy about their involvement. After their eventual marriage in 1774, Edward's father bought the couple a new home. Edward was Rector of Reedham and Freethorpe between 1775 and 1788, and Limpenhoe and Southwood between 1779 and his death in 1788.

The chaplain Edward Peach married Elizabeth Leathes (*née* Reading) two years after the death of her husband on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1790. Letters suggest that they separated in 1793 after a number of disagreements concerning Edward's extravagance.

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<sup>10</sup> See *ODNB*.



Elizabeth Reading was the daughter of Reverend James Reading of Woodstock (d. 1790), tutor to the Marlborough children, and his wife Elizabeth. In 1774 she eloped to marry Edward Leathes against the advice of her family, after which they had several children together. These included Elizabeth Leathes, who eloped to marry James Thompson in 1794, and Edward Leathes, who became Rector of Reedham after his father's death, and was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1794. Elizabeth began courting her new suitor Edward Peach in 1789, marrying him in 1790 but formally separating in 1793.

**John King** (c. 1753-1824) of London

**Mary Robinson** (c. 1756/8-1800) of Bristol and London

John King was born Jacob Rey, son of the Jewish street trader Moses Rey of Gibraltar or North Africa. After being educated at a charity school for Spanish and Portuguese Jews and apprenticed to a Jewish merchant house in London, he changed his name to John King.<sup>11</sup> He met Mary Robinson through her husband Thomas in 1773 while working as a money broker, and was primarily known as Jew King. Three years later he married Sara, the daughter of the city merchant Benjamin Nunes Lara, divorcing her in 1784. After Mary Robinson's high-profile affair with George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales (1762-1830), John decided to publish his own love letters with Mary in 1781. This was despite the attempts of Mary and her new lover George Capel, Viscount Malden (1757-1839) to recover the originals. John published *Thoughts on the difficulties and distresses in which the peace of 1783 has involved the people of England* (1783), a new edition of David Levi's *Apologia Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament* (1793-1800) and wrote for *The Argus* and *British Guardian*. From 1817 until his death he lived in Florence with the widowed Jane Isabella Butler, Lady Lanesborough (1737-1828).

Mary Robinson (*née* Darby) was the daughter of the Bristol sea merchant Nicholas Darby (c.1720-85) and his wife Hester (*née* Vanacott) of Somerset (c. 1725-93). During her teenage years she taught English at a school founded by her mother in Chelsea in c. 1771. She was later introduced to David Garrick, becoming his protégée at Drury Lane. Mary secretly married the solicitor's clerk Thomas Robinson (*fl.* 1750-1802) at St Martin-in-the-Fields on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1773, delaying her

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<sup>11</sup> See *ODNB*.

stage debut. While Thomas claimed to be the heir of a wealthy Welsh tailor, he was actually his illegitimate son. Mary's adulterous correspondence with John King began only five months into her marriage. Her first daughter Maria Elizabeth was born in 1774, and her second Sophia in 1777. After her performance as 'Perdita' in Garrick's *A Winter's Tale* in 1779, she famously became mistress of the Prince of Wales until he deserted her for Elizabeth Armitstead in 1780. Later well-known conquests include Lord Malden, Colonel Banastre Tarleton (1754-1833) and Charles James Fox (1749-1806). She was acquainted with Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, whose relationship is also studied in this thesis. Mary also became an author, writing poems in numerous newspapers plus novels such as the Gothic *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796) and feminist tracts such as *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799). Surviving likenesses include oil paintings by Thomas Gainsborough (1781), George Romney (1781) and Sir Joshua Reynolds (1784).

**John Eccles** (d. 1780) of Fordingbridge, Hampshire, and Southwark, near London

**Mary Hays** (1759-1843) of Southwark, near London

John Eccles was from a Radical Dissenting background, regularly meeting Mary Hays at nonconformist meetings and lectures. He came from a socially inferior family, and had no profession, which created opposition to their union. However Mary begged him not to join the navy due to the dangers involved. In July 1780 John became seriously ill, while Mary kept a vigil at his bedside. In August he set out for his family home in Fordingbridge on his doctor's advice, but died before reaching home, leaving all of his possessions to Mary.<sup>12</sup>

Mary Hays was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Hays, and was born on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1759 in Southwark into a Protestant Dissenting family. She began her relationship with John Eccles in c. 1777, which was kept secret due to the objections of her mother and John's father. Sadly, Mary's mother abandoned her resistance and permitted the couple to marry in 1780, but John succumbed to a violent fever and died whilst arranging the wedding. She began writing a novel about Eccles with 'Edwin' as the hero, but it was never finished. Mary later published the novels *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799), plus

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<sup>12</sup> Wedd, *Love-Letters of Mary Hays*, pp. 3-4.

numerous moral tracts including *Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous* (1793) and the anonymous *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women* (1798). Mary fell in love with the clergyman and social reformer William Frend (1757-1841) in 1791, confessing her love to him in 1796. She remained unmarried, but Frend married Sara Blackburne in 1808.<sup>13</sup>

**Admiral Sir Thomas Pye** (1708/9-85) of Tooting, Surrey

**Anna Maria Bennett** (d. 1808) of Tooting, Surrey

Thomas Pye was the son of Henry Pye (1683-1749) and his wife Anne, leaving school at fourteen to join the navy. He became a lieutenant in 1734. In 1755 he was charged with several offences including failing to obey a senior officer, but after being tried by court martial in 1758 was only reprimanded for lesser charges. Four months later Thomas was promoted to Rear-Admiral. His wife died in 1762, the same year that he became Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth and was promoted to Vice-Admiral. From 1766-9 he was Commander-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands, and was knighted and promoted to Admiral in 1773. Thomas embarked on an affair with Anna Maria Bennett in 1780, although his letters have not survived. He retired from the navy in 1783 before his death two years later.

Anna Maria Bennett was probably the daughter of the customs officer and grocer David Evans of Glamorgan. She was married to the customs house officer Thomas Bennett, meeting Thomas Pye while working in a Chandler's shop. She became his housekeeper and mistress in Tooting, Surrey, remaining so for at least seventeen years. In her letters Anna Maria called herself 'Nancy.' After his death, Pye left his house on Suffolk Street to Anna Maria and forgave her husband's debts. They had at least two children together, including Thomas Pye Bennett and the actress Harriet Pye (*née* Bennett) (c. 1761-1865). Anna Maria later became a novelist, publishing numerous tracts including *The Beggar Girl and her Benefactors* (7 vols., 1797), *Vicissitudes Abroad, or, The Ghost of my Father* (6 vols., 1806) and *Faith and Fiction, or, Shining Lights in a Dark Generation* (5 vols., 1816).

