Women, Empiricism and Epistolarity, 1740-1810

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PhD

University of York

English

September 2019

Abstract

This thesis examines the surprising and striking relationship between the empirical way of knowing that dominated British epistemology and culture in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, and an epistolary form of writing. Natural philosophers employed the practices of observation, description and communication to garner authority in the knowledge they produced. I show how the rhetorical devices they used employed characteristics of the letter form. I trace this relationship in women's writing, proffering a new understanding of how eighteenth-century women writers conceived of, and contributed to, the production of knowledge. My methodology offers a new model for analysing epistolary writing. I examine how writers use 'epistolarity' – the formal characteristics of the letter such as direct address, paper exchange, and the text as a site of experiential expression – across poetry, prose, and visual and material media. The detachment of epistolary qualities from the letter itself opens critical avenues. It exposes how writers used epistolary qualities as a creative and deliberate choice across a range of genres, and shows the influence of letters – an extraordinarily ubiquitous form in the eighteenth century – on non-epistolary writing. I focus on moments in which female writers use epistolary characteristics in empirical observations and descriptions of artefacts, natural objects and people. I concentrate on the work of Elizabeth Montagu, Sarah Scott, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Joanna Baillie and the network surrounding Margaret Bentinck, the duchess of Portland at the Bulstrode estate. Each of these figures utilised the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity to produce knowledge and debate the methods of knowledge production. Although the nature of the knowledge that each writer was interested in varied according to her social, religious and creative context, the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity that they each pursue invites us to reconceptualise women's involvement in knowledge production in the mid-to-late eighteenth century.

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Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude goes to my PhD supervisor, Mary Fairclough, whose rigorous eye, patience, understanding, encouragement and careful questioning have given me confidence for intellectual exploration, a role model in teaching and research, and a project that I feel proud of. I feel very fortunate to have done my PhD at the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies at York and that its ethos is felt in the final project. I'm thankful to the staff at CECS, in particular Emma Major, Jon Mee, Gillian Russell, Hannah Greig, Catriona Kennedy and Chloe Wigston Smith for their generosity, expertise and passion. The CECS Postgraduate Forum has been a constant source of support, academic energy, and friendship; special thanks to Lilian Tabois, Harrie Neal, Jenny Buckley, and Alice Rhodes. I am grateful to Joanna Wharton for faith in my work from the beginning, and for encouraging me to pursue opportunities.

This work was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/L503848/1) through the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities. Parental support during my writing up year made completion possible. WRoCAH Large and Small Awards enabled me to conduct primary research visits and to present findings at conferences; I am grateful to the WRoCAH team, Caryn and Clare, for friendliness, helpfulness, and for running cohort events that enriched my time at York.

Library staff at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, J. B. Morrell and King's Manor Libraries in York, at Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham, at the Natural History Museum Library and Archives, and at the British Library have given assistance, wisdom and patience. Conference audiences, fellow delegates, and members of the wider academic community have been extremely formative in the development of my thinking, in particular at the Western Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Conference 2017, the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Conference 2017, Lines of Connection 2016,

the International Conference of the Aphra Behn Society 2016, and the lively programme of events at CECS. I'm especially grateful to Rose Pimentel and Nicole Pohl for sharing work and research material.

An International Placement Scheme Fellowship at the Huntington Library, California, made my research for chapter one possible, and ideas that informed the thesis as a whole. I was lucky to have wonderful academic and personal support from staff and colleagues at the Huntington, fellow eighteenth-century-ists at the University of California, Los Angeles, and from friends old and new, in particular Lori Rusch and Allie Brandt. A WRoCAH-funded Researcher Employability Project at the Royal Institution, London, pushed me beyond my comfort zone, and I'm grateful to Sharon Ruston, Frank James and, subsequently, Bruce Moran, for guidance and encouragement.

Wonderful friendships have carried me through this project. Thanks to Jeannie, Rachel, Emma, Cloud, Kapin, Hayley, Siân, Rosie, Spencer, Kerry and Noreen for brilliant chats, deep laughs, sound advice, and for keeping my feet on the ground. I am so grateful to each of you. Thanks to Colin for unwavering support despite my work-induced silences. Finally, I'm very grateful for the firm, enabling support of my family. Thanks, Dad, for, among everything else, sharing the academic journey with me, and thank you to three amazing women who never fail to inspire me, energise me, make me laugh, and make me learn: Mum, Bridget and Cecily.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. Some sections of 'Chapter Three: Linnaean Empiricism, Ephemeral Epistolarity and Botanical Knowledge at the Bulstrode Estate' are published in an earlier form as '"All the productions of *that nature*": Ephemera, Mycology and Sexual Classification at the Bulstrode Estate,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no 4 (December 2019), 519-39. Chapter four has been accepted for publication as '"And breathes a spirit through the finish'd whole": Empirical Detail and Epistolary Absence in Anna Barbauld's Poetic Epistemology," *European Romantic Review*, forthcoming 2020-21. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction: Women, Empiricism and Epistolarity, 1740-1810

In this thesis, I argue that there was a surprising and striking relationship between the empirical way of knowing that dominated British epistemology and culture in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, and an epistolary form of writing. The production of knowledge by empirical means depended on a particular rhetorical process: the sensorial observation of phenomena, representation through particular and circumstantial description, interpretation by induction, and communication. It was through this process that natural philosophers produced knowledge and that empirical knowledge garnered authority. My thesis takes as its premise the notion that this process depended on formal devices that were characteristic of familiar letters. This relationship between empiricism and 'epistolarity' – the textual and material characteristics of the letter form – was not exclusive to natural philosophical writing. As the case studies of my chapters will show, writers across a range of genres mobilised the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity to interrogate processes of knowledge production, and to produce other kinds of knowledge: sentimental, moral, religious and literary. I suggest that by tracing the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity in women's writing in particular, we stand to gain a new understanding of how eighteenth-century women writers conceived of, and contributed to, the production of knowledge, and of the creative and exciting ways in which they explored knowledge production and literary – specifically, epistolary – form.

My thesis also offers a new model for analysing epistolary writing. The sheer ubiquity of letters in eighteenth-century writing – in novels, magazines, pedagogical works, scientific publications, political writing, the verse epistle, and letters themselves – poses practical and categorical problems for researchers of letters and epistolary writing. I propose an approach centred on form. I examine how writers use epistolarity – which encompasses the formal characteristics of the letter such as direct address, the exchange of loose sheets of paper, and the text as a site of experiential expression – across a range of poetry, prose, and even visual and material media.

This approach offers a means of analysing the influence of letters on non-epistolary eighteenth-century literary and cultural productions. It allows us to see how diverse forms of writing employed epistolary devices differently, and how those forms influenced each other in dynamic and multi-directional ways. It also offers a way of appreciating writers' use of epistolary qualities as a deliberate creative choice in verse epistles, epistolary fiction, and letters themselves. The writers I study creatively employed epistolary characteristics across a range of writing, visual forms of representation, and material products, in order to examine and challenge empirical processes, and to pose new ways of conceiving of knowledge, its production, and its use.

This thesis is structured around moments in which female writers bring epistolary characteristics into contact with the empirical observation and description of artefacts, natural objects and people. I focus on the work of four key figures: Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) and Sarah Scott (1723-1795), in chapters one and two respectively, Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825), and Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) in chapters four and five. Chapter three, at the central point of the thesis, is a slightly longer study of how a network of individuals, connected to the estate of Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, the duchess of Portland (1715-1785), at Bulstrode, Buckinghamshire, used epistolarity in their empirical botanical practice. In each case, the individuals I study utilised the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity to comment on methods of knowledge production, and to produce knowledge which varied in nature according to their social, creative and religious contexts, and their creative interests. Montagu exploited the interpretive instabilities that she saw in an empirical way of knowing in her letters and in her salon to spark the production of knowledge by others in salon conversation. Scott was also concerned by instabilities in the empirical process, in particular its potential for deception. She used epistolarity in her fiction to minimise this problem, and to produce moral knowledge amongst her readers through their observation of exemplary characters. At the Bulstrode estate, the botanists encountered practical challenges to the empirical botanical theory of Carl

Linnaeus's (1707-1778) taxonomic system. They explored the process of the production of botanical knowledge across a range of ephemeral productions with epistolary characteristics, including letters, notes, herbaria and, in the case of Portland's companion Mary Delany (1700-1788), spectacular collages of flowers. Barbauld used epistolary elements in combination with intricate representations of particulars in her poetry to create a literary epistemology that instilled in her reader a devotional sense of the world around them. Baillie drew on the notion of connection that characterised the empirical medical work of her brother's practice as a physician, and sought ways to overcome the impeding materiality of the letter, to produce a moral epistemology that connected audience, character and author in her plays and theatre theory. In different ways, each writer drew on and enlisted the empirical process of observation, representation, interpretation and communication, and the way in which it interacted with epistolary form, to produce a range of forms of knowledge in their readers and to explore new ways of knowing.

In this chapter, I begin by clarifying the ways in which I am using the terms 'empiricism' and 'epistolarity', and situate my discussion in current-day critical debates surrounding eighteenth-century processes of knowledge production, the uses of letters and epistolary form, and the role of women in these issues. In the second part, I will delineate the historical context that informs my argument, and show how eighteenth-century epistemology and culture operated on empirical principles, and how empiricism and epistolarity interacted in this context.

I. Empiricism

Both 'empiricism' and 'epistolarity' are mobile concepts, that merge and interact in the writings I examine in this thesis in different ways according to their context and the type of knowledge the writer is aiming to produce. I consider empiricism as a process, a set of practices, comprising of the representation and observation of particulars, and subsequent interpretation by induction, that is, the extrapolation of abstract, general truths from an observed particular.

This process was formalised in the knowledge-producing activities of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, founded in 1663, which followed the work of Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) proposals for empirical induction. But this process also underpinned a range of cultural activities such as the observation and interpretation of representations of people in a theatrical performance, the readerly observations of characters in a novel, and in the processes of display, representation, observation and interpretation in everyday sociable performances. This empirical process therefore had rhetorical and sociable dimensions: representations were interpreted through fictional and experiential writing; natural philosophical findings garnered authority through the circulation and communication of observed particulars; and people observed and interpreted the particulars of the behaviour of others in inductive ways. This use of the term 'empiricism' is retroactive.[1] The term as we currently use it, as 'a theory that privileges the role of experience in knowledge, which claims that sense experience or direct observation is the foundation of our knowledge of reality' came into use at the end of the 1700s.[2] In the 1600s, 'empiricism' referred to medical knowledge gained through direct practice on the human body rather than through theory.[3] *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy* (2006) refines the definition supplied by the *Oxford English Dictionary* by identifying two strands of thought that we refer to as empiricism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century: conceptual and methodological.[4] Conceptual empiricism, a philosophical concept associated with the work of John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume

[1] I use the term 'empiricism' retroactively as I believe it can help unearth connected practices across eighteenth-century knowledge production and cultural activity. The retrospective use of 'science' does not have the same benefit, as it implements an ahistorical disciplinary framework on eighteenth-century perceptions and practices. I therefore avoid the term 'science' in the main body of this thesis, but I do, however, use it throughout this introduction for ease of expression while I situate my work in current-day critical and historical frameworks, which include thought from the history of science. In these instances, I take 'science' to refer to the production of natural philosophical knowledge by an empirical methodology.
[2] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), s.v. "Empiricism," 5a.
[3] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Empiricism," 1.
[4] Peter Kail, "Empiricism," in *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy*, ed. Anthony Grayling, Andrew Pyle, and Naomi Goulder (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2006), 1:981-83. These categories roughly parallel the discussion of empiricism in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, which distinguishes between 'concept empiricisms', which are to do with humans' possession of concepts, and 'belief empiricisms', which are concerned with the experience necessary for the establishment of a belief or of knowledge. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Empiricism," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 262-63.

(1711-1776), maintains that concepts have origins in sensory experience. Methodological empiricism is concerned with how we reach a justified belief about the world, and holds that knowledge is produced through observation and experiment, or sense data, which is then used to form general laws about objects in the world. This form of empiricism was established in the works of Bacon and Isaac Newton (1643-1727). In this thesis, I use this latter meaning of the term, as I am interested in epistemological, rather than ontological questions: in the practices of empiricism as a form of knowledge production, rather than a mode of perception. There were, as we shall see, moments when writers drew on both forms but my main focus is on how empiricism as a practice manifested in knowledge-producing and cultural activities, how epistolary form intersected with this process, and how this impacted the knowledge that was produced as an outcome.[5] In the remainder of this section, I outline how empiricism in a methodological sense operated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, considering its rhetorical and sociable properties, and how it overlapped with the conceptual empirical theories of Hume and Locke. I then demonstrate how this approach to empiricism can throw light on our current understanding of women's contribution to the production of knowledge in the eighteenth century.

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's landmark work *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (1985) demonstrates how the circulation of written description became central to the establishment of 'matters of fact' in the Royal Society's methods of knowledge production. Shapin and Schaffer illustrate that the process of knowledge production in the Royal Society 'commenced with individuals' acts of seeing and believing, and was completed when all individuals voluntarily agreed with one another about what had been seen and ought to be believed'.[6] The production of

[5] For recent studies on the philosophy of mind in the eighteenth century, which aligns more closely with 'conceptual empiricism', see Joanna Wharton, *Material Enlightenment: Women Writers and the Science of Mind, 1770-1830* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018); Jonathan Kramnick, *Paper Minds: Literature and the Ecology of Consciousness* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018).
[6] Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 78.

a matter of fact from an experience or observation required a community of witnesses to see it, believe it, and therefore validate it as knowledge.[7] Shapin and Schaffer suggest that this witnessing could take one of three forms: through performing experiments in a social space, replicating experiments, or through the process of '*virtual witnessing*' which entailed representing experiments through written communication.[8] Reading written description therefore constitutes a mode of observation, or 'witnessing', enabling the reader to virtually experience the original observation. The circulation of written descriptions was more than the linear communication of findings but was, in Shapin and Schaffer's terms, a 'literary technology', that was part of the process of knowledge production itself. The production of knowledge was therefore a sociable act that depended on communication and a virtual or actual community of observers. As we will see in the following section, letters, including familiar letters, lent themselves to the production of knowledge by these means, as textual technologies of experiential communication.

The written productions of the Royal Society depended on a set of specific literary conventions to gain readers' trust in their claims. Shapin and Schaffer note that these include 'a narration of visual experience' and contain 'an indication of the sensory experience that underlies the text'.[9] They argue that dense circumstantial detail, which 'imitated reality and gave the viewer a vivid impression of the scene' produced a text that constituted a kind of 'visual source', that the reader would experience as if they 'had been present at the proceedings'.[10] Peter Dear's analysis of the *Philosophical Transactions*, the Royal Society's journal, identifies several literary techniques that were consistently used to this end. Articles in the *Philosophical Transactions* convey 'the impression of an actual, discrete event' through the use of the first person, an active voice, circumstantial detail regarding the time, place, participants and 'additional extraneous

[7] Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 25.
[8] Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 56-65.
[9] Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 61.
[10] Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, 62-63.

remarks about the experience, all serving to add verisimilitude'.[11] According to Dear, these devices could signal the authenticity of the experiment, that enabled witnesses to believe the experiment or observation described.[12] This form of rhetoric also embodied the shift in authority of different ways of knowing from an epistemology that depended on knowledge received from the ancients to a new, empirical form of knowledge based on observation, experiment and experience.[13] The literary conventions of empirical written description become central to the production of knowledge as empiricism was increasingly adopted as an authoritative way of knowing.

Written description was not only a means of authorising and communicating empirical knowledge, but it acted as a technology in the process of the production of knowledge itself. Bacon's *New Organon* (1620) sets out a series of procedures for the empirical method and the process of induction in his 'Great Renewal' of learning. Once data had been retrieved from the natural world by observation or experiment, he proposed that it was subjected to a process of analysis through the tabulation of written descriptions, which he identified as inductive reasoning. First, a 'natural history', in the form of a written description was to be produced of the object or phenomena. Then, this list of written characteristics was to be organised into a table, called 'the table of presence'. A 'table of absence' would then be created, followed by a third table which contained properties related to the first object. A process of elimination would leave all those properties that had the same presence/absence pattern as the object of study, and these would be its essential characteristics, or its 'form'.[14] The technology of written description was therefore central to Bacon's empirical epistemology. Andrew Barnaby and Lisa J. Schnell argue that writing and inscription are also important to the Baconian epistemology through his

[11] Peter Dear, "*Totius in verba*: Rhetoric and Authority in the Early Royal Society," in *The Scientific Enterprise in Early Modern Europe: Readings from Isis*, ed. Peter Dear (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 263, 265.
[12] Dear, "*Totius in verba*," 265, 272.
[13] Dear, "*Totius in verba*," 265, 272.
[14] Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 102-136.

concept of 'literate experience' or '*experientia literaria*' that recurs in various contexts throughout his work. They understand it as a new conceptualisation, 'experience-as-text', that encompasses Bacon's principal aim of establishing 'an experimental procedure for guaranteeing the mind's relation to material reality'.[15] For Bacon, they suggest, 'writing marks the epistemological requirement of making knowledge legible and reveals knowledge as a process that exists both between the world and the mind that interprets it and between private experience and the communal witness that authorizes it'.[16] Writing, in this formulation, is a sort of meeting point between the material object and the mind's perception of that object and, once this relation is established in the concrete, legible, and interpretable form of writing, it can then be circulated, and then authorised and validated by virtual, 'communal' witnesses. Like Shapin and Schaffer, Barnaby and Schnell identify the production of knowledge as an embodied, material, even sociable, practice that depends on the process of writing and circulation. While there is debate over the variations of the manifestations of Bacon's thought and works amongst the various natural philosophers at the Royal Society, the operation of writing, literary technology, and the need for communication of experience, are consistent features.

The definition and practice of the methodological empiricism of Bacon and the Royal Society differs from, but overlaps with, conceptual empiricism. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), Hume turned empirical observational practices onto people, believing that an empirical approach to the 'science of man' and the operations of the mind would lead to new insights about the human condition. One particular point of intersection between the empiricisms of Bacon and Hume, and an issue that Montagu and Scott in particular are interested in, is the 'problem of induction'. Only one type of relation between things, according to Hume, can take us, by reasoning, beyond immediate experience: causal reasoning, or the notion that everything

[15] Andrew Barnaby and Lisa J. Schnell, *Literate Experience: The Work of Knowing in Seventeenth-Century English Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 4.
[16] Barnaby and Schnell, *Literate Experience*, 19.

has a cause or effect.[17] Through this type of reasoning, we infer the cause or effect of observed phenomena; we establish an absent, general rule from a particular observation, or series of observations, as in methodological empiricism. However, this form of reasoning is not secure because the mental leap between cause and effect, between an observed object and a general rule, is an internal projection, and not related to the characteristics observed of that object. The relationship between that observed and the general rule, can only be, at best, a possible, convincing belief.[18] Dahlia Porter locates the beginnings of the problem of induction with Bacon's methodological outline that provides a model from particular observations to general principles, through series of tabulated observations but, in practice, 'provided no clear path from the initial steps of collecting arranging, comparing, and distinguishing observations and experiments to the next crucial step of synthesising this multifarious body of knowledge into an expression of larger truths'.[19] According to Porter's analysis, Hume's problem of induction stems from a 'gap' in Baconian induction.[20] The slipperiness of the connection between observed particulars and general principles poses a problem for the production of knowledge by empirical, inductive means, which we see Montagu and Scott identify, exploit and negotiate, as they draw on empirical principles in their production of other kinds of knowledge.

II. Women and Empiricism

In recent years, much work has been done to recover and re-examine women's role in the production of scientific knowledge in the eighteenth century, along three principle lines of enquiry. Firstly, historians of science and culture have focussed on women as experimenters, producers and consumers of scientific knowledge, both within and without scientific institutions. Women such as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673), Caroline

[17] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 61-65.
[18] Hume, *Treatise*, 61-65.
[19] Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 20.
[20] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 48.