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<sup>13</sup> Eleanor Ty, Introduction to Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, pp. vii-xv.

**Samuel Whitbread II** (1764-1815) of Cardington, Bedfordshire

**Elizabeth Grey** (1765-1848) of Fallodon, Northumberland

Samuel Whitbread II was the only son of the brewer, landowner and politician Samuel Whitbread I (1720-96) and his first wife, Harriet Hayton of Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire (d. 1764). He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, transferring to St. John's College, Cambridge in 1782 and conducting a Grand Tour from 1784-5.<sup>14</sup> On his return he fell in love with Elizabeth Grey, and was sent on a second tour of Europe by his father in 1787 to reconsider the attachment. Since Elizabeth had no fortune, Samuel's father favoured a match with Lady Charlotte Bertie, daughter of the politician Willoughby Bertie, Lord Abingdon. However Samuel's relationship with Elizabeth continued despite his father's objections, and the couple were married on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1788. Samuel took over his father's seat as Member of Parliament for Bedford in 1790, and after a fraught political career and bouts of depression, committed suicide on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1815.<sup>15</sup> Surviving likenesses include a portrait by John Opie from c. 1803, and a memorial in Cardington Church created by Henry Weeks in 1849.

Elizabeth Grey was the eldest daughter of Charles, first Earl Grey (1729-1807) and Elizabeth (d. 1822) of Southwick, county Durham. She married Samuel Whitbread II at Fallodon in Northumberland in 1788, after which they settled at Woolmers on a 195-acre estate in Hertfordshire. The couple had four children together, William Henry (1795-1867), Samuel Charles (1796-1879), Elizabeth (1791-1843) and Emma Laura (1798-1857). Elizabeth was the aunt of Lady Elizabeth Grey (1798-1880), who is studied below. Unfortunately her letters to Samuel do not survive. She was widowed twenty-seven years after her marriage in 1815, dying on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1848. Surviving portraits include a stipple engraving by Anthony Cardon in the National Portrait Gallery (c. 1808) and a half-length portrait in oil on canvas by an unknown artist (c. 1820) sold for £1,320 at Christie's on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

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<sup>14</sup> Dean Rapp, *Samuel Whitbread (1764-1815): A Social and Political Study* (London, 1987), p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> See *ODNB*.

**Joseph Strutt** (1765-1844) of Derby, Derbyshire

**Isabella Douglas** (1769-1802) of Swaybrook, Derbyshire

Joseph Strutt was the youngest son of the inventor and cotton-manufacturer Jedediah Strutt and his wife Elizabeth (*née* Woollat) (see above). He was baptised at Friar Gate Presbyterian Chapel in Derby on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1765. His engagement to Isabella lasted seven years before their marriage on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1793.<sup>16</sup> They had two sons and three daughters together, with Caroline (1799-1834), Isabella (1797-1877) and Joseph Douglas (d. 1821) surviving into adulthood. Upon his death on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1844, Joseph left most of his estate to his sole surviving child Isabella, who had married John Howard Galton (1794-1862) in 1819.

Isabella Douglas was the daughter of Archibald Douglas of Swaybrook, Derbyshire. Her precise social status and how she met Joseph are unknown.

**Edward Washbourn** of Holborn, Middlesex

**Frances ‘Fanny’ Wilmot** (b. c.1759) of Holborn, Middlesex and Wandsworth, Surrey

Edward Washbourn worked as a footman in the household of John and Fanny Wilmot in Bedford Row in Holborn from c. 1784. He left his post on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1791 to conceal his affair with Fanny, taking lodgings at No. 12 King Street, Holborn. However he continued to frequent the Wilmot house, purportedly to dine and drink tea with the servants on the housekeeper’s invitation. After John Wilmot publicly outed the affair on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1791, he had Edward’s apartments searched by a Peace Officer named McManus. Edward and Fanny’s letters have not survived. Edward subsequently went to work in the household of Colonel Popham.

Frances ‘Fanny’ Wilmot (*née* Sainthill) (b. c.1759) was the daughter of Samuel and Jemima Sainthill (*née* Scott). She married John Wilmot on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1776 while still a minor. John was a Member of Parliament, Master in Chancery and Commissioner of American Claims. They lived in Bedford Row, Holborn, and also had a country house in Wandsworth, Surrey. The couple had six children together, including one son and five daughters, the youngest of whom was five years old at the time of the trial in 1792. Their household included nine domestic servants: a butler, coachman,

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<sup>16</sup> See *ODNB*.

footman, under-footman, lady's maid, housekeeper, nursery maid, house maid and kitchen maid. The lady's maid Elizabeth Barnes, butler William Garthwaite, coachman William Tapscott, nursery maid Ann Wisdom, house maid Ann Frazer, kitchen maid Jane Smith and footmen Henry Hudson and Samuel Clough all testified against Fanny at the trial. Her adultery was exposed by her husband on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1791 when he confronted her at Edward's lodgings and forbade her from returning home. Edward's divorce case was first brought in the Consistory Court of London, from which an appeal was made to the Court of Arches, and a Sentence of Divorce was obtained.

**Reverend Charles Powlett** (1764-1834) of Hackwood, Hampshire

**Anne Temple** (1772-1827) of St. Gluvias, Cornwall

Charles Powlett was the son of Elizabeth Powlett and Lieutenant Percy Powlett, the second illegitimate son of Charles Powlett, third Duke of Bolton (1685-1754) and Lavinia Fenton (1708-60). Charles was educated at Charterhouse and Westminster school followed by Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1789 he became Rector of Winslade, Hampshire. After his father's death Charles was largely reliant upon his uncle (also Charles Powlett), who threatened to withdraw his allowance of £40 per year if he pursued his relationship with Anne Temple. In 1790 Charles was appointed Chaplain to the Prince of Wales, attending prestigious balls, dinners and social events. In 1794 Lord Stanwell presented him with 'two Livings' which granted him financial independence from his Uncle. Charles was acquainted with the Austen family, and is reputed to have been one of the suitors of Jane Austen in 1796. Charles married Anne on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1796.

Anne Temple was the daughter of Reverend William Johnston Temple. William was previously chaplain to Bishop Heppel, raising a 'good & respectable' family and promising to settle £2,000 upon Anne when she married. He also held the Great Living of St. Gluvias, while raising seven children.<sup>17</sup> The family were friends with James Boswell, who stayed with them at St. Gluvias in 1792. Anne offended Charles' uncle in her first letter to him in 1794 by failing to address him with due civility, forcing Charles to write a letter of apology for the offence she had caused. Her father also begged her to end their engagement and declare herself free. After

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<sup>17</sup> Powlett to his mother, August 27<sup>th</sup> 1790, 72M92/6/2, HRO.

their marriage in 1796, Anne and Charles moved to a new home in Dummer, Hampshire in 1800. They had nine children together; Anne Elizabeth (b. 1797), Caroline (b. 1800), James Gunman (b. 1801), Percy William (1802-66), Frances Horatia (b. 1803), Mary Laura (b. 1805), Katherine Octavia (b. 1806), Charles Armand and Frederick Armand (b. 1811).

**General Charles O'Hara** (c. 1740-1802) of Westminster, London

**Mary Berry** (1763-1852) of Kirkbridge, North Yorkshire

Charles O'Hara was an illegitimate son of James O'Hara, second Lord Tyrawley. He was educated at Westminster School, leaving in 1752 when he was appointed to a Cornetcy in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoons. In 1756 he became a Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards, fighting in Germany (1759) and Portugal (1762) before being taken prisoner in America. Charles was the British officer who formally surrendered to George Washington in 1781. After his release he travelled to Italy in 1783, meeting Mary Berry and her family on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1784. They became engaged in 1795, keeping their relationship a secret from everyone but Mary's friend Anne Damer. However Mary refused to marry Charles before he left England, leading Charles to break off the engagement in 1796 before moving to Gibraltar.

Mary Berry was the daughter of Lord Orford, and was born at Kirkbridge Stanwick, North Yorkshire on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1763. Aged six she was put under the care of a governess at College House in Chiswick, who left to get married in 1775. She enjoyed a brief romance in 1779, but the connection was later dropped. After long periods touring the Continent with her father and sister Agnes she returned to live at Little Strawberry Hill in 1791. She first met Charles O'Hara in 1784 when she was twenty-one and he was forty-four. Mary later became an author, penning the comedy *Fashionable Friends* (1844) and editing the *Works of Horace Walpole* (1798). Surviving likenesses include a miniature by George Engleheart in the Pierpont Morgan Collection, an engraving from *Town and Country Magazine*, and a likeness aged eighty-six, reproduced in *The Berry Papers*, Frontispiece, pp. 286, 438.

**Admiral Horatio Nelson** (1758-1805)**Lady Emma Hamilton** (1765-1815) of Naples

Horatio Nelson was the son of Reverend Edmund Nelson (1722-1802) and his wife Catherine (1725-67). He first went to sea age thirteen during the Falklands Islands crisis in 1771, before passing his examination to become a Lieutenant in 1777. He was promoted to Captain in 1779, marrying the widow Frances (Fanny) Nisbet (*née* Woolward) in 1787, who was the daughter of a judge and kept house for a planter on the Caribbean island of Nevis. He had several mistresses before meeting Lady Emma Hamilton in Naples in 1793, and beginning their affair in 1798. After entering into a *ménage à trois* with the Hamiltons he left his wife in 1800, and his illegitimate daughter Horatia was born in 1801. After becoming Rear-Admiral in 1797, Nelson received a baronetcy in 1787, and made Vice-Admiral and later Viscount in 1801. Surviving likenesses include paintings by Guy Head (1798-9), Sir William Beechey (1800) and John Hoppner (1802) plus caricatures by James Gillray.

Emma Hamilton was the daughter of the blacksmith Henry Lyon and his wife Mary (*née* Kidd). She found work as a nursemaid and housemaid in London, and was rumoured to have been one of the scantily-dressed attendants of Dr James Graham's 'celestial bed.' She became the mistress of Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh in 1781, having a daughter named 'Little Emma' the following year. She was briefly the mistress of Charles Francis Greville, before becoming the mistress of his uncle Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803) in 1786. She married him in 1791, before his death in 1803. Emma gave birth to twins in 1801, of which Horatia was the only survivor. She may have had a third child in 1803-4 who died shortly after birth. Despite the generous provisions of Nelson's will she ran up large debts and was consigned to debtor's prison in 1813, but was allowed to live nearby on parole with her daughter. She escaped to Calais in 1814 before her death the following year. Emma was depicted in innumerable guises by George Romney (1782-91), Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun (*c.* 1790-2), Sir Thomas Lawrence (1791) and Angelica Kauffmann (1791).



**Sir Gilbert Stirling** (c. 1779-1843) of Glasgow

**Anne Louisa Dalling** (c. 1784-1853) of Harley Street, London

Sir Gilbert Stirling was the eldest son of Sir James Stirling, Baronet (c. 1740-1805), Lord Provost and Mayor of Edinburgh and his wife (*née* Mansfield). Gilbert may have met Anne Louisa Dalling while his father worked as a clerk in the West Indies, and was possibly secretary to Anne's father.<sup>18</sup> Gilbert courted Anne for two years between 1803 and 1805, jilting her hours before their wedding. He was a Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards and succeeded his father as second Baronet in 1805. Newspaper reports chronicled his attendance at balls in Bath, portraying him as an eligible young bachelor. He died unmarried in 1843.

Anne was the daughter of Sir John Dalling, first Baronet (c. 1731-98), Governor of Jamaica and Commander in Chief at Madras. After his death in 1798, her brother William Windham Dalling (1775-1864) became the head of the family, overseeing the end of Anne's relationship with Sir Gilbert Stirling. Unfortunately her letters have not survived. She later married General Robert Meade (1772-1852) on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1807, who became Lieutenant Governor of the Cape of Good Hope. Robert was the second son of John Meade, first Earl Clanwilliam and the heiress Theodosia Meade (*née* Magill). The couple had ten children together: Robert (b. 1809), John (b. 1812), Adelaide (b. 1818), Catherine (m. 1836), Anne (m. 1833), Theodosia (b. 1811), Rose (b. 1819), Louisa, Edine and Caroline.

**Francis Cobb** (1759-1831) of Margate, Kent

**Charlotte Mary Curwen** (d. 1823) of Fenstanton, Huntingdonshire

Francis Cobb was the only son of Elizabeth Cobb and Francis Cobb Sr (1727-1802). He was educated at Ashford Grammar School, after which he was sent to Holland for a mercantile education.<sup>19</sup> His father was known as the 'King of Margate' from his work in brewing, banking, shipping, and insurance. Both men served as the Deputy Mayor of Margate, with the first family brewery constructed in 1760 and second in 1808.<sup>20</sup> Before he met Charlotte, Francis had been married twice before. He first

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<sup>18</sup> See *ODNB*.