Herschel (1750-1848), Marie-Anne Paulze Lavoisier (1758-1836), and Mary Somerville (1780-1872) performed experiments and published scientific writings; women practiced science in domestic settings, as part of a polite, leisurely pursuit, attended scientific demonstrations and lectures; and women were involved in the making of scientific instruments, and the creation of illustrations in scientific publications.[21] A second line of thinking has considered gender in terms of a constructivist approach to the history of science that sees social structures reflected in empirically produced knowledge. These accounts have examined the way gender relations have been, and continue to be, inflected in knowledge that is produced by empirical means. Evelyn Fox Keller's *Reflections on Gender and Science* demonstrates how gendered assumptions were encoded into early-modern scientific epistemology, and Londa Schiebinger's *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (1993) has shown how the Linnaean system of sexual classification translated hierarchical gender relations into a botanical system in which the 'male' parts of a flower determined the categorisation of that specimen before the female ones.[22] Furthermore, cultural historians of the eighteenth century have examined how, in the stadial version of history favoured by eighteenth-century philosophers, women's intellect was of interest as it acted as marker of the progress of a civilised nation: a situation that sustained throughout the eighteenth century, until the French Revolution, which brought women's intellectual freedoms under harsher scrutiny.[23] Women's excessive display of knowledge was consistently considered inappropriate, but publications such as Eliza Haywood's *Female Spectator* (1744-46) and Charlotte Lennox's *Lady's Museum* (1760-61) encouraged the learning

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[21] Londa L. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?: Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Patricia Fara, *Pandora's Breeches: Women, Science and Power in the Enlightenment* (London: Pimlico, 2004); Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*, ed. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[22] Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Londa L. Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 17.

[23] Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation, 1712-1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter two; Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop Journal* 20 (Autumn 1995): 101-24.

of certain branches of scientific knowledge – botany, astronomy, and geography – in domestic settings for moral and sociable purposes, in its ability to inspire appreciation for God's creation, and provide material for polite conversation.[24]

My thesis builds on elements of these three strands of scholarship. Firstly, it contributes to the recovery of women's multifaceted involvement in scientific activity in the eighteenth century.[25] My case studies offer a change in direction to the project of recovery by focussing on women's understanding of the methods of empiricism, rather than scientific practice. Botanists and artists at the Bulstrode estate, for example, directly questioned the efficacy of particular characteristics of an empirical, Linnaean botany. Montagu, Scott, Barbauld, and Baillie each explored different aspects of empirical scientific method through literary, epistolary, form, which had implications for the production of natural philosophical knowledge in some instances and, in others, for the production of personal, moral and literary knowledge. Secondly, following the lead of Fox and Schiebinger, my thesis is also based on the foundational premise of a constructivist approach to the history of science, but the structures that I trace into the production of different sorts of knowledge are rhetorical, as well as social and gendered. I explore the ways in which female writers use epistolary characteristics to represent empirical observations, which influence the mode and function of the knowledge that they produce.[26] Finally, my thesis contributes to our understanding of women's intellectual and epistemological contribution to eighteenth-century culture at large. I demonstrate that the literary and empirical modes of written representation that the women in this thesis employ contribute to the creation of knowledge across a range of cultural contexts, such as London salon life, moral fiction, botanical practice, poetry, Dissenting religion, and the theatre. The examples in this thesis show how the methods of scientific pursuit,

[24] See Kristin M. Girten, "Unsexed Souls: Natural Philosophy as Transformation in Eliza Haywood's Female Spectator," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 55-74.
[25] For a methodological consideration of the process of recovery, see *The Future of Feminist Eighteenth-Century Scholarship: Beyond Recovery*, ed. Robin Runia (London: Routledge, 2017).
[26] See Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

literary creativity and cultural productivity were enmeshed and could, at moments, elide with each other. Women writers took advantage of the epistemological potential of empirical observation, representation and communication, to produce knowledge across a range of cultural practices.

My study also contributes to discussions on the role of women writers in the communication of eighteenth-century scientific knowledge. Studies such as Barbara T. Gates and Ann B. Shteir's edited collection *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science* (1997) have addressed the numerous female authors and translators of scientific popularisations. From the seventeenth century onwards, works including translations by Aphra Behn (1640-1689) and Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806) and, later in the century, Priscilla Wakefield's (1751-1832) *An Introduction to Botany, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (1796) explicated scientific knowledge to a wider, non-specialist, and often female or youthful readership.[27] Many were dialogic or epistolary in form for pedagogical purposes, one speaker imparting scientific knowledge to the other. However, an exclusive focus on women's role as communicators risks upholding a now-outdated model of knowledge production and communication. The 'popularisation' model promotes a hierarchical structure in which knowledge is produced in sealed-off institutions, then interpreted, simplified and disseminated by communicators or popularisers, and consumed by a wider lay public. This model has largely been dismissed by historians of eighteenth-century science who now examine the cultural contingency of the production of scientific knowledge and the complex interplays between networks of people conducting natural philosophical activity across a range of material and textual practices.[28] The popularisation model is useful in some instances, and it motions

[27] Aphra Behn, *A Discovery of New Worlds* (London, 1688); Elizabeth Carter, *Sir Isaac Newton's Theory of Light and Colours* (London, 1742); Priscilla Wakefield, *An Introduction to Botany, in a Series of* Familiar Letters (London, 1796).

[28] Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey, "Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections in the History of Science Popualrization and Science in Popular Culture," *History of Science* 32, no. 3 (September 1994): 237-67; Johnathan R. Topham, "Rethinking the History of Science Popularization/Popular Science," in *Popularizing Science and Technology in the European Periphery, 1800-2000*, ed. Faidra Papanelopoulou, Agustí Nieto-Galan, Enrique Perdriguero (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Ralph O'Connor, "Reflections on Popular Science in Britain: Genres, Categories, and Historians," *Isis* 100, no. 2 (June 2009): 333-345.

towards the fact that empirical knowledge produced by individuals associated with formal institutions, such as the Royal Society, did command authority. It perhaps becomes more useful in certain instances towards the end of the century, with the increasing exclusion of women from practising the kind of knowledge produced in institutions. I reject, however, the hierarchy of epistemological practices that the popularisation model implies. In chapter one, for example, I argue that salons such as Montagu's were a site that sparked conversation and ideas that would later coalesce into more formalised epistemological manifestations. This model does not succeed as a blueprint in understanding women writers' role in the processes of the production of scientific knowledge as a whole, nor their production of other kinds of knowledge. It is most helpful, I believe, to understand some women's role as communicators of scientific knowledge through conversation and publication as part of a complex and broader landscape of women's epistemological and literary practices.

III. Epistolarity

This thesis presents an analytical approach that examines a range of letters, texts and material objects by considering their letter-like qualities, or their 'epistolarity'. I consider 'epistolarity' as a mobile formal concept that is not only possessed by letters, but by a range of textual, visual and material cultural productions. I use the term to refer to characteristics particular to, and in combination definitive of, the familiar letter. Janet Altman coined the term 'epistolarity' in her formalist study of eighteenth-century epistolary fiction, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (1982), under the working definition of 'the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning'.[29] She argued that in epistolary fiction, 'the basic formal and functional characteristics of the letter […] significantly influence the way meaning is consciously and unconsciously constructed by writers and readers of epistolary works', and she posits epistolarity as a 'frame

[29] Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 4.

for reading' that will expose to us the meaning that epistolary textual elements create.[30] I follow Altman in this definition and reasoning, but she makes a rich suggestion that her focus on epistolary fiction does not indulge. She states that 'novels that at first appear not to be epistolary may in fact create meaning through the literary structures particular to the letter'.[31] This implies that novels, and by extension a range of non-letter texts, knowingly or unknowingly employ the formal qualities of the letter to create meaning, across a range of different discourses. The material form of the familiar, unpublished letter – writing on paper that is passed to a recipient – further invites us to extend the characteristics of epistolarity to encompass the letter's material technology, and to apply an epistolary reading to material objects, as well as other texts. By examining the epistolarity of texts, we stand to gain across three key areas, which I discuss in more detail in what follows. Firstly, this broader conceptualisation and application of epistolarity will enable us to discern the influence of letter writing – a ubiquitous practice in the eighteenth century – on textual, cultural and epistemological productions. Secondly, it offers an analytical frame that allows us to navigate the relationships between functionality, creativity, history, and fiction that are particularly pertinent to letters. Finally, the notion of epistolarity allows us to see how women's letter writing in particular was an integral part of women's intellectual activity in the eighteenth century.

It is not possible to offer a definitive demarcation of the bounds of epistolarity, as the qualities characteristic of the letter form vary letter-to-letter and by the epistolary conventions of different eras and circumstances. However, there are a number of characteristics which appear consistently as epistolary in the texts I examine in this thesis, and which I deem to be particular to, and determinant of, the letter form. These include being 'to' someone and 'from' someone; being a form of writing that has communication as its primary aim; having the capacity for circumstantial, experiential prose description; materially made of loose sheets of paper; and

[30] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 4.
[31] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 4.

characterised by the technology of exchanging paper. If a text has all of these elements, we would identify it as a letter; if it has some, we might say it has epistolary elements, or discuss these elements as the text's 'epistolarity'. Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven remind us, however, that the letter form and its uses are culturally and contextually contingent; eighteenth-century letter-writing manuals, for example, recommended a loose and 'easy' style of writing, and letters sent within the Bluestocking circle frequently drew attention to themselves as material objects.[32] I use the term 'epistolarity' to refer to the more definitive characteristics that I have outlined, that have persisted from the eighteenth century until now, but throughout this thesis I do also signal where historically and culturally contingent epistolary characteristics become important for a text's meaning.

The use of the term 'epistolarity' in the way that I propose – to refer to epistolary characteristics in a way that detaches them from the letter form itself – offers a means of analysing the creative use of letter-like characteristics, or 'letter-ness' across a range of texts and cultural productions. Clare Brant's analysis of published letters raises the question of how we might, and the extent to which we should, understand the epistolary element of letters themselves as creative. She suggests that one of the problems that attends the study of letters is that '[o]ne is looking at innumerable texts which share identifiable markers of genre yet do not make a stable genre'.[33] The term 'genre' implies a deliberate creative decision on the part of the writer, which might be suitable for the discussion of 'epistolary fiction', as in Altman's study, but the idea of genre as a creative decision strains when looking at letters that were written for functional and practical purposes. Letters and other texts have coincidentally epistolary qualities, but those qualities nonetheless create meaning in that text. I suggest that the solution is to consider the 'identifiable markers' that letters share as formal characteristics, rather than indicators of 'genre'. We might

[32] Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven, introduction to *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, ed. Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1.
[33] Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

think about epistolarity as being to letters what verse is to poetry and prose to fiction: formal elements that can be deployed creatively, but are not necessarily used to participate in the operation of a distinct genre. Considering form rather than genre allows greater flexibility to identify the way in which formal epistolary characteristics make meaning across texts such as letters or moral fictions that have a combination of functional and creative imperatives, without assuming, but allowing for, those formal decisions being the deliberate creative choice of the author. This approach to epistolarity extends the purview of Altman's study, by bringing new texts other than epistolary fiction into its fold and, at the same time, proposes a way of examining the creativity and functionality of letters and other types of text.

The use of epistolarity as an analytical tool can also enhance our understanding of the role of the letter in both cultural and literary history. Susan Whyman gives an account of an increase in 'epistolary literacy': improvements in road and river transport in the 1660s, the rise of the Royal Mail, and increased mobility at a time of imperial expansion meant that a greater number of people were sending, receiving, reading, and thinking about letters into the eighteenth century.[34] These historical forces meant that letter writers developed skills such as 'layout, spelling, and grammar', and enhanced the creativity of their letters through 'originality and literary techniques'.[35] Thomas O. Beebee approaches the creativity of letters from the perspective of epistolary fiction. In his discussion of the frontispiece to Johann Neukirch's *Academische Anfangs-Gründe* (1729), which depicts the twinned muses of letter writing and poetry, Beebee notes that 'poetry takes on some of the pragmatic, informational aspects normally associated with letter-writing. Conversely, letter-writing takes on some of the literary, mimetic, and fictional aspects of poetry.'[36] That is to say that the relationship between letters and other forms of writing goes two ways: poetry can take on epistolary qualities, and letter writing – of fictional

[34] Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter-writers, 1600-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9, 13.
[35] Whyman, *The Pen and the People*, 9, 13.
[36] Thomas O. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe 1500-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2-3.

or actual letters – bears the marks of literary and figurative forms. Letter writing is influenced by, and has impact on, a wide range of written – and, I would add, verbal and material – discourses. Mary Favret argues that the interplay between letters and other forms of discourse denotes a deeply structural, mutually formative relationship between letters and history, and between fictionality and a history of letters. She suggests that historical perspectives that have associated women and the letter form with intimacy, privacy and romance are 'fictions', and she shows how fictional and literary letters indelibly mark social and political movements in history.[37] 'Women's letters ranged far and wide over questions of war, foreign cultures and religions, law and forms of government. Their letters were well within the mainstream of popular literature; more importantly, they challenged the status quo of English society and government.'[38] To consider 'epistolarity' rather than 'letters' builds on these perspectives, taking account of the relationships between functionality, creativity, fictionality, and history, by bringing to the fore the dynamic formal interactions between letters and other sorts of text. While this thesis does not set out to form conclusions about influence, shifting focus from letters to epistolarity opens the way for considering how writers of texts other than letters – poems, treatises and natural philosophical reports, for example – mobilise the characteristics of letters for various purposes and effects. This approach prevents us from segregating letters as a stand-alone form of writing, and textually embeds them in contemporary literary culture and other historical forces. It also, as Favret's study highlights, exposes how the everyday epistolary practices of individuals, including women, had social, literary, political and epistemological import.

This thesis argues that there were particular connections between epistolary qualities and the literary technologies employed in empirical knowledge-producing practices within and without the Royal Society, and into the eighteenth century. Letters were communicative technologies

[37] Favret, 19, 37.
[38] Favret, 37.

that, as Altman notes, were formally suited to experiential representation through their particularity.[39] These characteristics closely aligned with the rhetorical needs of representation and communication in the production of empirical knowledge that we saw above. Tim Milnes identifies a shift in eighteenth-century empirical epistemology in the work of Hume, which positions communicative form as central to the nature of the philosophical knowledge produced. Milnes argues that Hume's philosophy in *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) embody a tension 'between the abstruse but "accurate and abstract" philosophy epitomized by Aristotle and the "easy and humane" arts of rhetoric, sentiment and taste practiced by Cicero'.[40] This tension raises the question, Milnes argues, of how 'intellectual substance and debate are determined by matters of literary form and style'.[41] Milnes examines how the form of the familiar essay in particular serves 'mid- and late-eighteenth century "conversational" philosophy': 'the essay emerges in this period as a complex literary form whose affiliations with commonplace books, reading manuals, and epistolary writing enable it to range freely across disciplinary boundaries […] the familiar essay assumes a function that mediates between the propagation of scientific knowledge and the emulation of the fragmentary, improvisatory progress of the human intellect'.[42] Milnes's acknowledgement of the literary form of the essay as an expression and embodiment of the type of empiricism that Hume promoted invites an assessment of how epistolary writing, similarly characterised by a 'familiar' style, that might 'range freely across disciplinary boundaries' and revel in 'fragmentary' and 'improvisatory' form, also contributes to the production of knowledge by empirical means. The characteristics of the letter bend to knowledge-producing practices in both Royal Society and Humean versions of empiricism. Epistolarity provided eighteenth-century writers an accessible and everyday means of producing knowledge and participating in epistemological debate. Using epistolarity as a critical tool can

[39] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 117-18.
[40] Tim Milnes, *The Testimony of Sense: Empiricism and the Essay from Hume to Hazlitt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1.
[41] Milnes, *The Testimony of Sense*, 2.
[42] Milnes, *The Testimony of Sense*, 17.

therefore reveal how writers positioned themselves with regards to questions of epistemology, and how they deployed epistolary devices to create their own forms of knowledge.

My approach to epistolarity aligns with the critical trend that John Richetti identifies in his discussion of genre and the novel. In 2012, he identified an emerging 'new historically oriented formalism' that 'fuses cultural study with intense attention to form, the latter defined in various ways'.[43] I hope to show the fruitfulness of reviving Altman's formalist approach with a greater historical orientation towards eighteenth-century cultural and, in this case, knowledge-producing activity. This approach is also sympathetic to the instability between, and within, generic forms in a variety of eighteenth-century texts. Ingrid Horrocks, for example, in *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility, 1784-1814,* tackles the question of how to examine eighteenth-century works of prose fiction which themselves defy formal patterning.[44] She identifies a certain set of formal characteristics explored within writings about mobility, which do not comprise a genre, but 'a kind of mobile form as it moves across genres', and argues that 'this cross-genre scope allows for a more acute awareness of the peculiar and distinctive reworkings of form in general in the texts of the period and asks us to consider what these formal shifts register and evoke'.[45] I see writers' use of epistolarity as similarly mobile; letter-like characteristics migrate into various forms of writing, and analysis of this process can reveal the reasons for, and effects of, the melding of the letter form with others. Specifically, I am interested in how writers push the boundaries of epistolary creativity, and blend epistolarity with other forms in order to question or change the shape of knowledge-producing practices. Dahlia Porter employs a related, but distinct approach to form. I wholly agree with Porter's argument that 'the methods of knowledge production and assumptions about genre' from the seventeenth century 'take shape on – and determine the shape of – the pages of Romantic

[43] John Richetti, "Formalism and Eighteenth-Century English Fiction," *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 24, no. 2 (Winter 2011-12): 159.
[44] Ingrid Horrocks, *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility, 1784-1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 30.
[45] Horrocks, *Women Wanderers*, 30.

books'.[46] My approach diverges from Porter's, however, as she turns her attention from considering the way in which 'the eighteenth-century novel could incorporate other genres, eating them up and subsuming them into itself', to consider 'Romantic composite orders': texts that 'display their seams and stitchery, the visible imprint of mixture'.[47] She argues that authors at the end of the eighteenth century 'follow the steps of induction' in their works 'to compile and organise raw materials' and to forge them into a 'less or more coherent expression of truth', which results in their visible composite form.[48] Porter identifies a shift over the course of the eighteenth century in the problem of induction, in its application to moral philosophy in the mid-century, and a shift in focus at the end of the century from 'collecting and arrangement' to 'synthesis and comprehensiveness', making the problem of induction more urgent.[49] My focus on earlier writers therefore yields different findings to hers on the later years of the eighteenth century. In chapters one and two, my examination of Montagu and Scott's approaches to the problem of induction accord with Porter's identification of the relationship between induction and moral philosophy. For Scott in particular, the inductive interpretation of moral fiction was a challenge to overcome. Furthermore, my consideration of the way in which writers engaged with empiricism more broadly conceived, as an embodied, sociable and textual practice of observation, representation and interpretation, leads to different conclusions. With this conceptualisation, the migratory formal characteristics of the letter – its prosaic malleability; its relatively few, but distinct, formal markers; its communicative functionality – more akin to Horrocks's analysis of generic relations, lend themselves as formal qualities that enable writers to adapt, interject and to formulate knowledge-producing practices that employ an empirical method.

[46] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 13.
[47] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 8, 13.
[48] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 4.
[49] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 20.

IV. Women and Epistolarity

A critical issue that has both aided and troubled historians of culture, and those of women's history and the letter in particular, is the notion of 'public' and 'private' spheres of activity.[50] Harriet Guest outlines the parameters of the critical debate that has surrounded the concept of the public since its early incarnations in work by J. G. A. Pocock and Jürgen Habermas, in which the 'public' constituted the common participation by individuals in a reconstruction of a political realm based on, in Pocock's terms, a classical republican model or, according to Habermas, a sphere that emerged from the private realm of civil society.[51] Guest argues, and I agree, that although Habermasian 'spheres' of public and private are a somewhat cumbersome tool, the notion of the public as identified by each Pocock and Habermas, and refined by more recent commentators, remains useful, as the concept of the 'public' was important to eighteenth-century actors, particularly those excluded from it. Guests argues for the existence of a 'third site', 'derived from Habermas's public-within-the-private' that offered a withdrawal from public activity, but 'the capacity to imagine oneself as a citizen possessed of a political subjectivity'.[52] The relation between the public and private, Guest shows, was 'permeable' and 'fluid' and, over the course of the eighteenth century, a 'series of small changes in the position of women' made it 'possible or even necessary for some women to define their gendered identities through the nature and degree of their approximation to the public identities of political citizens'.[53] Female-authored familiar letters permeate the realms of public and private and can, at an individual level, create their own bounds of privacy or imagined publicity. Guest suggests that

> when eighteenth-century women engaged in the "tireless writing" of letters, they were perhaps engaged in an activity of very limited public importance,

[50] Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters*, 5-6.
[51] Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning and Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5.
[52] Guest, *Small Change*, 11-12.
[53] Guest, *Small Change*, 12, 14.

> public only in the sense that it created a "bond of company" between them and absent friends; but when they marked parts of their letters as suitable only for the eyes of the addressee, and indicated that other parts could be read to assembled company […] they made them available to an audience who might hear […] public opinions being formed and disputed.[54]

Women could, and did, use letters to imagine themselves as citizens possessed of a political subjectivity through the imaginative content of their letters and through the extent and location of their circulation. Montagu very consciously used her letters to develop her ideas about public participation, and these informed her salon sociability. Members of the Bulstrode circle also saw themselves as participating in a sort of scientific republic, contributing to a global stock of botanical knowledge. Women used epistolarity to question, challenge, and position themselves with regards to forms of knowledge that had both public and more local, immediate effects.

Gillian Russell's concept of 'domiciliary sociability' offers an approach to the relationship between the domestic and the public that can be applied helpfully to familiar letters. Domiciliary sensibility refers to a 'zone of interaction' that encompassed 'the range of activities – balls, assemblies, masquerades, theatricals, dinners, card-parties and general visiting – conducted in the household, by which elite women were able to claim a role for themselves in mid-eighteenth-century public culture'.[55] This model keeps in view the public-facing nature of the practices that took place in domestic spaces. Russell considers how elite women use this facet of sociability in order to claim their role in public and political life, but this notion can be extended to the textual domestic space of the familiar letter. A familiar letter may be written in a domestic setting, but its sociability can enable its impact in public culture. Unlike in-person sociability, however, a familiar letter is sociable on two planes: in its textual content and the matters it addresses to its correspondents and readers, and the production and reception of the letter are moments of domiciliary sociability themselves. We will see in chapters one and two

[54] Guest, *Small Change*, 13-14.
[55] Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11.

that Montagu and Scott were particularly aware of the sociable practices that surround receiving their letters: reading aloud, prompting conversation, and their circulation through different groups of people.

Eighteenth-century and current-day commentators have connected women, femininity and the epistolary form. Recent studies, however, have acknowledged that 'the feminine role' of the letter, and the suitability of a female way of writing to the letter form, are more representative of the ideology that surrounded women's writing, than its actual practice.[56] Mary Favret shows how critics continued to enforce this ideology, creating a 'fiction of letters' which ties women's letter writing to femininity, intimacy, romance and the domestic, and has sparked a series of responses that reconsider our configuration of the relationship between women's writing and epistolary form to include its '"public" voice'.[57] The critical avenues opened by Favret's analysis of the femininity of the letter as fictive, and its public role in politics, the conceptualisation of the 'public', and in literary criticism, invite us to question how the letter factors into the production of scientific knowledge.[58] Like Favret, and responding to the call of other feminist scholars such as Amanda Gilroy and W. M. Verhoeven, this study situates women's letter writing in a broader textual and cultural history than considering letter writing as a 'female' form, most suited to the communication of intimate thoughts, feelings and romance.[59] No study yet considers women's epistolary writing in the context of the production of knowledge and in relation to methodological and practical considerations of new forms of empirical science. Here I contribute to our expanding understanding of the diversity and multiplicity of women's letter-writing practices as Favret initiated. Unlike Favret and subsequent studies, however, by considering epistolarity rather than women's fictional or practical letter writing, I offer a new way of thinking about how female writers conceived of and

[56] Mary Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 24.
[57] Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 19.
[58] Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 18-19.
[59] Gilroy and Verhoeven, introduction to *Epistolary Histories*, 3-4.

utilised the epistolary form. The examination of epistolary formal qualities offers an explicit means of considering how women drew on their reading of letters and texts that used the epistolary form in their letter writing, and in more expressly creative works. I argue that they used these formal qualities to engage in debates and explore issues sparked by the processes of the production of empirical knowledge.

V. Empiricism and Epistolarity in Eighteenth-Century Knowledge Production

I now turn to show how the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity was embedded into eighteenth-century processes of knowledge production. I then turn to consider how the formal properties of the letter align with the rhetorical devices favoured by the Royal Society at the moment of its founding, and how they found expression in later knowledge-producing epistolary writing, particularly in the description of objects. The 'spatial turn' in the history of science, catalysed by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar's *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (1979) and Shapin and Schaffer's *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (1985) compels us to turn our attention to the local sites, practices and people, that determine the production, circulation and consumption of knowledge, and to reconsider our understanding of the relationship between these categories. Reviewing the spatial turn, David Livingstone suggests that knowledge 'is produced in the moment of encounter with new theory as it is shaped, taken up, and put to use in different intellectual and social spaces'.[60] He articulates a

> move away from thinking about scientific knowledge as free-floating and transcendental to thinking about it in a way that roots such undertakings in material entities – like bodies, buildings and other physical objects […] Given the fact that bodies are resolutely located in space, there are grounds for suggesting that scientific knowledge is always positioned knowledge; rationality, always situated rationality; inquiry always located inquiry.[61]

[60] David Livingstone, "Landscapes of Knowledge," in *Geographies of Science*, ed. Peter Meusburger, David Livingstone and Heike Jöns (Dordrecht: Springer), 5.
[61] Livingstone, "Landscapes of Knowledge," 7.

This localised, embodied, material and, we might say, socialised, conceptualisation of knowledge removes the moment of the production of knowledge from being the initial impetus in a linear chain of events that sees knowledge produced, circulated or communicated, and then consumed. It allows for new knowledge to be created at the moment of communication or consumption, or for communicative acts or texts to constitute knowledge production themselves. James Secord places the operations of circulation and communication at the centre of his model of the production of scientific knowledge. He notes that following Shapin and Schaffer's *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, science came to be viewed as 'a practical activity, located in the routines of everyday life. Knowledge itself came to be seen as a form of practice'.[62] He suggests that to escape a situation whereby we understand science to be 'created locally but then, by other processes, is transferred outward toward more general contexts', we need to 'shift our focus and think about knowledge-making itself as a form of communicative action'.[63] This means 'eradicating the distinction between the making and the communicating of knowledge. It means thinking about statements as vectors with a direction and a medium and the possibility of a response'.[64] Secord's call to historians of science places emphasis on close textual analysis but, specifically, on features that we might interpret to be epistolary: statements as directional vectors, which have a medium, and anticipate a response. By foregrounding the epistolary, or at least communicative, element of the texts that we examine, we are able to view how those texts contribute to the production of knowledge in a formulation that posits knowledge as communication.

Secord's address, in consolidating a key movement in current day history of science and its methods, is necessarily transhistorical, but Milnes's study of Hume's empiricism illuminates how the notion of knowledge as communication was deeply pertinent to Humean philosophy and the production of knowledge in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. He argues that Hume

[62] James Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* 95, no. 4 (December 2004): 657.
[63] Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," 660-61.
[64] Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," 661.

revives a model of empiricism 'based in trial and experiment', rather than a Lockean empiricism characterised by the binary of subject and object.[65] This conceptualisation of empiricism 'in turn is associated with a heightened awareness of the role of communicative action in knowledge formation'.[66] Milnes argues that 'Hume replaces [the] subject/object dichotomy with the language of intersubjectivity. Locating the preconditions of human knowledge in custom and habit, he exchanges a correspondence between ideas and the world for a correspondence between persons […] the intersubjective intellect is increasingly seen as a *communicative* intellect'.[67] Milnes's stance helps to concretise Secord's conclusions in a Humean empirical process: the method of knowledge production shapes the nature of the knowledge that is produced, and Hume's pragmatic philosophy was determined by the communicative and intersubjective manner in which it was conducted. Hume, therefore, revives an element of Royal Society processes of knowledge production, in that written and verbal communication does not serve so much to transmit or communicate knowledge, but that the communicative act is part of the process of the production of knowledge itself. The production of knowledge by empiricism is therefore a broad, communicative, and socialised activity and, this formulation implies, is adaptable to more varied physical sites, and accessible to a wider range of subjectivities.

The important implication of a spatial or communicative model of knowledge production is that it allows us to reconsider who had access to knowledge-producing sites and practices, and what could count as a knowledge-producing site. Secord notes that the shifts towards considering 'knowledge as communication' was largely due to feminist and gender studies which mobilised the concept of what Donna Haraway described as 'situated knowledge'.[68] Livingstone notes that women in the eighteenth century were excluded from formalised sites of natural philosophical

[65] Milnes, *The Testimony of Sense*, 4, 109.
[66] Milnes, *The Testimony of Sense*, 4.
[67] Milnes, *The Testimony of Sense*, 109.
[68] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism as a Site of Discourse on the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988), 575-99, quoted in Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," 658.

practice on a 'long standing "understanding" that female corporeality rendered women unsuitable for intellectual pursuits in general and for science in particular. Scientific space, by and large, was masculine space.'[69] But a broader conceptualisation of the production of knowledge allows us to expand our notion of what was 'scientific space' to encompass, for example, domestic space, the theatre, the lecture theatre, and conversation salons, or the site of the letter, to which women did have access, as sites of knowledge production. Such sites had continuities in practice with the processes of knowledge production – they allow for, for example, observation, representation, experimentation, replication, communication and exchange – despite not being formally recognised as specialist or scientific. Using this broader conceptualisation of knowledge reveals women's active participation in the production of different kinds of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, in their sociable, epistolary and literary activity.

A conceptualisation of knowledge as spatial, social and communicative interacts positively with the histories of the production of literature and culture, and in particular with the paradigm of eighteenth-century conversable sociability. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite's *Romantic Sociability* uncovered the role and value of sociability in the production of eighteenth-century and Romantic-era literature, culture and politics. Early periodicals including *The Tatler* (1709-11) and *The Spectator* (1711-12, 1714) construed sites of 'new-style' sociability such as the coffee-house, the club, inns, theatres and pleasure gardens as, according to Russell and Tuite, 'primary sites and practices of the conversational model of culture that starts to gain ground in the eighteenth century'.[70] They propose that sociability was a value 'in the modelling of culture as a conversation' and in 'the sociable values of laughter, clubbability, conviviality, taste and politeness', and in its capacity to 'ground moral judgements in Enlightenment philosophy'.[71]

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[69] Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 78.
[70] Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, "Introducing Romantic Sociability," in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840,* ed. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.
[71] Russell and Tuite, "Introducing Romantic Sociability," 5, 6.

Ideal eighteenth-century conversable sociability was therefore a productive medium, and provided the material of cultural activity and productivity. Jon Mee suggests that conversation 'always takes place somewhere between located subjects who are in the business of making some kind of sense – for whatever purposes and however obscurely even to themselves – of each other and their situations'.[72] In this formulation, conversation acts as medium that produces knowledge of some kind, no matter how obscure or implicit that knowledge is. More concretely, sociable conversation in certain environments, for example, in literary clubs, was productive of knowledge across a range of discourses: both Joseph Priestley's *History and Present State of Electricity* (1769) and James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791) were products of conversations at Samuel Johnson's Literary Club, founded in 1764.[73] The exchanges that took place at such sites, and in more domestic sociable encounters, therefore manifest a culturally productive practice, which blurs any clear directionality in the relationship between cultural production and consumption. Literature, poetry, theatre, science, and morals were consumed, enacted and produced in such spaces and by conversable practices.

Women had a distinctive role in conversable sociability, and in particular in its knowledge producing, and its domestic, dimensions. We saw above how Hume attempted to reconcile an abstract Aristotelian mode of learning with a rhetorical and communicative Ciceronian philosophical form. He refers to this tension in his essay 'Of Essay Writing', by defining people as being '*learned*' or '*conversible*', and he designates women the role of stimulating the production of knowledge through smoothing the differences between its abstract and more communicative forms.[74] He announces women ('that is, Women of sense and Education') as 'Sovereigns of the Empire of Conversation', and requests that they

[72] Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.
[73] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 81-82.
[74] David Hume, "Of Essay Writing," in David Hume, *Essays, Moral and Political* (Edinburgh, 1742), 2:1.

> Let them accustom themselves a little more to Books of all Kinds: Let them give Encouragement to Men of Sense and Knowledge to Frequent their Company: And finally, let them concur heartily in that Union I have projected betwixt the learned and conversible Worlds.[75]

Montagu responded to this call, taking the opportunity to position herself as the arbiter of polite sociability according to this model. Mee shows how Montagu hosted regular salon gatherings, using 'conversation as part of a conscious attempt to shape the variety of opinion into a national culture […] perhaps the closest the eighteenth century came to realizing Hume's vision of an empire of conversation reigned over by women'.[76] In her salon, Montagu arranged her chairs in a circle to stimulate productive conversation, and her aim of shaping a version of national culture through smooth conversational intercourse identified her salon sociability against the exclusive masculine sociability of the clubhouse, coffeehouse and tavern, which did not necessarily conform to such moralising principles.[77] Montagu's gatherings, however, were subject to public criticism for either 'dangerously usurping male prerogatives', or through 'the association of feminized culture with unlearned froth'.[78] To navigate the paradoxical demands of being sufficiently learned but not abstrusely so, Montagu's conversational practices, as Mee points out, were 'tied to a programme of moral regeneration'.[79] In line with Russell and Tuite's model, Montagu's domestic conversable sociability had the potential to reinforce politeness and the values of Enlightenment moral philosophy. Montagu and female attendees to her salon aimed to perform a sociability that was productive of knowledge and culture, that was wide-ranging, and that was underpinned by moral imperatives. Epistolary writing serves as an extension of this kind of sociable practice. Epistolary space operates as a site of sociability accessible to women, and its formal properties overlap with the processes of a sociable and communicative process of knowledge production. An examination of epistolarity, according to

[75] Hume, "Of Essay Writing," 2:5, 8.
[76] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 105.
[77] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 84-87.
[78] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 101, 109.
[79] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 107.

this model, therefore, can demonstrate how women were participating in, challenging and questioning the processes of knowledge production.

The process of knowledge production favoured by the Royal Society at the time of its founding had distinctively epistolary qualities. The *Philosophical Transactions*, the first peer-reviewed journal, was born from, and operated on, epistolary principles. Natural philosophers would address observations and experimental reports to the secretary of the Royal Society, Henry Oldenburg (1619-1677), which he would then publish often verbatim. A great number of the entries, from the seventeenth into the nineteenth century, had their genesis in epistolary accounts exchanged between members prior to publication. Robert Boyle's (1627-91) famous impromptu empirical report of luminescence on meat was first described in a letter to Oldenburg, and a number of entries written by Humphry Davy (1778-1829) changed little from the reports of experiments that he recounts in his personal correspondence.[80] A large proportion of entries published between 1660 and 1740 take the form of extracts of correspondence, and many are directly in the form of letters, containing a formal address and signature. Many of the articles refer to their epistolary origins. In 'An Account of a Very Monstrous Calf', for example, the editor introduces the account by acknowledging the letter he received.[81] The material epistolary basis of the *Philosophical Transactions* bears resemblance to the correspondence network that Elizabeth Yale examines as central to topographical study in the seventeenth century.[82] Like this earlier topographical correspondence network, epistolarity was the practical mechanism that facilitated knowledge-producing exchange. The *Philosophical Transactions* operated through the technology of epistolarity, whereby observations were recorded on paper, transmitted, and then published. Epistolarity was therefore important to the Royal Society in the

[80] Robert Boyle, "Some Observations about Shining Flesh, made by the Honourable Robert Boyle; Febr. 15. 1671/72. And by Way of Letter Addressed to the Publisher, and Presented to the R. Society," *Philosophical Transactions* 7, no. 89 (1 January 1627): 5108-5116. Humphry Davy, *The Collected Letters of Humphry Davy*, ed. Tim Fulford and Sharon Ruston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2020).
[81] "An Account of a Very Odd Monstrous Calf," *Philosophical Transactions* 1, no. 1 (30 May 1665): 10.
[82] Elizabeth Yale, *Sociable Knowledge: Natural History and the Nation in Early Modern Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2016), 12.

Philosophical Transactions, in this early moment in the formalisation of empirical knowledge production, as a communicative technology and in its capacity to represent circumstantial description, that could be circulated to a community of virtual witnesses.

Although the entries in the *Philosophical Transactions* were print publications, their content manifested a process of debate and exchange more akin to epistolary exchange. Entries were subject to challenge, debate and updates by other contributors. Monsieur Auzout, for example, authored an entry 'Considerations of Monsieur Auzout upon Mr. Hook's New Instrument for Grinding of Optick-glasses' to which Robert Hooke (1635-1793) replied with an article 'Mr. Hook's Answer to Monsieur Auzout's Considerations, in a Letter to the Publisher of these Transactions'.[83] In the *Philosophical Transactions*, the debate over a certain topic – in this case the efficacy of Hooke's engine for grinding spherical glasses – takes place through new instalments or updates on the topic under discussion. By following topics through these epistolary exchanges, the reader bears witness not only to the experiments contained within the entries, but also to the back-and-forth discussion about those experiments, almost like watching a debate or a play. In the discussion of Hooke's optic-glass instrument, a third contributor steps in, giving 'A Further Account, Touching Signor Campani's Book and Performances about Optick-glasses', almost like the entrance of a third character.[84] In its production and communication of knowledge, the *Philosophical Transactions* employs an epistolary form, which facilitates the dynamic, collaborative process of the production of knowledge, representative of the collaborative ideals of the Royal Society, and to which the reader is a witness.

[83] Monsieur Auzout, "Considerations of Monsieur Auzout upon Mr. Hook's New Instrument for Grinding of Optick-glasses," *Philosophical Transactions* 1, no. 4 (1665): 56-62; Robert Hooke, "Mr. Hook's Answer to Monsieur Auzout's Considerations, in a Letter to the Publisher of these Transactions," *Philosophical Transactions* 1, no. 4 (1665): 63-68.
[84] "A Further Account, Touching Signor Campani's Book and Performances about Optick-glasses," *Philosophical Transactions* 1, no. 4 (1665): 69-73.

Thomas Sprat (1635-1713) famously set out in the *History of the Royal Society* (1667) the ideal rhetorical form for the successful transmission of experimental reports and observations in speech and writing. The '[o]rnaments of speaking' he claims, are 'degenerated from their original usefulness'.[85] He expresses indignance at the 'mists and uncertainties' that specious '*Tropes* and *Figures* have brought on our knowledge', and outlines the society's remedial resolution

> to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many *things*, almost in an equal number of *words*. They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear senses; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can.[86]

Sprat's resolutions aim to establish a proximity between the reader or listener and the initial experience that the writer or speaker describes, through the use of plain, unadorned, non-figurative language. He uses spatial terms to describe the impact of obtuse descriptions, as though excess in words puts a physical space or obstacle between the reader and the experience they are reading about. His aim to achieve precision and a correspondence between the '*things*' described and the number of '*words'* used to describe them, suggest that he is almost trying to map the original experience onto the page in words, replicating it in such a way that the reader encounters as many words as the writer encountered things. He aims for absolute minimum mediation, a 'close, naked, natural' means of communication. Through clear, plain, unadorned, and precise language, he hopes to collapse the distance between the perceiver and the initial experience almost, it seems, to nothing, and to reduce, or even erase, the 'virtual' element of the 'virtual witness'.

[85] Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667), 112.
[86] Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, 112-13.

Sprat's comments come at a moment when the act of description was an important element of the epistemology of natural philosophy. We saw above the centrality of writing in a Baconian inductive epistemology. Studies on the history of description have identified how specifically descriptive forms of representation – both pictorial and written – were used in the production of artistic and natural philosophical knowledge. Svetlana Alpers's landmark work, *The Art of Describing* (1983), identifies the rise of the descriptive mode in art in Dutch painting in the seventeenth century, which diverged from the narrative or allegorical forms of representation typical of Italian art.[87] Descriptive Dutch art was interested rather in representing the surfaces of how things appeared, in a way that intersected with maps as a form of visual representation, and with new understandings of optics and modes of looking and seeing.[88] Her study opened new ways of understanding the practices of description and representation in visual art and natural philosophy. Brian Ogilvie has subsequently identified two principle types of descriptive visual representation in sixteenth-century natural philosophical and botanical practice. Description in the form of images, he suggests, were either representational, in which they were not necessarily drawn directly from nature, but served to communicate the key characteristics of a specimen, or analytical, that a botanist or natural philosopher might draw as part of an observational method, to gain knowledge and understanding of the specimen.[89] As we will see in chapter three, the notions of representational and analytical descriptive practice equally applied to written description, and were not mutually exclusive. The botanists at Bulstrode used the familiar letter and other ephemeral, epistolary forms of writing, such as notes, to conduct botanical inquiry through representational and analytical descriptions. In *The Science of Describing,* Ogilvie demonstrates how written description became a central practice and concern for successive generations of natural historians, following Bacon's work, and formed the backbone of the

[87] Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: John Murray, 1983).
[88] Alpers, *Art of Describing*, chapters two and four.
[89] Brian W. Ogilvie, "Image and Text in Natural History, 1500-1700," in *The Power of Images in Early Modern Science*, ed. Wolfgang Lefèvre, Jürgen Renn, and Urs Schoepflin (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2003), 157.

emerging discipline of natural history.[90] Sprat's comments therefore hoped to regulate a practice of description that formed a central part of an empirical epistemology in widespread natural historical, artistic, and natural philosophical practice.