<sup>19</sup> Cobb, *Memoir*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Lesley Richmond and Alison Turton, *The Brewing Industry: a Guide to Historical Records* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 106-7.

married Elizabeth Chippendale on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1786, who died six days after giving birth to their son Francis William Cobb (1787-1871) on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1787.<sup>21</sup> His second son believed the loss made his father turn to the scriptures for solace.<sup>22</sup> His second marriage was to Mary Blackburn (1773-1802) on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1794. She bore him a daughter, Elizabeth (d. 1803) and three sons, William Francis Cobb (1795-1862), Thomas Francis Cobb (1797-1882) and John Francis Cobb (1800-86). Unfortunately he was widowed again on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1802. His earliest letters to Charlotte Mary Curwen were written in 1805, where he described how their courtship began ‘some years back.’<sup>23</sup>

Charlotte Mary Curwen was the daughter of Ann Curwen and a Baptist Minister at Fenstanton, but was raised largely by her Aunt Barber. Before her marriage to Francis Cobb she was baptised into the Church of England in 1804. Charlotte became Francis’ third wife on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1805, and step-mother to his five children. The couple had three further children together, Charlotte Mary (1806-58), Mary Charlotte (1808-79), and Henry, who died in infancy on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1811. Charlotte died of a paralytic stroke on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1823.

**Richard Law** of Marylebone, London

**Jane Townley** (1761-1825) of Marylebone, London

Richard Law worked as a serge-maker and flax-dresser in Exeter, subsequently moving to Marylebone.<sup>24</sup> In January 1803 he acted as a ‘judge’ during the ‘trial’ of the prophetess Joanna Southcott (1750-1814). The same year, Law sent a letter to Prime Minister Addington demanding the release of the jailed prophet Richard Brothers (c. 1757-1824), advising him to read Southcott’s prophecies. He first met Jane Townley through their shared connection with Joanna, with their relationship beginning c. 1807. He continually pressed Jane for money, claiming that she had promised to provide for him. It is possible that the intensity of their relationship was significantly exaggerated by Richard in order to extort money from Jane. However

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<sup>21</sup> Zechariah Cozens, *A tour through the Isle of Thanet, and some other parts of east Kent* (London, 1793), p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Cobb, *Memoir*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> Cobb to Curwen, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1805, EK/U1453/C287/5, EKAC.

<sup>24</sup> Frances Brown, *Joanna Southcott: The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 132, 232.

his vitriol remained undimmed as he continued to write venomous epistles to her for over a decade after their relationship began.

Jane Townley was the fourth child of Colonel Richard Townley, High Sheriff of Lancashire (d. 1802) and his first wife Ann (*née* Western) (d. 1761). Jane was an invalid for much of her adult life, until the treatments of Doctor Moseley from 1798 restored her to health. She first read the books of Joanna Southcott in 1803, subsequently becoming one of her key companions, patrons and disciples. Joanna joined Jane's household in 1804, with Jane's servant Ann Underwood becoming her amanuensis.<sup>25</sup> Jane was the guardian of Joanna's famous unopened 'box of prophecies' from c. 1816 until her death in 1825, and was a woman of considerable means, with Richard speculating that she had at least £700 per year. She lived in Weston Place, opposite the smallpox hospital in Marylebone. Unfortunately her letters to Richard have not survived; it is possible that she never replied to him, with Richard complaining of her silence in 1817.

**Sir Robert Garrett** (1794-1869) of the Isle of Thanet, Kent

**Charlotte Bentinck** (1789-1819) of Kent

Robert Garrett was the son of John Garrett, Esq. of Ellington and Elizabeth Garrett (*née* Gore). He was educated at Harrow School, joining the army by purchase in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queen's foot on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1811. He courted Charlotte Bentinck between 1811 and 1814. Robert was promoted to a Lieutenancy in the 2<sup>nd</sup> garrison battalion on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1813, transferring to the 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers, where he served in the campaigns of 1813-14. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1814 he became Captain by purchase in the 97<sup>th</sup> Queen's Own.<sup>26</sup> He married Charlotte at St George's Church in Hanover Square on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1814 without the prior knowledge of his family, who disapproved of their disparity in rank.<sup>27</sup> Charlotte sadly died five years later, and Robert married the widow Louisa Devaynes, of Updown near Margate, in 1821. Their son Algernon Robert was born in 1825, and also entered the army. Robert was made a Knight Commander of the Order of Bath in 1857, and Knight of the Royal Guelphic Order in 1863.

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<sup>25</sup> See *ODNB*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> R/U888/C14, p. 117, EKAC.

Charlotte Georgina Sophia Cavendish-Bentinck was the daughter of Lord Edward Bentinck (1744-1819) and Elizabeth Cumberland (d. 1837), and granddaughter of William Bentinck, second Duke of Portland (1709-62). She was a close relative of the Duke of Devonshire, who sent her tickets for his box at the opera in 1814, also corresponding with the Earl of Clarendon and Marquis of Waterford between 1811 and 1817. Her parents purportedly encouraged her courtship with Robert Garrett as they had squandered their fortune and were largely reliant upon the goodwill of Lord Bentinck's brother the third Duke of Portland. Charlotte's letters to Robert have not survived. She died almost one month after her father on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1819 from the effects of a fall caused by Robert's dog 'Moreau.'<sup>28</sup>

**William Pratt** (b. 1783?) of Kegworth, Leicestershire

'B.F' of Lincoln

William Pratt engaged in an adulterous affair with 'B.F' between 1814 and 1816. Unfortunately his letters have not survived. Although his social and family background are difficult to ascertain, he may be the William Pratt of Kegworth (b. 1783) who practised as an ironmaster, and was married to Mary Pratt (*née* Elston) during the period in question.<sup>29</sup>

'B.F' was a housekeeper at a Lincoln boarding school, and was trapped in an unhappy marriage. She engaged in an adulterous affair with William Pratt between 1814 and 1816. Little is known of her husband or family.

**John Keats** (1795-1821) of Hampstead, London

**Fanny Brawne** (1800-65) of Kentish Town, and Hampstead, London

John Keats was the son of Thomas and Francis Keats (*née* Jennings), living with his parents until his father's death in April 1804. His mother remarried William Rawlings the same year, and John went to live with his maternal grandmother in Edmonton, where his mother returned in 1808 after her marriage broke down. In 1810 he was apprenticed to his guardian Richard Abbey's counting house, enrolling as a student at Guy's Hospital in 1815, and qualifying the following year. He courted

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> See attested copy receipt of William Pratt of Kegworth, 1813, DD/FM/2/3, Nottinghamshire Archives.