The characteristics of the letter form make it a particularly suitable site for this empirically driven descriptive practice. We saw above that letters as a communicative technology led them to function as conduits of descriptions in natural philosophical networks, such as in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Their textual characteristics, as experiential forms of writing from a particular perspective, and the capacity to encompass written and visual representations, gave them potential as sites of epistemologically productive description. John Bender and Michael Marrinan outline the technical characteristics of eighteenth-century description through examining how it was discussed in the *Encyclopédie*. The description must correspond in complexity with that of the organism it is describing; for example, the description of a human might be extensive, whereas that of a plant, more brief, and a mineral, more simple again.[91] This stipulation recalls Sprat's aim to deliver 'so many *things*, almost in an equal number of *words*', and it also coheres with a Baconian approach to writing, in which the descriptive tracing of an object establishes a coherence between the outward form of the object, and the understanding of it in the mind.[92] Bender and Marrinan also note the significance of description as it relates to the literal meaning of *décrire* as used in Geometry: 'description is the action of tracing a line, a surface, or some other geometric figure'.[93] Description is therefore tightly focused, trained on the contours of the object it is describing, and attentive to minute, superficial, characteristic details, as a product of close up, empirical, observation. The familiar letter form as a record of the immediate, and of experiences, lends itself to such descriptions. We will see in chapter four

[90] Brian W. Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), 7-8.
[91] John Bender and Michael Marrinan, "Regimes of Description: In the Archive of the Eighteenth Century, Conference Proposal," in *Regimes of Description: In the Archive of the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 216.
[92] Sprat, *Royal Society*, 113; Barnaby and Schnell, *Literate Experience*, 19.
[93] Bender and Marrinan, "Regimes of Description," 216.

how Barbauld draws on this potential of the letter form in epistolary poetry, to explore alternative ways of knowing that can be accessed through such tight written descriptions of observed phenomena. Joanna Baillie, however, as I will show in chapter five, found the material and formal qualities of such descriptive contouring restrictive and sought other means, through theatre, to represent the subject of her observations. Bender and Marrian also show that descriptions are contextually contingent, 'produced from particular perspectives or situations', and are reflective of 'the relative position of its subject'.[94] This, again, accords with a Baconian epistemology that, in the words of Barnaby and Schnell, 'promoted an awareness of the perspectival and communal nature of inquiry', in which writing played a central role.[95] This quality of description is enhanced in epistolary form. Perspectival communication is built into the letter form; epistolary writing is definitively 'to' a recipient, 'from' the writer. Letters, through their textual possibilities, lent themselves particularly well to the needs of natural philosophical description. But they were also flexible in their form and content, susceptible to the 'loose' expression that Howell advised against, that enabled their writers – such as Montagu and Delany – to angle and manipulate their epistolary descriptions in various ways, according to their particular perspective, and demands of their situation.[96]

Epistolary writing therefore had the capacity to adhere to the formal limits of description, and to the required proximity of description to the contours of the object that is being described, but the compliance of epistolary writing with this ideal, and to Sprat's guidelines, in the production of knowledge was far from guaranteed. Amiria J. M. Henare interprets description as bridging the gap between British eighteenth-century frames of reference, and new objects in the context of imperial expansion and voyages of exploration. She shows how descriptions and visual representations were always a mediation, or even 'attempts at translation', 'approximations' that, for want of language, reached for 'metaphor and simile' to 'liken something indescribable

[94] Bender and Marrinan, "Regimes of Description," 4 and 216.
[95] Barnaby and Schnell, *Literate Experience*, 8.
[96] Howell, *Epistolæ Ho-Elianæ,* 18.

to something familiar'.[97] In Bender and Marrinan's terms, 'descriptions do not replicate objects, but rather employ different media to transmit the salient characteristics of those objects across time and space'.[98] The letter form poses further, and particular, threats, however, to the ideal practice of epistemologically productive description, in the flexibility, or malleability of its textual form. Keymer identifies the 'ungoverned' and unobstructed nature of epistolary prose; it is not, as he sees it, restricted by 'any very highly developed conventions', meaning that 'nothing needed obstruct its expressive function', it 'need not engage in political controversy' or 'advance a philosophical argument'.[99] Favret discusses the same quality of the form of the familiar letter, that she refers to as its 'looseness', but arrives at precisely the opposite conclusions to Keymer.[100] The particular 'looseness' of the familiar letter, she suggests, 'made the familiar letter the most significant instrument for political propaganda during the years of revolution'.[101] The divergence between these critical interpretations is testament to the characteristic that they both identify: the possibility of the letter to run closely in accordance with a particular function, such as Keymer's 'expressive' function as it represents the inner workings of the mind, but its lack of rigid conventions mean that it can equally adapt itself to participate in fundamental and active ways in political debate. In natural philosophical description, this means that the epistolary form has the potential to fulfil controlled and restrained forms of experiential representation, such as that demanded by natural philosophical theory and practice. But its looseness, lack of governance and rigid formal convention, its flexibility and malleability at the hands of its author, means that there is always a possibility that epistemologically productive epistolary description might slip into something else – and it frequently does. This characteristic of epistolarity informs my analysis in this thesis, as I trace moments of epistolary representation of natural objects, artefacts, and of people, in different

[97] Amiria J. M. Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39-40.
[98] Bender and Marrinan, "Regimes of Description," 4.
[99] Tom Keymer, *Richardson's "Clarissa" and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.
[100] Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 24..
[101] Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 24.

forms of writing, as part of the empirical process of observation, representation and inductive interpretation. Each of the writers I examine capitalise on the flexibility, movement and potential changeability of the epistolary form, to slip between different modes of expression, in their representation of themselves, and the people and objects around them.

In the following section I will consider the implications and opportunities of the observation and representation of people. Here I pause to consider the role of material objects in the observational and textual processes of empirical knowledge production. The individuals I study represented and utilised objects in various knowledge-producing ways: Montagu to spark intellectual conversation in her salon; Portland in her natural history collection and through written representation of botanical specimens; and Barbauld through a devotional appreciation for products of the natural world. Natural objects (such as plants, shells, rocks and fossils) and artefacts of natural philosophical or historical interest (such as ethnographic or antiquarian artefacts) produced knowledge as individual entities, as components in an empirical, inductive process, in which they were subject to observation, representation, identification and categorisation. They were also displayed for observation as part of a collection, where their context amongst other objects determined the nature of the knowledge that they produced.

The production of knowledge by observation and representation of objects, and as part of a collection, were both beset with challenges. Henare demonstrates how newly discovered natural objects or newly acquired artefacts did not fit comfortably within existing analytical systems, such as that created by Linnaeus. This forced natural philosophers 'continually to reassess and revise their arrangements and, accordingly, their ideas'.[102] Henare paints a vivid picture of how this problem manifested in written description. The botanical notebooks from the *Endeavour* explorational voyage by Daniel Solander (1733-1782) – the colleague of Joseph Banks (1743-1820) and later of Portland – were 'a mess of corrections and erasures', that exemplify 'the

[102] Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*, 64.

frustrations of trying to fit the square pegs of new genera into the round holes of the Linnaean system'. In chapter three we will see how Portland proposed her own solution to this problem.[103] A further challenge that natural philosophers faced when aiming to produce knowledge empirically through the display of collected objects was that the meaning or the knowledge that an object embodied was not fixed, but contingent on its context and the interpretation of the observer.[104] As we saw above with the problem of induction, the transition from the observation of a particular object to a general rule was not a stable or predictable process. Henare points out, though, that natural philosophers could use this to their advantage, and utilised natural objects to perform social functions. Objects were 'gifted and exchanged among friends and associates', 'displayed in private houses' and gifted to 'the many learned societies then proliferating across Europe', in gestures that were, as Henare suggests, demonstrative of the mutual value of these objects as a 'tool in the production of knowledge', and for purposes of friendship or social gain.[105] These challenges posed epistemological issues and opportunities to the women I study in this thesis, particularly when they responded to them in epistolary ways. Montagu manipulated the representation of objects in her epistolary prose and in her salon to claim the public value of her sociable activity, and Portland offered innovative ways of representing unintelligible botanical specimens. At Bulstrode, botanical specimens even became epistolary in form, as flowers were pressed and circulated on paper. The centrality of prose description to an empirical epistemology, and its formal closeness to malleable epistolary prose proffered writers opportunities to interrogate, subvert and innovate empirical procedures for their own knowledge-producing purposes.

[103] Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*, 63.
[104] See Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*, 3. See *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
[105] Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*, 38.

VI. Empiricism and Epistolarity in Eighteenth-Century Culture

We have seen how empiricism, as a process of observation, representation, communication and inductive interpretation, was at the centre of knowledge-producing practices from the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. This empirical process also operated across a range of cultural practices. In this section I examine the cultural contexts in which performance, display, observation and representation were particularly prominent as epistemological processes, and with which the individuals in this thesis most explicitly participated. Empiricism was a symbiotic part of social, commercial, cultural, philosophical and even legal practices, across an eighteenth-century culture that historians have characterised by its 'visuality'.[106] John Barrell's work on the landscape and the prospect view established the foundations of our understanding of the processes of looking, viewing and observing in eighteenth-century culture. He shows how the observation of landscapes and, later in the century, the search for the picturesque, was a cultivated skill that was associated with, and demonstrated, landed privilege and the appreciation of aesthetics.[107] Peter de Bolla's study *The Education of the Eye* builds on this notion. He argues that attention to 'visuality' in the eighteenth century was so pervasive that it constituted a 'visual *culture*' in which the increased 'reproduction and consumption of visual matter' such as 'representations, maps, diagrams' demanded a greater range of 'modes of address attention, or forms of understanding' that came together in new ways to produce a culture based on different forms of looking, observing and viewing.[108] De Bolla's focus on paintings, architecture and gardens gives his study an aesthetic slant that diminishes the natural philosophical practices of observation and witnessing in the range of visual processes that he addresses.[109] Al Coppola picks up this question in *The Theater of Experiment* (2016). He argues for a 'new regime of visuality' that 'traversed the laboratory and the public stage' and he

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[106] Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.
[107] John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
[108] De Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, 4.
[109] De Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, 2, 4.

connects the procedures of observation and witnessing characteristic of the production of empirical knowledge by the Royal Society to the growing culture of performance and spectacle in theatres and scientific demonstrations.[110] Coppola suggests that Charles II's provision of a charter to the Royal Society in 1662 was related to the reopening of the theatres, and the admission of female actors was 'so that the stage might more faithfully represent "things themselves" in society, as the laboratory did in nature'.[111] Coppola demonstrates the 'mutual interaction of the stage and the laboratory over a period of time in which they were being purified and redisciplined into sites of mutually exclusive cultural practices'.[112] Coppola views the knowledge-producing acts of performance, display, observation and witnessing as a connective practice across scientific and cultural forms of expression. I believe that this can be extended even further. We saw above how circumstantial description in observational and experimental reports aimed to reproduce the original experience in the reader, as if they were an original observer, transforming them into virtual witnesses that would then, through communal agreement, authorise the description as a matter of fact. This epistemology saw textual representation as an extension to the processes of direct observation that Coppola identifies. It is therefore fruitful to consider textual representations, and particularly letters, as further sites where the empirical practices of performance, display, observation and witnessing took place. Furthermore, as I will show throughout this section, this epistemological structure had applications in the production of personal and moral, as well as scientific, knowledge.

The eighteenth century saw the flourishing of a culture of scientific spectacle, which was both entertaining and epistemologically productive. Urban and rural audiences attended demonstrations of natural philosophical experiments in theatres, markets, teaching institutions,

[110] Al Coppola, *Theater of Experiment: Staging Natural Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.
[111] Coppola, *Theater of Experiment*, 3.
[112] Coppola, *Theater of Experiment*, 21.

the workshops of instrument makers, and in domestic settings.[113] Demonstrations and lectures were delivered initially by the followers of Isaac Newton – Francis Hauksbee, John Keill and John Theophilus Desaguiliers – and then by successive generations of itinerant lecturers. This was a process of dissemination and popularisation – ideas spread through the audience as they learned scientific principles – but it was also part of the procedure of the production of knowledge by empirical means. As Larry Stewart argues, 'audience magnified the credibility of natural philosophy', and repeating experiments successfully to a wide audience became 'as essential as private experiments' in producing knowledge.[114] To witness scientific lectures and demonstrations was entertaining, it imparted knowledge that had been produced institutionally and by learned individuals, and it also implicated the viewer in the process of the empirical production of knowledge; audiences augmented the number of witnesses to the experiment, authorising the knowledge that the experiments displayed further and indefinitely.

Recent commentators have shown the importance of female audience members in this aspect of knowledge production. Demonstrators in the latter half of the century increasingly used affective and sensational means of representation to appeal to the sensibilities of a feminine audience. In her examination of the Royal Institution at the turn of the nineteenth century, Harriet Lloyd argues that female audience members became participants in the production of knowledge that such demonstrations aimed to validate; the programme of demonstration responded to their tastes, which then forged the direction of future experiments.[115] Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Christine Blondel have shown that from the mid-century onwards, '[w]hile sensation was the necessary basis of all knowledge, sensibility also formed part of the epistemic strategies of the Enlightenment. Admiration and repulsion, the sense of the sublime

[113] Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Christine Blondel, introduction to *Science and Spectacle in the European Enlightenment*, ed. Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Christine Blondel (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 2-4.
[114] Larry Stewart, "The Laboratory, the Workshop, and the Theatre of Experiment," in *Science and Spectacle*, 14. See also Simon Schaffer, "Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle in the Eighteenth Century," *History of Science*, 21 (1983): 1-43.
[115] Harriet Lloyd, "Rulers of Opinion: Women at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, 1799-1812" (PhD thesis, University College London, 2019).

and the sense of horror, all such aesthetic emotions aroused by tragedy were occasionally mobilised by public demonstrators.'[116] Coppola argues that the 'new sensationalist epistemology for Enlightenment natural philosophy' addressed itself 'to the heightened sensory capacities of a feminised (if not exclusively female) audience'.[117] The phenomenon of 'science for the ladies' in periodicals, encouraging women's scientific activity as a leisured pursuit, engendered a shift in 'the ideal witness to scientific experiments' from a masculine modest witness, 'to a new, feminised figure'.[118] Jessica Riskin, furthermore, shows that in the case of physics, this 'illustrative mode of teaching natural science had begun to influence research as well, shifting physics away from the general properties of matter […] and toward the more immediately demonstratable particular properties themselves'.[119] Over the course of the century, an empirical epistemology depended on increasingly sensational devices, using the feminised notions of sensation and affect in the ways that it garnered authority amongst its witnesses.[120]

The use of affect as a means of communicating scientific ideas, and as a way in which women participated in the production of natural philosophical knowledge, has several implications for my study, and intersects with epistolarity in interesting ways. Firstly, to return briefly to the model of popularisation discussed above, Coppola traces the 'feedback loop' between representations of scientific activity in plays and the 'elite science' of institutions, as cultural practices that are mutually formative, and in which women had an important role.[121] Stewart, Coppola, Riskin and Lloyd each demonstrate how scientific audiences, the 'consumers' of scientific knowledge through educational dissemination, also influence and direct the course of the knowledge that is produced. This premise is a starting point for my discussions in the following chapters; I aim to show what women writers then do in this epistemologically

[116] Bensaude-Vincent and Blonde, introduction to *Science and Spectacle*, 7.
[117] Coppola, *Theater of Experiment*, 151.
[118] Coppola, *Theater of Experiment*, 146.
[119] Jessica Riskin, "Amusing Physics," in *Science and Spectacle*, 56.
[120] See also Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).
[121] Coppola, *Theater of Experiment*, 164.

productive position. Secondly, beyond the scope of these studies, but within the purview of mine, is the commonality between the affective production of knowledge in these performance practices and the way moral philosophy and epistolary moral fiction use affect and sentiment in the inculcation of moral behaviour. I consider this in more detail below, and the uses of performance, spectatorship, observation, and affect, in the production of both natural philosophical and moral knowledge is an element that recurs throughout my case studies. Finally, I build on these studies by showing how women writers not only fed into and fuelled the production of existing forms of natural philosophical and moral knowledge, but also, by using epistolary devices in their writing, created their own epistemologies and knowledge systems. We will see in chapters four and five how Barbauld and Baillie use, respectively, detailed epistolary observation, and performance and spectatorship, to produce affective and sympathetic ways of viewing and knowing the world.

The empirical process of the observation, representation and interpretation of people, however, was not always objectifying. Observation and display manifested in the moral philosophies of Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782), and Adam Smith (1723-90) as well as in the moral works of Scott and Baillie. Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) put the process of self-observation at the heart of individual morality, in his figure of the 'impartial spectator'. Smith's philosophy holds that we can successfully judge the actions of another, 'as at a certain distance from us', with a similar detachment from our own sentiments, and must 'endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it'.[122] The 'certain distance' that Smith identifies is critical to the maintenance of the spectator's impartiality. He gives the example of a country during wartime, its impartial spectator is a far-flung neutral country, to which the citizens of the warring countries give no heed.[123] But, on the

[122] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 128, 129.
[123] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 179.

other hand, when the impartial spectator is too close, he is also ineffectual.[124] For example, when we are about to act, the impartial spectator's view becomes jeopardised, as 'the violent emotions which at that time agitate us, discolour our views of things; even when we are endeavouring to place ourselves in the situation of another'.[125] Smith's representation of the impartial spectator conflates geographical and affective distance; the spectator runs the risk of being too distant, beyond our consideration of our moral sentiments and actions, or too close, where any moral verdict is consumed by violent passion. We saw above how an unmediated proximity to a written experiential description was important to Sprat and a Royal Society empirical epistemology. Experiential – although not affective – proximity to a described experiment or specimen could garner the valorisation of a matter of fact amongst indifferent observers or witnesses. In the context of scientific demonstrations, an affective connection with the audience could obtain their belief in the experiment being displayed. In the production of moral knowledge, then, such as the writings of Scott and Baillie aim to achieve, observational proximity can have knowledge-producing effects, but have to be balanced against the morally-detrimental impact of a too-close spectator.

For Lord Kames, in *Elements of Criticism* (1762), the notion of spectatorship is also morally useful, but in the observation of others rather than oneself. Unlike Smith's, Kames's moral spectator operates on the sympathetic movement of the passions rather than an ideal unaffected impartiality. 'A signal act of gratitude', he suggests 'produceth in the spectator or reader […] a vague feeling of gratitude without an object […] that disposes the spectator or reader to acts of gratitude'.[126] Observing the virtue of others produces a feeling of goodness that then manifests in moral action. Although Kames remains vague about the distance of observation and the nature of this feeling, he is specific and explicit about the type of observational action that is

[124] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 182.
[125] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 182.
[126] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 6th ed, ed. Peter Jones (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 1:49.

conducive to gaining this moral insight. Speaking of the vividness of memory, recalling 'an interesting object or event that made a strong impression, I am not satisfied with a cursory view, but must dwell of every circumstance'. In these situations, he claims, 'I am imperceptibly converted into a spectator, and perceive every particular passing in my presence, as when I was in reality a spectator'.[127] His terms resemble the ideal experiential rhetoric of empirical representations, and he suggests that moral feeling is inspired by 'every circumstance' and 'particular' of the person or event. But, also unlike Smith, morally beneficial observation can occur through fictional works or in theatre. The effectiveness of an observation in inspiring moral feeling does not depend on whether the account is fictional or from experience, but on liveliness and accuracy in description.[128] While a 'general or reflective remembrance cannot warm us to any emotion', the accurate representation of particulars can raise 'ideas no less distinct that if I had been originally an eye-witness'.[129] Fictional representations 'by means of language', have 'the command of our sympathy for the good of others'.[130] Baillie draws directly on Kames's theory of the moral potential of observed particulars, and exploits its overlap with empirical descriptive and demonstrative methods of knowledge production in her establishment of a moral theatrical epistemology.

Eighteenth-century letter writers and modern critics frequently characterise the letter as a communicative medium that collapses geographical distance, either in a manner that accords with Guest's understanding of the letter in relation to the public and private, in which the letter writer feels imaginatively connected to a larger community or public, a 'republic of letters', or in a way that is perhaps closer to the 'private' expression of intimate affection, whereby emotional closeness bridges geographical distance. The Multigraph Collective note how the republic of letters as an imagined community 'brought its members closer together through

[127] Kames, *Elements*, 1:67
[128] Kames, *Elements*, 1:68-69.
[129] Kames, *Elements*, 1:68-69.
[130] Kames, *Elements*, 1:71, 77.

letters', and how correspondents 'ran their fingers over tears, ink, and the paper itself, in an attempt to reestablish contact with one another – and they wrote about doing so'.[131] They suggest that the distant correspondent is made present, embodied in the letter. But in its summoning of its recipient in the process of writing, the letter form draws attention to the recipient's absence, and to the same physical distance that it attempts to collapse. Altman suggests that 'the letter contains within itself its own negation' and that epistolary narrators can 'emphasise alternately, or even simultaneously, presence and absence'.[132] I follow Altman in this understanding of epistolary distance as a formal characteristic, an element of epistolarity, that the writer can emphasise or detract from according to their purpose, but diverge from her focus on the potential of this quality in romantic fiction. The writers I examine are, in the main, more interested in maintaining and managing epistolary distance than they are in collapsing the gap between writer and correspondent. Scott, for example, attempts to hold the reader of her epistolary fiction at a distance at which they might be able to observe its characters in a reflective, critical way. Barbauld's epistolary poetry, and the way it explores the production of knowledge, is built on the absence of its addressee. In examining how writers use epistolary distance in connection with the production of knowledge, I show that other elements were at stake in epistolary distance or proximity than personal relations, romantic intimacy, or the sense of belonging to a wider republic or community. Royal Society experimental reports, as we have seen, depended on minimal distance between reader and the report's content, to garner the reader's trust and belief as virtual witness. Observational distance was also a contested element of the proper functioning of sentimental epistolary fiction. The ways in which writers used epistolarity to establish critical, affective, and observational distance had a bearing on the way that they positioned themselves with regard to the aspect or mode of empirical knowledge that

[131] The Multigraph Collective, *Interacting with Print: Elements of Reading in the Era of Print Saturation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 172, 173. See also Bruce Redford, *Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 2.
[132] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 43.

they were engaging with, to the models of morality they were promoting, and to the type of knowledge that their texts were producing.

Letters, fictional and otherwise, contributed to, and reflected, the elements of display and performance native to eighteenth-century empirical culture. They offered a site for the writer's performance and display, and the reader's process of observation. James How's formalist analysis of 'epistolary space' provides a means of understanding the letter as a site of performance. How argues that the experience and perception of letter writing changed following the establishment of a national Post Office system in the 1650s. This gave rise, he suggests, to an imaginative conceptualisation of a new sort of space, in which letters were contained in transit and, through them, people were able 'to live and to think, and hence to act'.[133] How's theory is suggestive, implying that writers conceived of an epistolary site that they could figuratively step onto, as onto a stage, that is represented by the textual, material site of the page of the letter. Manushag N. Powell's analysis of the construction of authorial identity in periodicals is applicable to the notion of authorial performance that How's understanding implies. She suggests that the identity or 'self' that is constructed in periodicals is 'not the well-known heroically unified Romantic "self," but something more tied to […] the many varieties of public and social existence'.[134] The self of the periodical author does not necessarily constitute a subjectivity, but something more fluid according to its context and audience.[135] This is a useful way of considering the enactment of selfhood in epistolary writing. Familiar letters share the qualities of the periodical of episodic production, and relevance to immediate events, but have the added dimension of being directed 'to' someone, towards a known, specific reader or group of readers. The inherent sociability of the letter, with a known, named correspondent as its observer or audience, has an effect on the writer's construction of their persona within the letter,

[133] James How, *Epistolary Spaces: English Letter Writing from the Foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's "Clarissa"* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 1-2.
[134] Manushag N. Powell, *Performing Authorship in Eighteenth-Century English Periodicals* (Lanham: Bucknell University Press, 2012), 9.
[135] Powell, *Performing Authorship*, 9.

as it gives them the opportunity to angle and shape their identity according to their readers. Keymer notes how in Richardson's personal correspondence 'his epistolary voice is strangely chameleon-like, adapted always to the particular context of each exchange'.[136] More recently, Louise Curran has demonstrated the complex ways in which Richardson's self-conscious epistolary performances in his personal correspondence informed his use of epistolarity in his publications.[137] The performance of different personae and identities to cohere with the expectations of the letter's recipient is a practice that Montagu, Delany, and the correspondents within the Bulstrode circle all adopt in different ways according to the demands of the specific situation and, more broadly, is a feature of the familiar letter that gave the writer access to imaginative forms of self-presentation.

With this opportunity, however, came fears of the potentially deceptive nature of the letter form. Letter-writing manuals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries insisted upon the notion that letters were a natural, unmediated form of communication, and that they represented the workings of the author's mind. '[W]e should write as we speak', *The Complete Letter-Writer* advises, but, unlike speech, a letter 'has all the advantage of pre-meditation, it is not apt to err'.[138] The repeated assertions of the naturalness of letters, and insistence on their propensity for direct communication, reveal both a contemporary desire for unmediated communication, and doubts of the ability of letters as a communicative technology to achieve it. Correspondents throughout the period, suggest the Multigraph Collective, 'were aware of the way that letters in manuscript highlighted mediation'.[139] Richardson, as Curran shows, was continually troubled by 'design' in letters: 'Richardson presented his writing as "undesigning" […] in the sense of not being deceitful or calculated'; he was wary of 'the dubious nature of letters' capacity for

[136] Keymer, *Richardson's "Clarissa"*, 64.
[137] Louise Curran, *Samuel Richardson and the Art of Letter-Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11-18.
[138] *The Complete Letter-Writer, containing Familiar Letters on the Most Common Occasions in Life* (London, 1776), 10.
[139] Multigraph Collective, *Interacting with Print*, 173.

indirection and deception'.[140] This capacity brings into question the reliability of the letter form for the communication of experiential representation. It highlights the impossibility of the complete recreation of an initial experience; there will always be an element of mediation and instability, and the witness will always be virtual. When writers were knowingly creative through the epistolary form, they were also engaging with and challenging questions of the textual representation of experience, and of the authority of an experiential and empirical system of knowledge.

One of the elements of Richardson's work that sparked debate, and the aspect we will see Scott's fiction engaging with most intricately, was his famed use of the letter form as a means of establishing sentimental proximity between the reader and the fictional letter writer, for the purpose of moral instruction. In the preface to the second edition of *Clarissa*, he explains that

> All the Letters are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects […] So that they abound not only with critical Situations, but with what may be called instantaneous Descriptions and Reflections (proper to be brought home to the breast of the youthful Reader); as also with affecting Conversations; many of them written in the dialogue or dramatic way.[141]

Richardson's emphasis is on the immediacy and 'instantaneous' nature of the communication between the character and the reader. As he put it in the preface to *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), his epistolary fictions were characterised by the 'Nature of familiar Letter, written, as it were, to the *Moment*, while the Heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears'.[142] The letter, as he views it, is a form that can capture the sentiments of a character, the 'Descriptions and Reflections' as they happen, which are then transmitted to the reader in a direct, sentimental and unmediated way. This, in theory, enabled a sympathetic connection between the reader and the

[140] Curran, *Samuel Richardson*, 9.
[141] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Toni Bowers and John Richetti, abridged edition (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2011), 30.
[142] Samuel Richardson, preface to *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (London, 1753), 1:vi.

text's virtuous characters, which spurred the reader to follow their exemplary moral behaviour.[143] Yet, as Richardson was keenly aware, the coming to fruition of this theory in practice was not straightforward, and his negotiation of the distance between the letter and the reader was more complex, which had implications for his texts' moral epistemology, and the perceived morality of his novels.

Contemporary critics questioned the efficacy of undertaking moral instruction through an intimate sentimental connection between the reader and the characters. Speaking of the use of example in instructive fiction for young readers, Samuel Johnson (1709-84) warned that 'the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will', and he suggests that to antidote this danger, 'the best examples only should be exhibited'.[144] For Johnson, sentimental proximity to the text is problematic; the example the reader observes can impress on them in unmediated and dramatic ways. Recent critics have shown how the epistolary form and the relationship it establishes with the reader intervene in these questions surrounding the morality and workings of sentimental fiction. Keymer suggests that Richardson's use of letters embodied his preoccupation with 'the deformations that arise from the rhetorical or performative tendencies of first-person discourse'; epistolarity was part of, but could also negotiate, the charges of artificiality and deception that were levied against sensibility.[145] Janet Todd highlights that in Richardson's fiction and elsewhere, letters mediate between fictional action and readerly sentiment. She argues that '[l]ike the body and unlike social speech, letters have some sincerity and spontaneity', but are also a 'distancing device' which must 'express some detachment', which 'makes it possible for verbal expressiveness and sensibility to unite, without the touch of sexuality or impropriety'.[146] For Todd, letters in sentimental fiction enable sincerity and 'verbal

[143] Sören Hammerschmidt, "Reputation," in *Samuel Richardson in Context*, ed. Peter Sabor and Betty A. Schellenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 58.
[144] Samuel Johnson, "No. 4," *The Rambler*, 31 March 1750, 4th ed. (London, 1756), 4:19.
[145] Keymer, *Richardson's "Clarissa"*, xvi.
[146] Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), 86.

expressiveness' that, as she argues, mitigates the problems that the proximity of the reader to the characters of sentimental fiction can cause. The treatment of epistolarity therefore, as we see in the moral writings of Scott and Baillie, was central to navigating the dangers of writerly deception and readerly sentimental proximity to the text. Epistolary devices posed challenges to and opportunities for negotiating the sentimental distance between reader and the writer, fictional character, or persona that the reader observed within the letter, which had implications for the moral dimension in the production of different sorts of knowledge.

VII. Chapter Rationale and Breakdown

I have selected the central figures of this thesis – Montagu, Scott, Portland and her circle, Barbauld, and Baillie –as women who were intellectually and culturally productive. Montagu, Scott, Barbauld and Baillie were each writers, and were all regular, if not prolific, letter-writers, and each had a keen awareness of the creative potential of epistolary form. Each also had an understanding of the empirical production of knowledge and contact with various knowledge-producing environments: Montagu through her friendship with Portland and visits to her estate; Scott through contact with Montagu during these visits, and her later position within an intellectual, religious and philanthropic social group at Bath; Portland through botanical work and extensive natural history collecting practices; Barbauld through the informal Dissenting education of her upbringing and her later work as an educator; Baillie through her brother who worked as a physician. Some of these women have been critically gathered under the rubric 'Bluestocking': a term that initially referred to the social group immediately surrounding Montagu, but that has also been used to refer more widely to denote 'intellectual women'. I follow recent reflections by Emma Major and Nicole Pohl that warn of the potentially homogenising effects of the term.[147] I therefore do not use the term 'Bluestocking' to group the women I discuss in this thesis, but I do use it on occasion to refer to the connections between

[147] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 80-84; Nicole Pohl, "Introduction: 'The Commerce of Life': Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800)," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (Winter 2018), 445-46.

Montagu, Scott, Carter, Elizabeth Vesey (1715-1791) and Catherine Talbot (1721-1770), and to the epistolary practices, and Anglican and philanthropic values that have been critically associated with this group.

I have also selected to study these figures for their social, religious, intellectual and creative differences, that inflect into their approaches to the relationship between empiricism and epistolary, and into the type of knowledge that they were interested in. Montagu and Scott were born into a gentry family. Montagu made great efforts towards improving her social standing: she inherited coal mines from her husband which she ran to great profit, and she gained fame as a London salon hostess. Scott's social trajectory was markedly different. After suffering smallpox and the break down of her marriage, she took residence in Bath with Lady Barbara Montagu (1722-65), and conducted a modest and active life of charity, practical Anglicanism and writing. Portland, as a wealthy aristocrat, had the inheritance and the means to pursue and sponsor programmes of knowledge production of various kinds at Bulstrode. Barbauld and Baillie were both Dissenters and neighbours for a time at Hampstead. Barbauld's unique philosophy of religious devotion and poetry was at the core of her epistolary and empirical representations in verse and, for Baillie, the empirical work of her brother, and her belief in the moral propensity of sympathetic connection, underpinned her literary empirical works. The selection of writers that I examine, therefore, demonstrates how a variety of middle-class and elite female writers, with diverse experiences, social interests, religious beliefs, and approaches to creativity, each pursued their respective approaches to the production of knowledge, and explored the types of knowledge that they each deemed important to challenge or produce.

In this thesis, these key figures are discussed in three groupings, according to the type of knowledge that the women address. My chapters on Montagu and Scott parallel each other not only in the fact that they present the differing approaches to empiricism and epistolarity of two sisters, but in that both women can be said to produce sociable knowledge. Montagu stimulates

her salon guests in intellectually productive and imaginative conversation, and tests the bounds of an empirical epistemology in her epistolary writing; Scott is concerned with inciting the reader of her moral epistolary fiction to benevolent and charitable social behaviour. Furthermore, both women are interested in the same epistemological issue: the problem of induction, and the slipperiness between the observed particular and an underpinning abstracted truth. An expanded chapter on Bulstrode constitutes the second grouping of individuals, all of whom are interested in the production of botanical knowledge in a way that we might understand to be more conventionally scientific, although we see that their production of different forms of botanical knowledge was informed by the sociable and epistolary practices within the network. Finally, Barbauld and Baillie both use the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity in their production of literary knowledge. These two figures also add a further dimension to our understanding of the knowledge-producing practices of women writers. Barbauld and Baillie do not only produce knowledge, but create epistemologies, inviting their readers to share in, respectively, poetic and moral ways of knowing. The organising principle of my textual analysis in this thesis is to examine moments in which empiricism and epistolarity come into contact: when, for example, a writer offers an observation of a person in epistolary form, or gives a circumstantial or sensorial description of an object or specimen using epistolary characteristics. This method of selection means that the content of the selections of text that I analyse is, at moments, wildly various: this thesis analyses women's descriptions of embroidery, shell-picking, snooty neighbours, exemplary benevolence, flowers, fungi, canals, insects, and depressed lovers. Although no thematic grouping holds these descriptions together, and their content ranges between artefacts, natural objects and people, they are consistent in that they all employ an aspect in the process of empirical observation, representation and inductive interpretation, and they are all epistolary, utilising elements of the letter form in creative ways.

In chapter one, I show how Montagu uses the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity in surprising and creative ways to stimulate the production of knowledge in others. Montagu's

salon sociability operated on empirical principles, but her youthful letters demonstrate her early understanding of the instability of an interpretative process that depended on a linear traversal from the observed particulars of a material object to a generalised form of knowledge. She explores the creative and knowledge-producing potential of this instability through a remarkable range of epistolary representations. She demonstrates how the notion of vanity unites the problem of induction with a broad correspondence network and how, in this manifestation, their combination stimulates the production of knowledge for the public good. In a series of letters representing people, she probes the instabilities of an epistemology built on visuality, exploring the mismatch between an individual's actions and motives, the inefficacy of the eyes and microscopes, and deductive interpretive alternatives. She uses epistemological instability to explore the creative possibilities and limits of the malleability of epistolary prose and the material qualities of the letter. Her ideas about the slipperiness of interpretation inform her later salon practices, particularly in her use of ornament and the production of a decorative pair of feather screens. The screens resist a singular interpretation and, like Montagu's changeable self-representation in her letters, are characterised by their ambivalence. As such, they have the purpose of inspiring a variety of imaginative, knowledge-producing responses amongst her guests, and enable Montagu to see herself contributing to the public good, and fulfilling her civic duty.

While Montagu actively pursues the creative opportunities that the slipperiness of inductive interpretation offer, in chapter two I show that it poses more of a threat to Scott's aims as a moral writer. In her moral piece *Millenium Hall* (1762) and sentimental novel *Test of Filial Duty* (1772) Scott employs a pedagogy of example, that operates on empirical principles by which the reader observes the virtuous actions of the texts' characters, in order to replicate them in their own lives. The problem of induction in this moral learning leaves open the possibility that the reader fails to learn morals themselves and performs virtuous acts purely through mimicry. Scott uses epistolarity in different ways in each text to combat this by establishing an

affective distance between the reader and the text, and encouraging in them processes of individual and sociable reflection. In *Millenium Hall*, the narrative frame offers an example of how letters might operate as a site of moral reflection themselves, and inset narratives indicate to the reader suitable times to pause to discuss the text's moral lessons. In her epistolary novel *Test of Filial Duty*, Scott emphasises the epistolary distance between her corresponding protagonists to establish an affective and critical distance between reader and text. I also show in this chapter how Scott associates morality with epistolarity in a set of educational cards suitable for children that she produces with Barbara Montagu. In using the relationship between the empirical observations of characters in moral texts and epistolarity in fiction to produce moral knowledge amongst her readers, Scott makes a claim for the morality of fiction, and epistolary novels in particular, in debates surrounding the moral potential of fiction following the publication of Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. She treads the line between writing sentimental fiction that will appeal to contemporary audiences, and to the practical Anglican piety of her Bluestocking peers.

Chapter three adopts a different structure to the other chapters in this thesis, as I examine the production of knowledge by the circle of botanists connected to Portland, and her Bulstrode estate, that included Delany, John Lightfoot (1735-88), Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-70) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). The botanists use a range of epistolary and ephemeral productions – letters, notes, publications and herbaria (collections of dried plants) – to negotiate the challenges of the Linnaean taxonomic system. Linnaeus's system was empirical in that it used representational and analytical descriptions of the specimen, in both visual and written form, as a technology in its inductive process of observation and categorisation. Botanists encountered problems in implementing his method in practice, particularly in the identification of species of fungi, which were ill catered for in Linnaeus's guidelines for description, and categorial framework. The ephemeral space of letters, notes and sketches that were circulated within the estate gave Delany, Lightfoot, Ehret and Portland opportunities to trial

representational approaches to overcome these challenges. Their use of epistolarity extended beyond botanical letters. Linnaeus's guidelines for herbaria advocated the exchange of dried specimens on loose sheets of paper, utilising epistolary technology to promote a collective, collaborative form of botanical endeavour. This was an invitation that Rousseau, botanising with Portland from a distance, and Delany, resident at Bulstrode and working on an enormous project of botanically accurate floral paper collages, took up to varying degrees according to their conceptualisation of the benefits of botany, and the social expectations that were placed on them. In each instance, the botanists' use of epistolarity and their awareness of the extent and degree of circulation of their botanical productions influenced the content and type of botanical knowledge that they produced, and the way in which they positioned themselves according to a Linnaean epistemology.

In chapter four, I argue that in her early poems written while resident at the Dissenting Warrington Academy, Barbauld produces a poetic epistemology, a particular way of knowing that the reader gains on encountering her poems. Several of her poems are epistles, addressed to her friends and family. In these, the absence of the recipient, in combination with detailed empirical observations of the natural world, or of various processes of knowledge production, create an epistemology in which epistolary absence brings poetic knowledge into being. She also poetically addresses the gendering of different forms of knowledge. Through the poetic representation of minute particulars, she demonstrates how poetry can transform observation or description into a devotional experience that the reader can take forward to their future encounters with God's natural creation. The self-reflective nature of her poetry marks her poems themselves as experiences. In each poem, she positions the reader in a different position in her poetic epistemology: as observer, critic and, in the unusual case of her 'riddles', as vital participant in the production of knowledge. Barbauld's poetry establishes a range of positions on the production of knowledge and the gendering of knowledge production, but resists holding

any of those positions in a consistent way, drawing into question the epistemological foundations that the modes of knowledge she inhabits stand on.

Baillie, the subject of chapter five, is also concerned with establishing new systems of knowing. Baillie is famed for her extensive and ambitious *Plays on the Passions* (1798): a moral theatrical project in which she aimed to produce a comedy and a tragedy on each of the principal passions, on the basis that people have a natural propensity to observe others, and morally learn from those observations. I examine her *Plays*, and her *Poems* (1790) that she published just prior, as literary experiments that draw on the rhetorical devices of Baconian empiricism as was practiced in the surgical work of her uncle, John Hunter (1728-1793). Baillie was interested in the limits and potential of a central epistolary characteristic: the relationship between communication and materiality. In her *Poems* and *Plays*, Baillie aimed to establish a sympathetic connection between character and reader, that would inspire the reader to moral action, as part of a broader moral theatrical epistemology. The material and formal qualities of writing – particularly in written, rather than performed, dramatic works – could cause both a hindrance for this aim, but also proffered opportunities for more direct sympathetic communication than poetry or prose.