Fanny Brawne between 1819 and 1821, beginning when his *Endymion* had just been published. He wrote the sonnet 'Bright Star' for Fanny in 1819, and died of tuberculosis aged twenty-five in 1821.<sup>30</sup> Their relationship remained a secret until Fanny's son Herbert sold their love letters at auction, and they were published by Harry Buxton-Forman in 1878. There are countless images of Keats, including portraits by Benjamin Robert Haydon (1816), Charles Brown (1819) and Joseph Severn (1816-21).

Fanny Brawne was the daughter of Samuel and Frances Brawne, and met John Keats through Charles Brown's neighbours the Dilke family. After his brother Tom died in December 1818, John moved in with Charles. The Dilkes' then rented their half of Wentworth Place to the Brawne family, and Fanny and John became neighbours. While John struggled for mental and monetary security, Fanny had never been burdened with financial troubles, as her grandfather died when she was nine, leaving a considerable sum to her mother.<sup>31</sup> Fanny last saw him on his ill-fated trip to Rome in an attempt to improve his health, but he died within four months of arrival. Unfortunately her letters to John have not survived. She married Louis Lindon, Esq. twelve years after his death in 1833, and had three children, Edmund, Herbert and Margaret Lindon. A miniature portrait survives of Fanny by an unknown artist from c. 1833.

**John William Robert Kerr, Earl of Ancram** (1794-1841)

**Lady Elizabeth Grey** (1798-1880) of Howick Hall, Northumberland

John William Robert Kerr was the eldest son of William Kerr, sixth Marquess of Lothian (1763-1824) and his first wife Lady Harriet, daughter of John Hobart, second Earl of Buckinghamshire. He was Lord Newbottle from 1794 until 1815, becoming Earl of Ancram in 1815 when his father became a Marquess. He entered the House of Commons in 1820 as a Member of Parliament for Huntingdon, marrying Lady Cecil Chetwynd-Talbot in 1831, and having seven children together. He became a member of the Privy Council in 1841, and was appointed Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard under Sir Robert Peel.

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<sup>30</sup> Further works written during their relationship include *Ode on Indolence*, *Ode to Psyche*, *Lamia*, *Otho the Great* and *To Autumn* (1819).

<sup>31</sup> OE Madden (ed.) *The Love Letters of John Keats* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 2-3.

Lady Elizabeth Grey was the second daughter of Mary Elizabeth Grey, Countess Grey (*née* Ponsonby) (1776-1861) and Charles Grey, second Earl Grey (1764-1845). She was the niece of Elizabeth Whitbread (1765-1848) (*née* Grey), studied above. Her letters to John Kerr have not survived. Elizabeth married the Sherriff and MP John Crocker Bulteel (1794-1843) in 1826 and they had three children together, Mary Elizabeth (d. 1916), John (1827-1897) and Louisa Emily Charlotte (1839-1892). Surviving likenesses include an engraving by Henry Bryan Hall after William Say in the National Portrait Gallery (1841).

### Appendix Three

#### Breach of Promise Cases in the Common Law Courts 1730 to 1830

This Appendix charts every record for ‘breach of promise’ and ‘breach of contract’ in the British Newspaper Database at the British Library and Times Digital Archive between 1730 and 1816, plus three pamphlets reproducing cases in full from Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. Due to the sheer volume of cases reported after 1817, it uses the first article of every year in the *Morning Post* between 1817 and 1830. This newspaper was selected as it was published daily, had a wide circulation, and contained a large number of detailed assize reports.

Cases reported in brief without sufficient detail have been deliberately discounted, as well as plaintiffs asking for retrials and cases mentioned but not actually tried.<sup>1</sup> Cases tried in Scotland and Ireland have also been discounted. I have endeavoured to reproduce the original language of newspaper reports wherever possible, in order to retain important nuances in the language of ‘sorts.’ Where information is not available in newspaper reports, boxes have been left blank. Additional reports are continually being digitised by the British Library; new cases were added for the final time on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

	<u>Case</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Court(s)</u>	<u>Sex of Plaintiff</u>	<u>Age of Plaintiff During Trial</u>	<u>Occupation / Social Status of Plaintiff</u>	<u>Age of Defendant During Trial</u>	<u>Occupation / Social Status of Defendant</u>	<u>Verdict</u>	<u>Damages</u>	<u>Objects Used as Evidence</u>	<u>Source(s)</u>
1	<i>Holt vs. Ward, Esq.</i>	Feb 1730	CKB	F	‘Young’	‘Had not a competent fortune’		‘Squire’ / Gentleman of ‘plentiful fortune’	P	2,000 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	Plt

<sup>1</sup> For example see *World* on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1792, Issue 1798; ‘An action is to be tried next term, for a breach of promise of marriage: the Plaintiff is a widow, and means to produce, as an evidence of the promise, a letter which she received from the Defendant *nine days* before the death of her husband.’

2	<i>Higgs vs. [?]</i>	July 1774	CCP	F				Brewer's clerk	P	100 l.		LC
3	<i>Schreiber vs. Frazer</i>	July 1780	CKB	M		'very respectable wealthy Merchant'		Widow of the late General Frazer, worth £24,000+	P	600 l. with costs	House, horses, carriages & suit of livery bought	LEP
4		Jan 1787		M		Lieutenant of Marines		Widowed French Countess worth £16,00 exclusive of property				WFA
5		March 1787	EA	F	'Young'	Young woman abandoned while pregnant		Gentleman of property	P			WFA
6	<i>Chapman vs. Shaw, Esq.</i>	May 1790	CKB	F	'Young Lovers'	'very respectable family'	'Young Lovers'	'very respectable parents', Attorney at Law	P <sup>2</sup>	20 l.		Plt/W/WEP/T
7	<i>Brown vs. Arnold</i>	Aug 1790		F	Nearly 40 – 'old maid'	Maiden lady who ran a lodging house	Just turned 21	Lived in Miss Brown's lodging house at her expense for 15 months	D		Love letter & 'preliminary articles' for marriage	LC/WE P

<sup>2</sup> While the full report of the case in *The Times* recorded a verdict for the plaintiff of £20, adverts for a pamphlet of the case four months later mistakenly reported a verdict for the defendant. See *Times*, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1790, 1689, TDA, *World*, September 24<sup>th</sup> and October 30<sup>th</sup> 1790, 1163, 1194 and *Whitehall Evening Post*, September 25<sup>th</sup> 1790, 6545.