Each writer examined a different aspect of the empirical process, emphasising the process of the problem of induction (Montagu and Scott), written or pictorial representation, identification and categorisation (the botanists at Bulstrode), the detailed representation of particulars (Barbauld) or representation and observation through performance and spectatorship (Baillie). They also each employed various elements of epistolarity, at different points. They deployed flexible prosaic form, the distance between writer and recipient, ephemerality, the technology of paper exchange, the recipient's absent-presence, epistolary materiality, and the capacity for connectivity in their address of epistemological issues. Through moments of intersection between aspects of the empirical process and epistolary characteristics, Montagu, Scott, the

botanists at Bulstrode, Barbauld and Baillie probed elements of an empirical epistemology, and pursued other forms of knowledge and knowledge production in creative and original ways.

Chapter One

Elizabeth Montagu: Vanity, Ambivalence and Facilitating the Production of Knowledge

Elizabeth Montagu, salon hostess, colliery manager, landowner and letter writer, said of herself, 'I live in a great beehive. And tho' as the queen bee, I do not work myself, yet like her Majesty, I have care of the collected treasures.'[1] She had care of treasures both physical and intellectual. In her home at Hill Street, London, from 1744, and her more extravagant property at Montagu House in Portman Square from 1781, Montagu adorned herself and the interior of her salon with luxury goods in a programme of conspicuous consumption that evidenced her social status, and sparked creative and productive discussion amongst her guests.[2] She was also the patron of works in poetry, literary criticism, philosophy, moral writing and botany. The image of Montagu as queen bee at the centre of, and connected to, her workers brings to mind her central position in her wide-reaching epistolary network. Montagu was a keen and creative letter writer and, from her early epistolary exchanges with her friend Margaret Bentinck, the duchess of Portland, she cultivated an extensive epistolary network which included friends, relations and society figures. The image of 'queen bee' is also one of many parallels that Montagu drew, as Emma Major has shown, between herself and the figure of a queen, usually Elizabeth I.[3] These comparisons enact how Montagu saw her patronage practices and inclusive salon sociability as activities that coordinated and enabled the production of knowledge for public good. The position of the queen bee surrounded by her male workers is gendered, but Montagu's claim to this sort of public authority over those around her was more complicated than that of her bee counterpart. Montagu dismissed and challenged the masculine gendering of the kind of public

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[1] Elizabeth Montagu, *Mrs. Montagu, "Queen of the Blues": Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, ed. Reginald Blunt (London, 1923), 2:136, quoted in Les Turnbull, "Elizabeth Montagu: 'A Critick, a Coal Owner, a Land Steward, a Sociable Creature'," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 683.
[2] Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 68.
[3] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 72-80.

duty that she saw herself performing in her facilitation of the production of various kinds of knowledge.

In this chapter, I will show how Montagu utilised the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity as an element that assisted her aim to facilitate others' production of knowledge. In her epistolary representations, and the decorative objects she used in her salon – notably a spectacular set of screens made from feathers – Montagu explored and exploited the instabilities of an empirical mode of observation and interpretation as it manifested in sociable settings. We saw in the introduction how the interpretation of objects exchanged, gifted and displayed was contingent on the object's context, rendering the inductive transition from a particular object to its broader meaning as unstable. This was a practical and philosophical issue: it impacted on social interpretation and exchange, and threatened the linear process of the production of knowledge by empirical observation and inductive interpretation. Montagu explored both of these dimensions of the problem of induction in her letters and salon sociability. In her early letters, Montagu used vanity as a point of contact between the problem of induction and letter writing, and used the relationship between the two to support her self-presentation as facilitating knowledge production for wider public good. In a series of letters describing people, Montagu uses philosophical problems in the processes of observation, representation and interpretation as occasions to explore the limits of epistolary creativity. In the final section of this chapter, I show how Montagu's exploitation of the problem of induction manifests in her treatment of ornament in her letters and in her salon, where she utilises the instability of a linear process of induction to establish an ambivalence in her presentation of herself and the objects in her salon, which she hopes will yield imaginative, publicly useful and epistemologically productive conversation. Underpinning Montagu's very varied epistolary and physical negotiations of the shortcomings of an empirical logic in social settings is her notion that this instability provides an opportunity for her to stimulate the production of knowledge through creativity, epistolarity, and conversation, and that this serves the public good.

A satirical representation in *The Observer* in 1785, of an afternoon at Montagu's salon, by dramatist and civil servant Richard Cumberland (1732-1811), illustrates how the salon operated on the empirical principles of observation and interpretation. Cumberland praises Montagu's contributions to the arts and sciences. He sees them fuelled by vanity and characterised by their variety; her salon hosts both 'the manufacturer of a toothpick' and 'the author of an epic poem'.[4] According to his account, the smooth sociability of the salon was dependent on the visitors' observations of the people and objects around them, but this process repeatedly failed. Montagu mistakes Cumberland for a famous sea diver, and blames 'these wretched eyes of mine'; a sermonising gentleman bores his audience but does not realise, as his eyes 'never once lighted on the company'; and a 'blind old gentleman', a philosopher who had formerly made discoveries on the microscope, bemoans that he is unable to continue his latest project – dissecting the eyes of a mole – and offers to share with the party his new discovery of a poison for vermin that he suspects as the cause of his blindness.[5] Cumberland suggests that the sociability of Montagu's salon was dependent on ineffective processes of observation and interpretation and, when these fail, polite sociability also stumbles. He also suggests that Montagu manipulated these unstable empirical processes for her own self-promotion; she had 'several new publications on various subjects' lying on a table in her reception room in which 'she had stuck small scraps of paper, as if to mark where she had left off reading'.[6] This technique, according to one of the salon's attendees, had the effect of 'making authors believe she reads their works' and as a result, by 'tickling their vanity', she sends them as 'heralds into the world to cry up her fame to the skies'.[7] Cumberland implies that Montagu is aware of the empirical underpinnings of her salon sociability and that she exploits the slipperiness of

[4] Richard Cumberland, "No. 23," *The Observer* (London, 1785), 217.
[5] Cumberland, "No. 23," 220, 221, 223, 224.
[6] Cumberland, "No. 23," 217-18.
[7] Cumberland, "No. 23," 218.

empiricism in her salon setting by directing her guests' interpretation of objects placed on display for her own, vain, purposes.

Montagu's letters, and others' praise for her, reveal how her manipulation of empirical interpretive instability was more sophisticated than Cumberland's satire suggests. Her epistolary self-presentation was chameleonic, shifting and adapting as circumstance, correspondent and purpose required. Nicole Pohl's formulation of Montagu as a woman of 'commerce' in an eighteenth-century sense of the term helpfully illustrates how Montagu cuts across a range of socially, epistemologically, and commercially productive activities in her commitments 'to trade, to correspond and to exchange ideas as a literary critic and essayist, to be a businesswomen, a patron of the arts, and a literary hostess'.[8] The changeability between each role that this range of activities demanded has some resemblances to Manushag N. Powell's notion of authorial performance in periodicals that we saw in the introduction, in which the performance of the self was fragmented through different varieties of social and written expression.[9] But if we view Montagu as the queen bee, at the centre of her epistolary network, rather than represented from various angles within it, she evades our understanding, and our possible interpretation of her is somewhat ambivalent. Montagu was felt to be an evasive figure contemporaneously, as well as in current scholarship. Major shows that praise for Montagu as it was expressed across polite literature leaves Montagu herself as a 'shadowy figure'; 'the praise dazzles, presenting Montagu in paradigmatic and hyperbolic language that conceals her individuality even as it celebrates her as a model for the improvement of the reading public.'[10] Harriet Guest, furthermore, suggests that Montagu was seen as 'on the one hand a shining spectacle for the civilized progress of the nation, and on the other a figure of vanity whose learning is tainted by the doubtful glitter of fashionable display'.[11] I do not aim to capture the

[8] Pohl, "The Commerce of Life," 444..
[9] Powell, *Performing Authorship*, 9.
[10] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 72.
[11] Guest, *Small Change*, 131

elusive Montagu through her letters but, rather, to examine how she deliberately cultivated this ambivalence through her varied self-presentations, and her refusal to commit the objects of her salon, namely her feather screens, to one interpretation. She exploits the instability of empirical observation and interpretation, which has the effect of leaving the object of observation – herself, or an object in her salon – open to whatever interpretation most interests, inspires, and sparks ideas in her correspondents and guests. It also enables her, as Major's and Guest's interpretations suggest, to shift in her position on broader questions that this raises about the gendering of knowledge, about vanity, about the progress of civilisation, and about knowledge as a public benefit.

Montagu's epistolary and sociable self-presentation practices engaged in debates on these topics as they related to the eighteenth-century discourse of civic humanism. The republican ideals that characterised civic humanism, according to Cary Nederman, included the notion that republican life was 'thought to be formative of the public spirit on which it rests'.[12] It depended on 'constant civic activity' and the 'realisation of human potentiality, encouraging the flowering of all forms of creativity and ingenuity insofar as they contribute[d] to public welfare'.[13] Such civic humanist values were embedded characteristics of eighteenth-century culture, and we see Montagu's 'public spirit' and belief in the national value of 'civic activity' in her encouragement and support of the arts through patronage. Tania Smith demonstrates how Montagu actively engaged with the educational and rhetorical republican ideals that she encountered in her reading of the *Life of Cicero*, by Conyers Middleton (1683-1750), a close family friend, and the epistolary and social exchanges that this reading prompted. Smith shows how Montagu's 'reflection on rhetorical history and contemporary life built within her a strong

[12] Cary Nederman, "Civic Humanism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2019 edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/humanism-civic/>.
[13] Nederman, "Civic Humanism."

sense of virtuous, civic rhetorical intentions to awaken and inspire others'.[14] By Smith's account, Montagu's early understanding of civic duty, and her ideas of stimulating public productivity in others were connected to her early learning of rhetoric, sociable debate and letter writing. Smith also suggests that Montagu's early patriotism stemmed from her admiration of Cicero's desire to see the flourishing of his republic.[15] Major also sees Montagu's letter writing as formative in her patriotism, and later public activities as she contributed to, and helped create, a national, polite, Anglican sociability. Major suggests that the way that the public and private map onto each other in Montagu's correspondence reveals her 'strong private involvement in the fate of the national public', and her construction of a wider sense of national community.[16] Montagu's early republican reading, and a backdrop of civic humanist values, cultivated her desire to make productive public contributions. She enacted these through letter writing, patronage and salon sociability, in ways that transformed domestic epistolary activity into public spirit and national community.

Montagu's aspirations to make productive public contributions as part of a republican sense of civic duty and to build a patriotic, Christian national community, are not straightforward to reconcile; her monarchical positioning as queen bee and her imaginary following in the footsteps of Elizabeth I is at odds with republican values of communal civic responsibility. J. G. A. Pocock's thesis of civic humanism in its eighteenth-century manifestation explains the context of this paradox. Pocock shows that the civic humanist ideal was in an ongoing and irresolvable tension with new social and commercial structures.[17] He suggests that at this moment:

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[14] Tania Smith, "Elizabeth Montagu's Study of Cicero's Life: The Formation of an Eighteenth-Century Woman's Rhetorical Identity," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 26, no. 2 (Spring, 2008): 173.
[15] Smith, "Elizabeth Montagu's Study of Cicero's Life," 180-81.
[16] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 185.
[17] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 462.

> The universe of real property and personal autonomy now seemed to belong to a historic past; new and dynamic forces, of government, commerce, and war, presented a universe which was effectively superseding the old but condemned the individual to inhabit a realm of fantasy, passion, and *amour-propre* [self-liking]. [The individual] could explain this realm […] but he could not explain himself by locating himself as a real and rational being within it […] far from seeing himself as a mere product of historical forces, the civic and propertied individual was endowed with an ethic that clearly and massively depicted him as a citizen of classical virtue, the inhabitant of a classical republic.[18]

In these terms, Montagu's changeable self-presentation, that gave way to interpretive ambivalence, enabled her to occupy a range of positions in Pocock's paradox. She could shift between queenliness and public-spirited republicanism, and she could 'inhabit a realm of fantasy' and self-liking, as she did in her use of vanity, her pursuit of fame, and her encouragement of the work of others. She also shifted between 'self-love and self-liking', 'Court and Country'; her classical republican 'ethic', as Pohl reminds us, was not purely motivated by her public spirit and civic duty, but her own social climbing aspirations as she 'attempted – quite ambitiously and consciously – to progress beyond her origins to enter the intersecting social circles of the public and the court'.[19] Elsewhere Pohl argues that Montagu identified her role of salon hostess as the 'main force' in her own 'self-proclaimed civilizing process' that enabled her to negotiate 'often contradictory discussions about gender roles and the demarcation of public and private', in a salon culture that operated mutually in embodied sociability and in epistolary productions.[20] In this light, creativity in letters, as a form of writing that was domestically produced, varied in content, and publicly impactful, and the slipperiness of an empirical mode of interpreting objects represented in letters and the salon, were tools that Montagu drew on to traverse and navigate the overlaps and tensions between different modes of public action in an eighteenth-century civic humanist context.

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[18] Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 466.
[19] Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 467; Pohl, "The Commerce of Life," 446.
[20] Nicole Pohl, "'Perfect Reciprocity': Salon Culture and Epistolary Conversations," *Women's Writing* 13, no. 1 (2006): 149, 148.

Montagu uses empirical interpretation in particular to negotiate the gendering of civic humanist discourse. John Barrell argues that the 'discourse of civic humanism was the most authoritative fantasy of masculinity in early eighteenth-century Britain', in its presentation of 'public virtue as "manly" virtue', and description of the corruption of the citizen as "effeminacy"'.[21] Barrell shows that one of the arenas in which individuals could lay claim to, and demonstrate, such masculine public virtue was aesthetics.[22] In the period, political authority was 'exercised by those capable of thinking in general terms; which usually means those capable of producing abstract ideas […] out of the raw data experience. The inability to do this was usually represented as in part the result of a lack of education, a lack which characterised women and the vulgar.'[23] Empirical observation and inductive interpretation, the ability to produce general conclusions from observed particulars, therefore, carried considerable gendered and political weight. Montagu used imagery of empirical observation to demonstrate her capability of thinking in abstract terms. She writes to Portland in 1745 about the collective wisdom and utility of individuals. She says that humankind is made up of 'classes of people' and we might rail against individuals for various reasons, but

> could we see the entire economy we should then declare how all conspire to the great end, and learn not to despise any part of so excellent a constitution […] So instead of a microscope, that considers only minute objects, take a moral and physical telescope, look over the whole creation of intelligent beings, and you will be reconciled to every part of them.[24]

Montagu applies images of instruments of empirical observation to her consideration of mankind as a whole, to demonstrate her ability to synthesise observed particulars of individual people into a general understanding of the make-up of human society. This points to the

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[21] John Barrell, "The Dangerous Goddess: Masculinity, Prestige and the Aesthetic in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 63.
[22] John Barrell, "The Public Prospect and the Private View: The Politics of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Birth of Pandora*, 41.
[23] Barrell, "Politics of Taste," 41.
[24] Montagu to Portland, Mount Morris, 23 October 1745, in Elizabeth Montagu, *The Letters of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. Matthew Montagu (1809-13; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3:32-33.

potential use of an empirical form of observation and interpretation to offer groups disenfranchised within a civic humanist discourse, 'women and the vulgar', to make a claim for political authority.[25] Montagu's choice to represent her capability for abstraction using the example of individual people as part of a collective emphasises her ambitions for public influence, and implies her recognition of the potentially productive value that individuals, such as those that she patronises and hosts at her salon, have in their contributions to a collective knowledge and culture.

It is perhaps surprising, then, that Montagu enjoyed aesthetic ornament and detail in the objects that adorned her salon, and in the prose of other letters that she wrote. Major demonstrates the significance of ornament, detail, and intimate epistolarity in epistolary fiction. In particular, Samuel Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison was a 'public-spirited private man', caught in the Pocockean eighteenth-century civic humanist paradox.[26] Major explains that the 'virtues of private man, even when described as public qualities, necessitate explanation and detail, for they do not have the cultural weight of and immediate recognition possessed by the hegemonic model of civic humanist man'.[27] Major demonstrates how Richardson used the epistolary form to achieve this. The 'precision of detail' in the novel 'combines with the form and even the language of the epistolary novel to represent a masculinity that is bounded by the detail of the domestic, intimate, and the vulgar'.[28] Naomi Schor describes the use of detail in prose as 'doubly gendered as feminine'; detail, she suggests, participates in a 'semantic network, bounded on one side by the *ornamental*, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other by the *everyday*, whose "prosiness" is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women'.[29] Montagu's position as public-spirited private woman is accompanied by a different set of concerns than the public-spirited private man of *The*

[25] Barrell, "Politics of Taste," 41.
[26] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 107.
[27] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 107.
[28] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 107.
[29] Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Mathuen), 4.

History of Sir Charles Grandison (1753). The legitimation of her public activity lies in identifying with the civic humanist model of masculinity, rather than distancing herself from it. As we might expect, Montagu's approach to detail is not consistent throughout her letters and in her treatment of the objects of her salon, but she challenges and reconfigures the associations between detail, ornament, epistolary prose, and effeminacy. On some occasions, as in her representation of telescopic vision, and as we will see in the second section of this chapter, Montagu challenges the view that epistolary description conforms to such detail, immediacy and intimacy that Major identifies of Richardson's fiction. She does not, however, reject ornamentation as a whole. In empirical terms, as we saw in Thomas Sprat's discussion of description in the Royal Society, ornamental prosaic representation distracts from and obscures the object that it is attempting to represent. According to this logic, it hinders the inductive process of interpretation from observed particulars to general conclusions. Montagu does use ornament and ostentatious display, as in the example of her feather screens but, rather than representing an effeminate experience or insisting on an alternative private masculinity as in *Charles Grandison*, she utilises the obscuring effects of ornament that Sprat is concerned about, to manipulate the process of inductive interpretation. She embraces the interpretive ambivalence that ornament produces, to spark knowledge-producing discussion amongst her salon attendees, and defy its associations with effeminacy.

Vanity upsets an inductive, empirical process of interpretation, and Montagu used this characteristic of her own vanity, and her appeal to others', as a point of intersection between the problem of induction, the positioning of the individual in relation to public communities and power structures, and epistolarity. The definition of 'vanity' in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) emphasises its potential for deception. Among its definitions are '[e]mptiness; uncertainty; inanity', '[f]alsehood; untruth'.[30] When an individual displays vanity, their outward actions are a 'falsehood'; while their actions may be virtuous, they do not cohere with their

[30] *A Dictionary of the English Language*, comp. Samuel Johnson, 2nd ed. (London, 1755), s.v. "vanity."

inward motive of self-promotion. The actions of a vain person are unintelligible, and defy a linear, inductive interpretation, as what is seen is mismatched with what is intended. Yet vanity was not entirely negative; Adam Smith's moral philosophy, for example, acknowledged the public benefits that a vain person could bring about in the pursuit of their own self-interest.[31] Montagu's efforts to establish a positive public image of herself through supporting others aligns with the description that Pocock offers of the changing notion of social morality in the eighteenth century. In Pocock's interpretation, 'the mainspring of social behaviour' shifted from 'self-love' to 'self-liking', 'based on the figure one cut in one's own eyes and those of others'.[32] For Montagu, the vanity of the figure she cut in her own eyes and in others' was both a motivation for and a mechanism by which she encouraged others in their production of knowledge. As Cumberland satirised, she tickled the vanity of the artists and writers around her.[33] She mobilised vanity's deceptiveness and the challenge it posed to a linear process of inductive interpretation, adapting her self-presentation to others, inspiring in them productive activity and, consequently, fulfilling her civic duty.

I. Vanity, Epistolarity and Public Benefit

In her early correspondence, throughout the 1730s, Montagu established connections between letter writing and vanity. Vanity was a nominal reason for her cultivation of a wide epistolary network and was a feature that underpinned her epistolary relationships, both in the way that she enacted her own vanity, and appealed to that of her correspondents. In one of her earliest letters to Portland, sent in 1736, Montagu describes awaiting the duchess's response to her previous

[31] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 61, 271, 303, 304. Eric Schliesser, "The Obituary of a Vain Philosopher: Adam Smith's Reflections on Hume's Life," *Hume Studies* 29, no. 2 (November 2003): 343; Maria Pia Paganelli, "Vanity and the Daedalian Wings of Paper Money in Adam Smith," in *New Voices on Adam Smith*, ed. Leonidas Montes and Eric Schliesser (New York: Routledge, 2006), 279-81.
[32] Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 465.
[33] Cumberland, "No. 23," 218.

letter. She agonises over whether imagining the letter stored in Portland's letter case or receiving a swift response is the more pleasurable scenario.