8	<i>Smith vs. Taylor</i>	June 1791	CKB	F	c. 43 (came to London aged 40)	Domestic servant, farmer's daughter & distant relative of celebrated mathematical instrument maker	c. 30	Young mechanic who had recently acquired a business from a brasier & tinman	P	50 l.		W/O
9	<i>Hagen [or Hayden] vs. Walker</i>	Dec 1791	CKB	F	c. 30	Quaker 'of undoubted credit and character' who kept a boarding house	c. 50	Methodist earning 250-300l. p/a	P	50 l.		T/W
10	<i>Palmer vs. Barnard, Esq.</i>	Dec 1792	GH	F	23	Tradesman's daughter	29	Banker's son	P	1,000 l.		Plt
11	<i>Davis vs. Saunders</i>	Jan 1792	CCP	F	c. 28	Educated farmer's daughter working as a milliner & mantuamaker		'Widower of some property'	P	100 l.	Love letters	DWR
12	<i>Williams vs. Harding</i>	March 1793		F	'Young'	Milliner of 'exemplary character for prudence, virtue and industry'	'Very young'	Tradesman in the city	P	50 l.	Large settlement declined by woman	TB
13	<i>Sands vs. Sayer and Wife</i>	May 1793	CKB	M		Respectable man who 'was bred up a planner and layer out of gardens and pleasure grounds'	22	Niece of eminent coachmaker who had left her a 'considerable fortune'	JW	Parties paid their own costs	Love letters	T/LC

14	<i>Harris vs. Williamson</i>	May 1793	CKB	F	20	Mantuamaker			P	200 <i>l.</i>		Sun
15	<i>Simpson vs. Burton</i>	Sept 1793	GA	F		Daughter of a 'respectable shopkeeper'		Army Lieutenant	N		Love letters	W
16	<i>Watts vs. Johnson</i>	Nov 1793	CKB	F	<i>c.</i> 25	Milliner and mantuamaker	<i>c.</i> 40	Master of a haberdashery business who suffered occasional fits of insanity	P	20 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MC/PA
17	<i>Marcom vs. Edgar</i>	Aug 1794	NA	F		Independent fortune of £5,000		Apothecary and surgeon	P	500 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	OPA
18	<i>Guy vs. Harlington</i>	Oct 1794		F		'not a lady of strict chastity'			P	30 <i>l.</i>		OPA
19	<i>Murray vs. Gale, Esq.</i>	Dec 1794	CKB	F	Under 18 – 'infant'	Daughter of noble Lady & Baronet		Gentleman of 'very large fortune'	D		Mother gave him picture of her daughter	LPEP / Sun

20	<i>Taylor vs. Norton</i>	Dec 1794	CCP	F	<i>Fifteen years older than D</i>	'not a lady distinguished for her chastity'			D			CEG
21	<i>Brown vs. Harding</i>	June 1795	CCP	F		Widow of 'exemplary prudence'	Younger than P	Propertied tradesman	P	20 l.	'Preliminaries'	GEP/Sun
22	<i>Jones vs. Gordon</i>	July 1796	CCP	F	'Young'	Young woman 'of virtue and correct demeanour'		Tradesman 'of some eminence' with a father 'of considerable property'	P	50 l.	Love letters	TB / WEP / OPA
23	<i>Atcheson vs. Baker</i>	1796 & 1797 (R)	CKB	M	70-2 (R)	Respectable button-manufacturer earning £300p/a, retired expecting marriage	60-2 (R)	Wealthy widow worth £24,000	N / P (R)	4,000 l. <sup>3</sup>		TB/WE P/EM / Tel
24	<i>Tawes vs. Jones</i>	March 1796	CCP	F			'Young'	'Gentleman of fortune'	N			OPA / Sun

<sup>3</sup> Later reports reveal that these damages were never paid, as discussed in Chapter 7, note 110, p. 254.

25	<i>Heyward vs. Arnold</i>	May 1796	CCP	F	c. 40	Woman of 'levity of conduct'	c. 22		N			Sun
26	<i>Jones vs. Gordon</i>	July 1796	CCP	F	'Young'			Tradesman 'of some eminence' whose father had 'considerable property'	P	50 l.	Love letters	OPA
27	<i>Tyley vs. Deerhurst</i>	Sept 1796	EA	M	'Young'	Man of 'respectable family and connections' and a 'polished life'		Woman with 'equally respectable' connections	N			OPA
28	<i>Bennet vs. Handcocks</i>	Nov 1796	CCP	M	Over 40	'Respectable tradesman's son'	22		D		Love letters	Sun
29	<i>Bond vs. Oliver</i>	Dec 1798	CKB	M			Nearly 70	Lady	S			TB

30	<i>Belchier vs. Thompson</i>	May 1799	CKB	F	Young	Daughter of a deceased gentleman who was an Officer in the Navy, and widow who took the <i>City of London</i> inn in Dover		Son of a wine merchant who owned his own business as a 'Wine-merchant and Woolstapler' and was in 'a great way of business'	P	400 <i>l.</i>	Love Letters	ODA / SJC
31	<i>Wilson vs. Powditch</i>	Dec 1799	CCP	F				'Captain of a Ship trading to the Baltic Seas' who had 'failed in trade' so was worth no more than £600	P	500 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	ODA
32	<i>Harris vs. Surry</i>	April 1800	CA	F		Schoolmistress			P	20 <i>l.</i>		MPG
33	<i>Jones vs. Brock Wood, Esq.</i>	Aug 1800	NPC	F					P	1,000 <i>l.</i>		LPEP
34	<i>Shaw[e] vs. Baker<sup>4</sup></i>	Aug 1800	SRA	M	<i>c.</i> 30	Managing Clerk of distillery earning 200 <i>l.</i> per year. 'Middling but decent and respectable rank of life'	68 (MPG) more than <i>seventy</i> (ODA)	'widow Lady of very considerable property' with fortune nearing 30,000 <i>l.</i> (MPG), 'more than 30,000' (ODA)	D		Draft marriage settlement	MPG / ODA / MC

<sup>4</sup> This was the second case brought against Mrs. Baker, after *Atcheson vs. Baker* three years earlier.