> Had I a mighty conflict to decide whether I should chuse the honour of a place for my letter in the Graces [*sic*] most illustrious letter case or the pleasure of an immediate answer thus Madam did I sometimes in my imagination take the letter half out of the case and put a pen into your hand (reserving the ink and papers for my more settled resolution) then did I again reinstate my letter in its former Glory and was going to take the pen out of your hand but upon reflecting what you coud [*sic*] do with that pen provided I added ink & paper I was going to snatch the letter out of the case had not the love of fame interposed and then said I what is fame which we don't hear & commendations we never Know Fame is but Vanity & losing a letter from my Lady Duchess vexation of Spirit I had rather say now I have a letter from you than it shou'd be reported that an Epistle of mine did actually lye in State in your letter case for 18 days in the 8th Year of the Reign of King George the second.[34]

Both Montagu's own vanity, and her appeal to Portland's, figure prominently in this passage. As Montagu perceives it in this letter, the problem with fame and vanity is that it leaves compliments unknown, not the vice of the trait itself. Montagu's grandiose, mock-heroic tones of the report of her 'Epistle', lying in Portland's case, and the length and extent of the imagined scenario itself appeal to, and insert herself into, Portland's esteem in the same way as her letter enters into Portland's letter case. Montagu repeatedly indicates that her letter's appearance in Portland's letter case has a public dimension, and will elevate her socially; it is an 'honour', a position of 'Glory', and she imagines that its position in Portland's letter case will be 'reported' after the event. Pohl shows that Montagu prepared her letters with an eye to publication as early as 1765; here Montagu construes Portland's letter case, albeit fictionally, as a public space, in which her letter will be seen, will advance her social status, and will stimulate speculation and discussion, suggesting that her association of letter writing with her notion of a contribution to a

[34] Montagu to Portland, 2 October 1736, San Marino, California, The Huntington Library, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu Papers, MO 261. Hereafter 'HL'. See also Montagu to Portland, Horton, May 1738, in which Montagu desires Portland to 'put the letter in your pocket without reading for a few days'. HL MO 271A. For the furnishings of letter-writing and storage practices, see Markman Ellis, "Letters, Organization, and the Archive in Elizabeth Montagu's Correspondence," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2018): 617-18.

wider public began even earlier.[35] Markman Ellis notes that '[k]eeping received letters was an established social practice in wealthy households', and Montagu's appearance among the duchess's collected letters affords her, in a more symbolic way than potential future publication, a material marker of social status, both to herself, and to others that may see her letter amongst Portland's collection.[36] This passage also suggests vanity's role in the establishment of a socially aspirational, public-facing correspondence network. Although Montagu eventually lands on her preference for receiving a reply from the duchess, her directional emphasis is on letters moving away from her – on correspondence as a network expanding outwards – and on the scope of her correspondence in terms of the class of its recipient, rather than a reciprocal friendly exchange between two people. Even at this early stage in her correspondence career, Montagu was conscious of curating a public image, and the potential for expanding an ambitious social and epistolary network.

In a series of letters that she sends to her sister in 1740, Montagu is more exploratory in her representation of the potential benefits of vanity in its capacity to expand an epistolary network into something that has a public dimension. She builds on the alignment that she has noted between vanity and breadth in epistolary circulation to consider the public good that vanity, when well directed, can achieve. She compliments her sister's work on an apron and comments that humility might stand as a good quality, but that the actual design in expressing humility and rejecting praise is often to 'take up a stock of credit' for being humble:[37]

> Vanity is the Nurse of Virtue, is her Deputy when absent, & assistant when weak; Supports the Patriot; Inspires the Poet; Directs the Judge, inflames the Hero, warms the friend & Sanctifies the Priest, it does the work of every virtue while the reward is but to blow up the bladders of emptiness with the breath of fame, & make perhaps a Syllable puffed with the favourable gale

[35] Pohl, "Perfect Reciprocity," 148.
[36] Ellis, "Letters, Organization and the Archive," 609.
[37] Montagu to Scott, Bulstrode, 15 November 1740, HL MO 5563. Montagu repeats similar sentiments regarding humility to Scott a couple of months later: 'I think an ostentatious profession of humility the most ridiculous thing I know. It is an hypocritical appearance of a chimerical virtue, the counterfeiting a falsity'. Montagu to Scott, Whitehall, 22 January 1741, HL MO 5597.

> of praise to swim down Fates unnavigable Tyde; Vanity was given as the blessing of Society, & may make a person as Useful to it as Real Virtue.[38]

Vanity, by this account, is ubiquitous, virtuous in its effects, and can be a positive social force, present across a range of public occupations and activities, and vanity operates both on an individual and social level. The language she uses acknowledges the charges of vacuity that were applied to vanity in contemporary advice literature, that warned of vanity turning the mind 'frothy and volatile'; she identifies the reward of vanity as the inflation of 'bladders of emptiness', and the 'breath of fame', with empty puffs and winds of praise.[39] In a letter to Portland, Montagu reconfigures the gendered and prescriptive association between vanity and intellect. She recycles the list that she has sent to Scott, to write to Portland that vanity, 'so sweet a companion',

> when we go into the world it leads us by the hand … [vanity] commends the hero that gains the world, and the philosopher that forsakes it […] sits on the pen of the author, and visits the paper of the critic; reads dedications, and writes them; makes court to superiors, receives homage of inferiors; in short, it is useful, it is agreeable, and the very thing needful to happiness.[40]

Once again, vanity has a public dimension: it operates in 'the world', in publication, and at court. It is the force that stirs people to action, and instigates an individual's fulfilment of his or her occupation. Montagu had a habit of recycling aspects of her letters to various correspondents; this letter, as a reworked version of the earlier letter to Scott, presents an interesting case.[41] She removes the language that recalls the incompatibility of vanity and female intellect, reconfiguring vanity into something substantial and publicly productive. Advice literature offered religion and reading as remedies to vanity. John Essex (c.1680-1744), for example, suggested that young women 'Read useful and instructive Books' to give them

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[38] Montagu to Scott, Bulstrode, 15 November 1740, HL MO 5563.
[39] [Wilkes?], *In Praise of Female Learning*, in *Conduct Literature for Women, 1720-1770*, ed. Pam Morris (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004), 1:384.
[40] Montagu to Portland, Allerthorpe, 19 November 1742, in *Letters of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu*, 2:222-23.
[41] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 83.

'Solidity of Thought'.[42] But Montagu, rather than supporting the notion of quelling vanity through reading, suggests that cultivating vanity can lead to writing, and the production of literary and philosophical knowledge. Furthermore, she associates herself with this figure of vanity. Although his letter predates much of her patronage activities, it reads as a list of the areas of her later support, and demonstrates her social aspirations to 'make court to superiors' and receive 'homage of inferiors'. She thereby dispenses of the 'froth' of feminised vanity and stakes a claim for the public benefit of vanity's, and her own, knowledge-supporting activities. This move also invokes letter writing as a facet in this process; it is not only the pen of the author and the philosopher that vanity leads into the world, but her own resoundingly written letters in her growing epistolary network.

II. Objects, People, and Letters: Epistolary Creativity and the Production of Knowledge

Montagu assisted in the production of knowledge in more concrete ways by facilitating the collection of shells and feathers for Portland's natural history collection through epistolary exchange. Montagu's reflections on vanity, however, brought to her attention the problem of induction. In the same 1740 letter that Montagu wrote to her sister in which she commended her work on the apron, Montagu continues by suggesting that

> [t]o the Possessor [of vanity] it is very difficult, all fame is foreign but of true desert, plays round the head but comes not to ye heart, the Vanity works the noble act it dare not adopt, the Praise, & while it smiles it cheats others sighs that it is not cheated: But what transitions I have made, from a Short apron to Humility! from thence taken a high leap to Vanity, & so come round by mortification, my letters are like an Index, as many heads & as little Doctrine, but it would look like that humility I condemn'd to find fault with them.[43]

[42] John Essex, *The Young Ladies Conduct: or, Rules for Education* (London, 1722), in Morris, *Conduct Literature*, 1:82. See also [Wilkes?], *In Praise of Female Learning*, 1:384.
[43] Montagu to Scott, Bulstrode, 15 November 1740, HL MO 5563.

Vanity, by this account, is inherently contradictory, and it throws its possessor into inner conflict between knowing with the head that noble acts have been performed, but not feeling it in the heart. Its effects are noble, but vanity itself is not. It deceives, or 'cheats' others, while believing it should be cheated; it mutually smiles and sighs. Its outward effects do not represent the inward motive, resulting in a challenge to the coherence between outward motion and deeper truth that an inductive, empirical line of reasoning depends on. Furthermore, her letter formally enacts the instability of a linear form of interpretation. Montagu highlights the way her letter has made unconnected leaps between topics – from an apron, to humility, to vanity – and finally considers the structure of the letter itself. Her comment that these leaps have taken the form of an 'Index' draws attention to the letter's textual composition and its formal malleability, revealing her early interest in how different forms of epistolary expression might lend themselves to, or disrupt, the reader's inductive interpretation of the objects represented within the letter's body.

Montagu explicitly addresses the interpretive ambiguities that arise from the observation of actions in a letter to Portland reporting that she has contacted her brother, Robert Robinson (1717-56), requesting that he bring back feathers and shells from his travels with the East India Company. She states that her brother

> Will be proud to have added something to your Graces Cabinet, I cannot help thinking I see him in his check'd Shirt & coloured Handkercheif [*sic*], tyed with a graceful negligence about his neck […] gathering shells for the finest Lady in England while the ignorant Crew imagine his diligence to be only to get a present for Black Kate of Deptford or some sunburn'd Nymph at Wapping: so difficult it is to guess the motive from the action.[44]

As well as noting his pride – another instance of vanity fuelling an epistolary connection – Montagu addresses head-on the ambiguities in understanding that are the product of inductive empirical observation and interpretation. For onlookers, it is unclear that he is collecting shells

[44] Montagu to Portland, 5 January 1737, HL MO 265.

for Portland, rather than for a city woman of ill repute. With this in mind, Montagu's use of coloured, textured and circumstantial particulars – the checked shirt, the coloured handkerchief, and the way he wears it with a 'graceful negligence' – stakes a claim for the authority of her version of events over the other possible interpretations of the scenario also vying for authority, and thus secures his moral motives. By contrast with the crew's interpretations, Montagu elevates Portland's collection, and uses epistolary prose to explore the interpretative ambiguities of observation of behaviour.

In her representation of objects in the letters she sent to assist Portland gathering shells and feathers, Montagu foregrounds their visible and ornamental qualities, rather than their natural philosophical significance. She writes that collecting objects for Portland 'beside the pleasure of serving you which wou'd always give the greatest satisfaction I should think I contributed to the composing the prettiest work in the World'.[45] When she assures Portland that she will write to her brother, she promises to request him

> to bring me from India Parrots feathers, & some of many other beautiful birds, I have heard him say he has seen there […] and in the mean time I will get all the feathers I can here for Peacocks, and Parrots, I fear I cannot supply you.[46]

The purpose of their epistolary exchange is reminiscent of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century natural philosophical networks, in which epistolary communication facilitated the transmission of specimens between geographically distant individuals.[47] Beth Fowkes Tobin has shown how in in such networks, and in Portland's collection specifically, material objects such as shells took on various meanings as they traversed through different

[45] Montagu to Portland, 2 October 1736, HL MO 261.
[46] Montagu to Portland, 3 December 1736, HL MO 264.
[47] Elizabeth Eger, "Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture," Parergon 26, no. 2 (2009): 123. See also Yale, *Sociable Knowledge*.

spaces and contexts, accruing 'value as an object of beauty, curiosity and scientific enquiry'.[48] But Montagu's representation closes off such a range of interpretations and directs the reader to appreciate their visual appeal, rather than their natural philosophical value. Her repetition of 'Parrots' and the listing of 'Peacocks, and Parrots' brings forth the vivid colours and unfamiliar forms of these 'beautiful' birds. Their visuality hints that she anticipates, as with the imagined letter-case, her contribution being displayed amongst Portland's collection. Montagu was fully aware of the instability of how objects such as shells and feathers might be interpreted as natural philosophical specimens or as ornamental items depending on their context. In these letters, she makes a deliberate choice to present the feathers as ornaments, rather than knowledge-producing entities, establishing epistolary space as both functional in organising the acquisition of feathers, and as a site of aesthetic display.

Montagu takes advantage of the ambivalence in possible interpretations of natural philosophical objects in her epistolary representation. She experiments with using the formal qualities of the letter to guide the reader towards an aesthetic reading of such objects, and to display her skill in letter writing. Flowers become her subject in a letter to her sister about an apron that she is going to make, following her sister's success:

> Mrs Pendarves has sent me a pretty pattern Enough in black & white only outlines, it consists of Auriculas Anemonies a poppy Roses & buds Orange flowers & lillies [*sic*] of the Vally to help me in shading she lent me the prints of the flowers which my Pappa said would be admirable directions if they were coloured but I have only in black & white, now what I should be infinitely obliged to my father & you for would be to get me a pattern done by Mr Hately of Auriculas in abundance Convolvaleus [*sic*] (that is the blew flower we work up in the print in the facing) the lilies [*sic*] you mention, poppies, & tulips (of which I have painted ones very fine) as likewise convolvaleus [*sic*] in a picture, lillies [*sic*] I would have too & narcissus's & any thing else to make out the pattern.[49]

[48] Beth Fowkes Tobin, "The Duchess's Shells: Natural History Collecting, Gender, and Scientific Practice," in *Material Women, 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 250.

[49] Montagu to Scott, Bulstrode, 17 August 1740, HL MO 5544. The unfamiliar terms for flowers in this passage are not an indication of an attempt to display botanical knowledge. 'Auriculus', 'narcissus' and 'convolvulus' were the common terms for Bear's-ear, daffodils, and bindweed, and they later became standardized as part of the Linnaean binomials for these plants. The people she mentions in this passage

Rather than an 'index', the opening of this passage comprises a list that resists an inductive, empirical form of interpretation. The list of the flowers to be featured on the apron's design contours their outlines; the reader is not encouraged to delve for a deeper botanical or aesthetic truth, but is led in quick succession from one flower to the next. It serves its practical purpose, but the incessant series of images of flowers is vivid, and ornaments the letter's prose. The repetition of certain names throughout the passage – auriculas, convolvulus, and lilies – lends the prose abundance, variety and texture. The passage also has an intermedial quality as Montagu draws on a variety of visual forms of representation, including prints, flowers and paintings. The overlapping and disorientating effect that this has – each form calling for the reader's attention – resists the establishment of an understanding of them beyond their visual appearance. These forms of visual media are ornamental: they congregate and jostle together in a description that, although practical, is floral, colourful, full of twists, swirls and repetitions in almost a Baroque ornamental flourish. The site of the letter is a dramatic, vibrant, almost theatrical space as she experiments with the ornamental and decorative possibilities of prose form in a letter that is nominally written for practical purposes.

In several of her earliest letters to Portland, written as a young woman exploring the possibilities of epistolary representation, Montagu represents acquaintances and social contacts in ways that – other than being highly satirical and fairly cruel – playfully probe the inadequacies of visual observation as a means of leading to firm conclusions. In a letter to Portland in 1734, she comments on the countenance of a woman who meets with her disapproval, a young Miss Watson: 'If I could draw well enough' she says, 'I would send Miss Watson her own musty face […] I am sorry le Brun, has not seen her musty face, that he might have put it in my Book of Drawings, among the faces that express the several passions, but he has None that express mustiness'.[50] Montagu refers to the work of art theorist and

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are Mary Pendarves (née Granville), later Mary Delany, and her father Matthew Robinson (1694-1778), and the painter and friend of the family Edward Haytley.

[50]Montagu to Portland, Horton, 3 November 1734, HL MO 247.

physiognomist Charles Le Brun (1619-90). She complains that in his theory of physiognomy – the study of the passions as represented through facial expression – he does not account for Montagu's creation, the passion of 'mustiness'.[51] Le Brun's methods in *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions* (1698), published in English just months before Montagu wrote this letter, were deductive, and at odds with the inductive ideals of the Royal Society.[52] His publication was deductive in that it takes an expression 'as the exemplification of a general kind and then uses this to describe the character of an individual', producing knowledge of a particular specimen from a general idea.[53] Montagu's anecdote explicitly hangs on the inadequacy of a deductive Le Brunian method; no general notion exists for the particular 'mustiness' of Miss Watson's face. Montagu creatively exploits the potential for comedy that the disconnect between the Le Brunian general passions and 'mustiness' offers, but also makes an epistemological point that the connection between a particular observation and a broader generality, regardless of the direction of that connection, remains unstable and open to manipulation.

Montagu also explored the creative potential of another epistemological problem: the unreliability of sensory perception and observational apparatus such as microscopes. She describes an encounter with Miss Nanny Palmer, an exchange that Montagu again relates with tongue-in-cheek disdain, in which she draws on ideas of magnification and distortion in order to represent Palmer's apparently distorted viewpoint of not wishing to attend the Canterbury races:

> Pretty Miss Nanny Palmer, who not content with those beauties nature in its profusion bestow'd upon her adds much to her charms by the distortions of affectation, by which help she has lengthen'd her nose & chin to the total

[51] 'Crossness; ill humour', *OED*, s.v. "mustiness," 2. This letter is cited as one of the *OED* examples for this now-obsolete use of the term.
[52] Despite James Parson's (1705-1770) later efforts to offer an inductive approach to physiognomy, that had closer links to physiology, physiognomy was consigned to being a marginal mode of enquiry until it garnered popularity following the work of Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801) in the 1770s. Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 19. See also Abigail Williams *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 17-20.
[53] Hartley, *Physiognomy*, 2.

> eclipse of the intervening feature her mouth & when she should show her scorn she turns her eyes upwards & her nose downwards, which makes a very beautiful contraste in her countenance upon the mention of Canterbury Assembly & Races, she touch'd her chin with her nose, & her cap with her eye brow, & said very cruelly, she hoped she shou'd not be at them.[54]

Montagu distorts Miss Palmer's features in terms that resemble microscopic observations. Throughout the description, Palmer's features shift in and out of focus, and the reader's attention on her face is piecemeal and disrupted. Montagu enlarges Palmer's nose and chin beyond proportion, and shrinks her mouth and forehead to the point of disappearance, using shifts in scale to distort Palmers features in a way that might be experienced when using a microscope.

Montagu had experience using a microscope on at least one occasion while staying with Portland at Bulstrode. She mentioned it briefly to her sister in a letter, reporting that the 'sun doesn't shine on our microscope […] which is a great vexation to curiosity'.[55] This apparently innocuous comment engages directly with contemporary concerns around the efficacy of human senses and microscope apparatus as addressed in Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665), the earliest publication to illustrate objects as seen through a microscope, and an enormously popular publication into the eighteenth century.[56] Hooke's central claim for the value of microscopal enquiry was that new optical technologies could remedy the errors of human observational practices, such as the eyes' inability to see at scales too large or too small, and the possibility of erring in the process of perception.[57] He was at pains to prove that microscope technology offered a solution to these issues and therefore opened new realms of enquiry. To do this, as Jutta Schickore points out, he had to acknowledge and overcome defects in the

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[54] Montagu to Portland, 1 July 1739, HL MO 276.
[55] Montagu to Scott, Bulstrode, 1740, HL MO 5589. A few letters later, Scott wrote back 'I am glad the Sun has return'd to you again that your microscope may not be useless, nor your curiosity unsatisfied'. Scott to Montagu, 11 November 1741, in Sarah Scott, *The Letters of Sarah Scott*, ed. Nicole Pohl (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 1:20.
[56] Jutta Schickore, *The Microscope and the Eye: A History of Reflections, 1740-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 14-21.
[57] Robert Hooke, preface to *Micrographia* (London, 1665), np.

microscope itself which inevitably undermined his own claims.[58] A considerable proportion of the preface to *Micrographia* is concerned with defects in modern microscopes and how to combat them. '*[T]he Apertures of the Object-glasses are so very small*', for example, '*that the Object appears* dark *and* indistinct', and 'oftentimes the Weather is so dark and cloudy, that for many days together nothing can be view'd'.[59] Concerns about the efficacy of both human vision and the microscope were therefore built into microscopy from the moment of its genesis, and proliferated in early publications in microscope practice. The problem that Hooke reports about the necessity of the correct lighting and weather conditions is precisely that which Montagu identifies in her early experience with Portland's microscope. On top of the problems of interpretation that Montagu sees to the inductive processes, her magnified distortion of Palmer acknowledges the inefficacy of observation as an epistemological act. She draws on the inconclusivity of defective microscope observations, however, to creative ends. Montagu's exaggerations of Palmer's physical features reflect her own perception that Palmer's views on the races are distorted or defective in some way. She uses the distortions in observational practices to represent her experience of the social exchange more effectively than the verisimilitude of empirical visual observations would fulfil the same purpose.