35	<i>Fowkes vs. Selway</i>	Dec 1800	CKB	M	'maturer age' than usual	Widow who had 'lived in trade', kept a shop and lodgers	'mature r age' than usual	Widower who had 'been in trade' but was 'comfortable'	D			Sun
36	<i>Prothero vs. Evans / Jones</i>	Jan 1801	CKB	F	28		60 (MPG) 60-70 (BG)	Methodist preacher, publican and farmer	P	50 l.	Love letters	MPG / BG
37	<i>Vaughan vs. Aldridge</i>	June 1801	CCP	F	50		75	Lived on his income independent of trade, but now confined in an asylum	P	10 l.	Love letters & 'other evidence'	MP
38	<i>Andrews vs. Morrison</i>	Dec 1801	CKB	F		Daughter of a deceased tradesman		Respectable tradesman worth 150 l. per year independent of his business	P	200 l.	Wedding ring, license & furniture	MC / MPG
39	<i>Forster vs. Mellish</i>	Feb 1802	CKB	M	c. 27	Respectable gentleman 'in the medical line' with an income of 800-900 l. per year	'Young'	Daughter of 'a person of considerable property' with a fortune of 13,900 l.	P	200 l.	Love letters, house & 'marriage clothes'	MPG / MC
40	<i>Hand vs. Kisten</i>	July 1802	CCP	F	37	Sister of a 'respectable tradesman'	'might almost be her son'	Apprentice to P's brother	P	100 l.	Love letters	MC

41	<i>Storey vs. Eagle</i>	Aug 1802	YA	F		Humble maidservant		Humble hostler, becoming an innkeeper worth 600 <i>l.</i>	P	50 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MPG
42	<i>Graves vs. Innocent</i>	Feb 1803	CKB	F		Daughter of a 'very respectable tradesman'		Goldsmith, jeweller & dealer in curiosities	P	100 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MP
43	<i>Leeds vs. Cook[e] and Wife</i>	March 1803	CKB	M	'Young'	'young Gentleman of considerable property'	'Young'	Daughter of a 'Gentleman of landed property'	P	1 <i>s.</i>	Letters sent after desertion	MP
44	<i>Martin vs. Jeffery</i>	March 1803	DCA	F		'Servant girl'		Tanner	P	80 <i>l.</i>		IJ
45	<i>Hunt vs. Smith</i>	July 1804	KA	F	c. 35	A 'decent woman keeping a small shop' (a grocer's & chandler's)	c. 35	Stone-cutter who kept two shops	P	10 <i>l.</i>		T/MC
46	<i>Greenwood vs. Bradshaw</i>	Aug 1804	LNA	F		'humble station'		'humble station' with only £100 and a house	P	80 <i>l.</i>		MP
47	<i>Forster vs. Hoblin</i>	March 1805	WA	F		Daughter of a 'respectable farmer' deserted while pregnant		Farmer in same county 'considered a man of substance'	P	400 <i>l.</i>		T/MP

48	<i>Montgomery vs. Evans</i>	Aug 1805	WXA	M		Reverend		Niece of Admiral Sir Peter Parker	S	Defendant paid costs plus 100 l.	Love letters	T /MP
49	<i>Balls vs. Gardener</i>	Aug 1806	NPC S	F				Miller, maltster and brickmaker	P	300 l.	Love letters	BNP
50	<i>Forrester vs. Lyons</i>	July 1808	CCP	F		Farmer's daughter		Master baker	S	50 l. with costs & maintenance for child		MP
51	<i>Howells vs. Charles</i>	Dec 1808	CKB	F		Farmer's daughter		Farmer and timber merchant with estate worth 100 l. per year	P	150 l.		MC
52	<i>Corham vs. Bulteel (née Pinson)</i>	April 1809	EA	M		Ensign in the Devonshire militia			P	400 l.	Love letters	BNP



53	<i>Hulme vs. Warbrick</i>	Aug 1809	LNA	F	'Young'	Woman of 'great personal attraction' who ran a confectioners shop		Had previously been 'in trade', but Miss Hulme helped purchase a commission in the Dragoons	AR		Love letters	T / LG
54	<i>Millis vs. Flower</i>	March 1810	CKB	F		Daughter of a 'respectable ribbon manufacturer'	'Old fool'	Wholesale ribbon merchant & manufacturer 'in a respectable situation in life'	P	500 l.	Love letters	MP / IJ / YH / BNP
55	<i>Blankney vs. Temps</i>	July 1810	CKB	F	18-19	Woman with 'wandering inclinations' and a 'love of pleasure'		In 'a very comfortable situation in life as an art engraver'	JW	Each side paid their own costs	Love letters	MP
56	<i>Bishop vs. Robinson</i>	Aug 1810	CKB	F	'Young'	'Young Lady of respectable family and connections' with a 'small fortune'	'Young'	A 'merchant of London, and a man of great opulence, having therefore ample means to pay any damages'	P	5,000 l.	Love letters	MP / HP / BNP
57	<i>Archer vs. Hinch</i>	March 1812	BA	F	23	'the daughter of an Attorney'	23	'Young man of credit' / 'Person of respectability'	S			T / LM

58	<i>Sherriff vs. Godbold</i>	Dec 1812	CKB	F	30 (BNP) 30-40 (MC & OJ)	Captain's widow	c. 50 (MC & BNP) 50-60 (OJ)	Gentleman of 'considerable property', proprietor of 'Vegetable Balsam'	P	40 s.	Love letters	MC / BNP / OJ
59	<i>Chamberlain vs. Williamson, Esq</i>	Sept 1813	GA	. <sup>5</sup>		Overseer of the poor house – daughter ran a 'little school'	'Considerably older' than her	'ample fortune' from trade	P	200 l.	Love letters	MP
60	<i>Barr[y] vs. Dixon</i>	Dec 1813	CKB	F	Young Lady	Orphan of 'moderate fortune, but of very good connection'		Coal merchant making 400 l. p/a	P	300 l.	Marriage license & plate given as wedding present	T / MP
61	<i>O'Neil vs. Evans, Clerk and Wife</i>	March 1814	OA	M		Drawing master	Relationship began when she was underage	Daughter of J. Ireland, Esq.	P	1 f.	Love letters	IJ

<sup>5</sup> This was the first example of a case brought by the father of a disappointed woman, as noted in Chapter 7, pp. 239-40.

62	<i>Pilgrim vs. Weston</i>	March 1814	TA	F	c. 17-18	Servant		Bailiff	P	150 l.		BNP
63	<i>Page vs. Mont</i>	July 1815	HA	F	'Young' but 'considerably older' than D	'Daughter of an Innkeeper'	Under 18 when married in 1810	grocer and cheesemonger	P	500 l.	Love letters	MC
64	<i>Badeley vs. Mortlock</i>	Feb 1816	CCP	M	Over 40	Attorney	Over 40		P	1 s.		BNP / EFP
65	<i>Long vs. Peyton</i>	June 1816	CKB	F		Widow 'of considerable attraction'		Son of Admiral Peyton, holding a Lieutenant's commission in the Navy	P	300 g.		E / BNP / RCG
66	<i>Lancey vs. Hunter, Esq.</i>	June 1816	CKB	F		Daughter of a Mathematical Professor at Greenwich Hospital School and Governess to the defendant's daughters	51-2	'a widower, and a Gentleman of considerable fortune'	P	1,500 l.	Love letters	BNP / YH / HP

67	<i>Matchiff / Mathers vs. Dixie / Dixey</i>	Aug 1816	DA	F		Sister of a grocer	17-18 during courtship	Apprentice surgeon and apothecary, becoming a baronet before trial with a 'not large' fortune	P	1,500 <i>l.</i>		MP / BNP
68	<i>Evans vs. Jones</i>	May 1817	CKB	F		Daughter of Excise Collector	c. 27	Labourer in lead mine who unexpectedly came into property	P	1,000 <i>l.</i>		MP
69	<i>Shannon vs. Brandon</i>	June 1818	CCP	F	Young Jewish Lady			Jewish merchant in Goodman's Fields	P	500 <i>l.</i>	Letters	MP
70	<i>Bourdernelle vs. Bamfyld</i>	July 1819	CCP	F		Respectable foreigner		Gentleman / army surgeon	P	100 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MP
71	<i>Beattie vs. Pearson</i>	Sept 1820	LNA	F		Widow		Silk manufacturer	P	5,000 <i>l.</i>		MP / EFP
72	<i>Vaile vs. Vandyk</i>	Feb 1821	CKB	F	18	'Middle rank'	25	'Middle rank'	P	100 <i>l.</i>		MP

73	<i>King vs. Chance</i>	April 1822	NPC G	F	32	Fancy dress-maker & respectable manufacturer's daughter		Gentleman of fortune w/ accomplished manners. Ex-army Lieutenant	P	800 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MP
74	<i>Ester vs. Hiatt</i>	Jan 1823	CKB	F	40	Daughter of a brewery clerk	36	American possessing large property	P	980 <i>l.</i>		MP
75	<i>Rabbitts vs. West</i>	April 1824	SMA	F	30-40	Humble farmer's daughter	<i>c.</i> 70	Farmer of considerable property	P	200 <i>l.</i>		MP
76	<i>Horner vs. Wood</i>	Feb 1825	CKB	F					P	100 <i>l.</i>		MP
77	<i>Peake vs. Wedgwood</i>	March 1826	OCS	F		Gentleman's daughter		Man possessing large landed estate & collieries	P	1,500 <i>l.</i>		MP
78	<i>Levers vs. Faulkes</i>	March 1827	MCN	F	Nrly 35 by trial			Gentleman worth <i>c.</i> 15,000 <i>l.</i>	P	1,600 <i>l.</i>		MP

79	<i>Simpson vs. Timperon</i>	March 1828	NCC	F	'old'	'The station of life in which the parties moved was not very elevated; but it was respectable'	'old'	Butcher, farmer and 'man of considerable property' worth about 120 <i>l.</i> per year	P	350 <i>l.</i>		MP
80	<i>Foot vs. Ottway</i>	March 1829	SLA	F		One 'of four orphan daughters'	Under 18 in 1825	Coachmaker	P	100 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MP
81	<i>Cooper vs. Bunning</i>	Feb 1830	CCP	M	65	Widowed surgeon		Widow	P	140 <i>l.</i>	Love letters	MP

Key

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Court</u>						
BA	Bury Assizes	KA	Kent Assizes	NCC	Northern Circuit, Carlisle		
CA	Chelmsford Assizes	LA	Lewes Assizes	NCL	Northern Circuit, Liverpool		
CKB	Court of King's Bench	LEA	Leicestershire Assizes	NCN	Northern Circuit, Newcastle		
DA	Derby Assizes	LNA	Lancaster Assizes	NCY	Northern Circuit, York		
DCA	Dorchester Assizes	LSA	Liverpool Summer Assizes	OA	Oxford Assizes		
EA	Exeter Assizes	MNP	Bail Court, Middlesex Nisi Prius	OCS	Oxford Circuit, Stafford		
GA	Gloucester Assizes	MCN	Midland Circuit, Nottingham	PCC	Preston County Court		
GH	Guildhall	NA	Norwich Assizes	SMA	Somerset Assizes		
HA	Hertford Assizes	NPC	Nisi Prius Court	SHA	Shropshire Assizes		
HCK	Home Circuit, Kensington	NPCG	Nisi Prius Court, Gloucester	SLA	Salisbury Assizes		
		NPCS	Nisi Prius Court, Suffolk	SRA	Surrey Assizes		

STA	Stafford Assizes
TA	Thetford Assizes
WA	Warwick Assizes
WXA	Wexford Assizes
WCA	Winchester Assizes
WCC	Winchester Civil Court
YA	York Assizes

Abbreviation   Verdict

A	Adjourned
AR	Referred to arbitration
P	Rule for the Plaintiff
D	Rule for the Defendant
(R)	Retrial
N	Nonsuit
S	Settlement reached
JW	Juror Withdrawn

Abbreviation   Newspaper

BG	<i>E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor</i>
BNP	<i>The Bury and Norwich Post</i>
CEG	<i>Courier and Evening Gazette</i>
DWR	<i>Diary or Woodfall's Register</i>
E	<i>The Examiner</i>
EFP	<i>Trewman's Exeter Flying Post</i>
EM	<i>Evening Mail</i>
GEP	<i>General Evening Post</i>
HP	<i>The Hull Packet</i>
IJ	<i>The Ipswich Journal</i>
LC	<i>London Chronicle</i>
LEP	<i>Lloyd's Evening Post</i>
LG	<i>Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser</i>
LM	<i>Leeds Mercury</i>
LPEP	<i>London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post</i>

MC	<i>The Morning Chronicle</i>
MP	<i>The Morning Post</i>
MPG	<i>The Morning Post &amp; Gazetteer</i>
O	<i>Oracle</i>
ODA	<i>Oracle and Daily Advertiser</i>
OJ	<i>Jackson's Oxford Journal</i>
OPA	<i>Oracle and Public Advertiser</i>
PA	<i>Public Advertiser</i>
Plt	<i>Pamphlet</i>
RCG	<i>Royal Cornwall Gazette</i>
SJC	<i>Saint James's Chronicle</i>
Sun	<i>Sun</i>
T	<i>Times</i>
TB	<i>True Briton</i>
Tel	<i>Telegraph</i>
W	<i>World</i>
WEP	<i>Whitehall Evening Post</i>
WFA	<i>World &amp; Fashionable Advertiser</i>
YH	<i>The York Herald</i>

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