Montagu enlists not only the flexibility of epistolary prose, but the material qualities of the letter to enhance her creative representations of people that are constructed on the inefficacies of inductive empirical observation and interpretation. Writing to Portland in 1738, she pens (yet) another unflattering representation of a neighbour, Sir Robert Austin and his wife, Lady B-. Montagu gives an account of Robert Austin's extreme thinness and what she sees as his wife's compensatory fatness:

> Sir Robert Austin's shadow, by moonlight, would make a dozen of the other […] I cannot describe him to your Grace, a shadow is too material, and a skeleton too fat […] His wife and he are literally but one flesh, for she has

[58] Schickore, *Microscope and the Eye*, 25-26.
[59] Hooke, preface to *Micrographia*, np.

> all the flesh herself. But why should the fat and lean equally torment your Grace? I know if I was to undertake to describe her, I could never bring her circumference within my sheet of paper. For once, she shall come into a narrow compass, for I think now compassion is due to you, and I will, for your sake, let Lady B- grow a little fatter
> […]
> I could describe Lady B- in much less compass than I could tell you how much I am your Grace's obedient servant,
> Eliz. Robinson.[60]

Her description of Sir Robert and Lady B-'s physical appearances are, like the representation of Palmer, humorous through the exaggerated manipulation of scale, as might be viewed through a microscope. But Montagu uses epistolary terms to represent the size of Lady B-, claiming that to represent her in letter form is impossible, as even a description of her would lengthen the letter too enormously, testing her recipient's patience, and would physically exceed the material paper bounds of the letter itself. At the close of the letter, Lady B-, in what Montagu views as her excessive compass, has spilled over from the main body of the letter to bulge into the signature. Montagu uses the material characteristics of the letter, the paper, and the signature, as representative tools, combining epistolarity with the inefficacy of empirical observation to create an impression to Portland that will more effectively convey Montagu's perception of Lady B-.

In her representations of people, Montagu explored several problems with an inductive, empirical epistemology at each stage of its practice – in observation, representation and interpretation – to creative ends. Her representation of her brother picking shells for Portland indicated the slipperiness of the interpretation of a person's actions, she showed how the meaning of feathers, shells and flowers was natural philosophical or aesthetic depending on their context, and she highlighted the inadequacies of the senses and observational instruments to comic effect. She experimented with the possibilities of epistolary representation as a means of communicating her perspective more effectively than empirical forms, pushing her letters to

[60] Montagu to Portland, 17 December 1738, in *Letters of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu*, 1:46-47.

formal and material limits and demonstrating her early prowess and interest in letter writing. Montagu exploits the inadequacies of an empirical epistemology and, through its interpretive ambiguity, she creatively offered alternative representational practices for communicating the truth of a social experience. I now turn to show how she exploited the problem of induction for very different social purposes in her later salon practices.

III. Ornament, Ambivalence, and Productive Salon Conversation

Much later, as a salon hostess in the 1770s, Montagu applied the creative and productive potential of the shortcomings of an empirical epistemology in her salon practices. This can be seen in her use of ornament. Elizabeth Eger has shown that at Montagu's residence at Hill Street, where she lived and hosted gatherings from 1744, her 'talent for "ornament" and display was frequently praised and […] she seems largely to have escaped the disdain reserved for the fashionable folly of several of her female contemporaries'.[61] The improvements that she made when she built Montagu House in Portman Square between 1775 and 1782 also demonstrate a careful use of ornament. Eger shows Montagu's relatively tasteful restraint, suggesting that her interior design was seen as virtuous 'cultural investment' in an age 'marked by an ostentatiously reckless aristocracy'.[62] The building of her residences and her interior design were distinctly conspicuous activities. Eger notes that the construction of Montagu House became a 'public event', with the building supervisor issuing tickets to visitors by 1780 who came to see the work.[63] The adornment of the interior of Montagu House with a pair of feather screens, constructed between 1781 and 1791 were the subject of a poem by William Cowper (1731-1800), gained media attention on their completion in 1791, and were the focus of a visit from Queen Charlotte. The conspicuous nature of her improvements implies the importance of display, observation and interpretation for her salon sociability. Within this, Montagu utilised

[61] Eger, *Bluestockings*, 68.
[62] Eger, *Bluestockings*, 73.
[63] Eger, *Bluestockings*, 71.

the shortcomings of an inductive, empirical mode of interpretation in a social setting to stimulate the production of knowledge amongst her guests. Her exploitation of the problem of induction is particularly clear, as I show below, in the interpretive variability of her ornamental and epistemologically productive feather screens.

Montagu comprehensively outlines her approach to ornament in a letter to Henry Home, Lord Kames in April 1767. After she visited him during her 1766 trip to Scotland, Kames invited her to contribute to the new edition of his *Elements on Criticism* (1762, sixth edition 1785) on the subject of what is 'proper' in ornament.[64] Although she ostensibly declined the offer, announcing her refusal in a letter to her friend George Lyttelton (1709-1773), and on the first page of her reply to Kames, her reply then constituted a twelve-page essay on ornament, some of which appeared in reworked form in Kames's extended sixth edition.[65] In her thesis, ornamental objects are characterised by their inability to confer an explicit meaning; they are interpreted according to cultural associations, which vary according to the experiences of the onlooker, in a way that is antithetical to a linear, inductive interpretation. 'It is impossible', she says:

> to reduce to simple reason a subject which has so adulterated & sophisticated by custom, fashions, superstitions &c as that of ornament. In modern life a scarf has an air of dignity, because it is given as a sign of some addition to the man in the way of his profession; make the same material into an apron for him, & it would give him the air of a mechanic & debase him & the eye would decide it to be an ungracefull form from a train of ideas no way related to or dependent on grace of form. Long Robes appear noble, not merely from the flowing lines they describe, but as they are the habits of magistrates; add gold furr they rise in dignity, because such belong to greatest magistrates. The Insignia & symbols of power, wisdom, holiness &c adorn persons; things used in religious or civil ceremonies adorn places.

[64] Kames to Montagu, Edinburgh, 18 March 1767, HL MO 1165.
[65] Montagu to Lyttelton, Denton, 18 November 1766, HL MO 1449; Montagu to Kames, 13 April, 1767, HL MO 1175A. Kames's arguments on ornament diverged from hers, but he utilised her examples of '[A]malthea's horn', 'triumphal arches, pyramids, obelisks', and 'modern cutlery', and her arguments that '[t]he same statue shown to a man of learning as the statue of Apollo, will appear to him more agreeable than if he was told it was done [for] a barbers apprentice' and that in dress, '[j]ewels seem most noble appropriated to some purpose […] The regard they obtain from the beholder is chiefly as signs of wealth a dress clasped or button'd with diamonds looks more noble than the same quality of jewels placed as ornaments'. See Kames, *Elements*, 2:710-12.

> These things therefore are not to be estimated so much by their shape & figure as by the attributes they confer […] Objects are often recommended more by introducing a certain set of ideas than from their form.[66]

Ornamental objects, by Montagu's account, are particularly prone to slippages in interpretation that hinder an inductive, empirical mode of observation and reasoning. Robes appear noble as, through experience, the observer associates them with the robes of magistrates, not because of an inherent quality in the form or fabric of the robes themselves. The mind synthesises previous experiences of an object, by a set of experiential principles, into an idea or belief about that object, unrelated to its empirical appearance.

The effect of this perspective on the utility of ornament sets her ideas apart from Kames's. For Montagu, the fact that the observed characteristics of an ornament – its material and its form – are not indicative of its meaning, does not make ornament redundant. Rather, the ambivalence of ornamental objects, the shifting connection between their appearance and meaning, depending on the experiences and associations of the onlooker, proffers the opportunity for a creative response and the production of knowledge:

> Your Lordship asks whether every ornament should not seem to be of some use? If it be of such a sort as bring with it a train of ideas superior to ordinary convenience I think not. The mind of man loves to rise above the vulgar necessities of animal life, to range in a higher sphere. The sober eye of reason beholds with some degree of approbation, every thing of known utility, but the eye <u>of imagination, in its fine frenzy rolling</u> catches with rapture a glance of an intellectual world, looks through the perspective of ages with sacred veneration on objects celebrated in history or immortalized in verse […] I can hardly imagine you will agree with me upon it and I rather suspect you will laugh at my System, and from your love of <u>utility</u> will destroy all my doctrine of Ornaments.[67]

Kames concedes that ornaments have use when they are of a form that is 'suited to their real or apparent destination'.[68] For Montagu, an ornament without an express use or coherence with the

[66] Montagu to Kames, 13 April 1767, HL MO 1175A. See Kames, *Elements*, 2:711.
[67] Montagu to Kames, 13 April 1767, HL MO 1175A.
[68] Kames, *Elements*, 2:711.

site it adorns can still be creatively and epistemologically productive. She suggests that it can elevate the mind beyond the quotidian and ordinary and can spark the imagination. Ornament gives the mind access to 'an intellectual world', which views 'objects celebrated in history or immortalized in verse', and has the ability to see intellectual development and patterns. It is not an inductive, empirical 'eye of reason' that accesses such truths, but the imagination's flight when sparked by the interpretive possibilities of an ornament, and its synthesis of historical and literary representations. Ornaments function as stimulants to imagination and the quest for knowledge. Empirical reasoning is not in opposition to imagination: Mary Fairclough has shown how, at this time, imagination served as a facet of natural philosophical endeavour in creating connections between modes of enquiry.[69] Gregory Tate has further illustrated that imagination was the means by which connections were made between objects in an analogy.[70] Montagu's comments therefore do not represent a dismissal of rational empirical reason in favour of artistic imagination. She offers an alternative epistemology to inductive empiricism that identifies the instability of empirical logic in its dependence on imagination, and takes advantage of the knowledge-producing possibilities that ambiguous or ornamental objects consequently offer. For Montagu, an ornament without an express purpose can lead, via imagination, to general truths. The inductive interpretation of ornamental objects, regardless of their utility and purpose, can 'rise above the vulgar necessities of everyday life', and can give access to general – and therefore, powerful, publicly productive – ideas.

Although work began on Montagu's feather screens much later, in 1781, and were not unveiled until their completion in 1791, the essential features of her argument on ornament in her letter to Kames find expression in them as decorative salon objects. Their ornamental quality and decorative function enable their interpretive flexibility, and they enact, in object form, the

[69] Mary Fairclough, "Dr Thomas Beddoes and the Politics of the Imagination," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 84.
[70] Gregory Tate, "Humphry Davy and the Problem of Analogy," *Ambix* 66, nos. 2-3 (May-August 2019): 143. See also Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 45.

changeability and interpretive ambivalence that characterised Montagu's self-presentation. During their construction, Cowper represented them in a poem:

> The Peacock sends his heav'nly dyes
> His rainbows and his starry eyes;
> The Pheasant, plumes which now infold
> His mantling neck with downy gold;
> The Cock his arch'd tail's azure show
> And, river blanch'd, the Swan, his snow.[71]

The passage is visually rich, as Cowper feeds the reader images of birds that almost distract with their colour and variety. The reader is not guided to a broader, general meaning, but the feather images remain, in the words of a newspaper account of them, as 'fanciful decoration'.[72] Montagu herself creates a similar effect as she describes the shape-shifting of the feathers into flowers as her employee Betty Tull works on the screens: 'Maccoas she has transformed into Tulips, Kings fishers into blue bells'.[73] These representations are reminiscent of the abundant flowers that Montagu described in her letter to her sister regarding the design of the apron in 1740, and have a similar effect of moving the reader's eye from one vivid image to the next. While we have no detailed visual or textual representations of the completed screens themselves, Cowper's poem and Montagu's brief comments, both written during the construction process, help to indicate their hoped-for impact. The density of the detail of colour and form in both the poem and Montagu's comments indicate their highly ornamental quality, and visual richness. To return to Schor's analysis of detail in prose, these representations seem bounded by the '*ornamental*', but not by the '*everyday*'.[74] But, unlike lengths of detailed prose, these rich descriptions do not submerge the reader in heavy depths of detail, or obscure their vision with their multiplicity. Rather, the poetic lines of Cowper's verse, and the brevity of Montagu's description, move the reader from detail to detail, with the effect of the reader

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[71] William Cowper, "On the Beautiful Feather-Hangings, Designed for Mrs. Montagu," *Gentleman's Magazine* 58, June 1788, 542, lines 1-8.
[72] *St James's Chronicle*, 11-14 June 1791.
[73] Montagu to Elizabeth Charlton Montagu, 17 December 1788, HL MO 2975, quoted in Eger, *Bluestockings*, 72.
[74] Schor, *Reading in Detail*, 4.

catching a glance of each of the features represented. It is as though the reader or observer's 'eye of imagination […] catches with rapture a glance' at the feather screens, and the reader is left to synthesise their observation of them into an idea.[75] It is plausible that this epistemology was common to both the written representations of the screens and the objects themselves. As well as being varied in their visual representation, they also pertained to numerous different kinds of knowledge. Made of feathers, they were items of natural philosophical interest; woven together, they were the product of extremely accomplished craft; their visual design, of flowers and landscapes, made reference to traditions in visual art; and they were pieces of interior design. Like Montagu's own changeability in her epistolary self-presentation, the feather screens refuse to conform to one particular interpretation. They have the potential to spark imagination and conversation around a range of topics, depending on the experiences or interests of the observer. Their virtue as a piece in a salon is their ambivalence and adaptability; their openness to a range of interpretations means that they are able to stimulate imagination and productive conversation. Through her feather screens, Montagu takes advantage of the conversational and productive potential of the slipperiness of an inductive mode of observation and interpretation.

The open ambivalence of the feather screens could not preclude, however, more troubling associations. Ruth Scobie has shown how the print culture depicting Montagu's feathered screens contained tensions that pointed towards more anxious contemporary interpretations of them as emblems of the loss of bird life required to produce them, and as reminders that 'the feathers' provenance included colonial ecological exploitation' and artistic appropriation 'in order to promote British superiority'.[76] The use of feathers also echoes contemporary concerns regarding the broader relationship between effeminacy and fashion, commerce, and imperial expansion. Gillian Russell shows how feathers echo the contemporary fashion for high

[75] Montagu to Kames, 13 April 1767, HL MO 1175A.
[76] Ruth Scobie, "'To Dress a Room for Montagu': Pacific Cosmopolitanism and Elizabeth Montagu's Feather Hangings," *Lumen* 33 (2014): 136.

headdresses, and key into the relationship between the fashionable woman 'at her toilette, indulging herself in the products of empire' and the 'anxieties about the morality and possibly effeminising effects of Britain's engagement in global commerce and its corrupting influence at home'.[77] Russell demonstrates that high heads and other fashionable displays do not represent a perversion of trade from its 'real' purpose but, rather, 'like fashionable sociability' they 'articulated the fantasy of an imperial cornucopia, of boundless empires of imaginative scope'.[78] The use of plumes as salon decoration therefore encoded within them not only the morally dubious actions of imperial expansion that Scobie identifies, but also, in civic humanist terms, the 'fantasy' of expansion enabled by a new commercial order, and concern about the 'effeminising effects', the corruption and decay, that accompany it.

However, Montagu's use of feathers in decorative screens, and their appearance several years after the peak of discussions expressing these anxieties about feathery high headdresses, mean that her screens perform slightly differently in this semantic field than feathers used in dress.[79] In her letter to Kames a number of years prior, Montagu noted the distinction between ornaments with no utility in dress, compared to those with no function in architecture or interior design. As we saw above, by Montagu's formulation, design ornaments with no thematic connection to the object they adorned could inspire an imaginative transition from observed particular to an inspiring, broader generality. In dress, however, Montagu takes a different stance. 'In dress, I will allow, every ornament shd, if possible, appear of use, but this from reasons the Beholder seldom traces to their source. Too curious adorning of the Person makes a man appear effeminate, a Woman Coquettish.'[80] By this formulation, the dangers of effeminacy do not extend to stand-alone objects of ornamental display, such as her feather screens; it is through association with dress and the body that feathers and fashionable ornament can make 'a

[77] Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre*, 189.
[78] Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre*, 189.
[79] Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre*, 192.
[80] Montagu to Kames, 13 April 1767, HL MO 1175A.

man appear effeminate, a Woman Coquettish'. Her feather screens, as ornamental displays that invite the viewer to traverse observed particulars to greater truths perhaps are, in Montagu's view, open to the 'fantasy of an imperial cornucopia' and 'boundless empires of imaginative scope' without the same effeminising trappings of the plumes used in dress.[81] They also, I think, are unique as items of display that aim for ambivalence and also display that ambivalence. Their status as ornamental objects in her salon invite the observer to participate in the production of knowledge by empirical observation but, while their ambivalence enables open, imaginative interpretation by induction, it also confounds. The feather screens simultaneously offer the potential for the production of general, publicly impactful knowledge across a variety of subjects, and force the observer to question the efficacy of the production of knowledge by observational and empirical methods.

Despite Montagu's changeability, epistolary flexibility, and cultivation of ambivalence, two connected interests persisted throughout her youthful letters and into her salon practices: her view of the creative and knowledge-producing potential of the instability of the process of induction, and her ambitions to make a visible, public contribution without the associations of vacuous femininity or corrupting effeminacy. In her early letters, she used the relative privacy of her youthful relationships with Portland and her sister to experiment with the possibilities and bounds of epistolary prose. In doing so, she addressed epistemological issues that would inform her later salon and patronage activities, and her conceptualisation of her public, civic, duty. Vanity, for Montagu, was a point of intersection between the instabilities of empirical observation, opportunities for broadening an epistolary network and for making forays into public culture by supporting the work of others. She challenged an empirical mode of knowledge production on several fronts in her letters that represented people, and used this as an opportunity to explore alternative, epistolary, means of communicating her perceptions of social experiences. Her awareness of the possibilities of the problem of induction for the

[81] Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre*, 189.

stimulation of the production of knowledge in others manifested in her feather screens in which she used their ambivalence to inspire imaginative, publicly useful conversation amongst her guests, but in such a way that, like her, they refused to conform to one particular interpretation.

Chapter Two

Sarah Scott: Sentimental Fiction, Epistolary Distance, and Reflective Moral Knowledge

The novelist and reformer Sarah Scott proposed a different solution to her sister, Elizabeth Montagu, to the problem of an unstable relationship between a person's observed behaviour and the real motive or feeling behind it. In the previous chapter, we saw how Montagu exploited the instability between cause and observation in people's behaviour, by using the space that such a slippage opened to pursue creative epistolary expression, and to formulate her particular, knowledge-producing salon sociability. Rather than stepping into and exploiting the space that potential interpretive slipperiness opened, Scott's writing, as I will show in this chapter, solves this problem by distance. Scott emphasises the geographical and temporal distance between the fictional letters exchanged within her texts, which affords the reader sentimental, critical and reflective distance from their contents. This enables the reader to reflect upon whether there has been a slippage between the observed particulars of the character's behaviour and their internal motive, and allows them to notice deception or inconsistencies, and to confidently emulate exemplary moral behaviour. Scott and Montagu's different stances on vanity epitomise their diverse approaches to the problem of interpreting people's moral motives through observing their actions. As we saw in the previous chapter, Montagu acknowledged the way in which vanity represented a problem to the process of observation and interpretation of a person, but she cultivated her own vanity for its potential value in stimulating the production of knowledge in those around her. For Scott, the dissonance between action and intention in a vain person was more troubling. She suggests this in her first publication, a work of moral fiction, *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life* (1754), in which a kindly governess Sabrina, instructs her young charge, the Princess Carinthia that:

> Many bad Qualities have their Uses, but none more than Vanity, it makes the naturally Morose appear mild and Courteous, the Proud humble and affable, the Avaricious generous, and the Cruel and Hard-hearted, humane and

> charitable […] it will lead them into many Vices, yet it generally prompts them to borrow the Mark of Virtue. None are more hurtful to those who are intimately connected with them, than very vain Persons; but they are often beneficial to Society, and they should be the less censured, since their Actions may do as much good to others, tho' not to themselves.[1]

Scott emphasises her perception of vanity as contradictory and deceptive syntactically as multiple adjectives 'mild and Courteous', 'humble and affable', rush in to cover over the less desirable qualities of being 'Morose' and 'Proud', in the same way that courtesy and affability conceal the proud core of a vain person. Scott concedes the societal benefit of vanity, but believes it to be at the cost of a contradiction between virtuous external behaviour, and internal motive fuelled by vice. Scott presents vanity as most painful for those closest to a vain person, rather than society at large. As well as sounding with a ring of personal experience – it is easy to imagine Scott having her sister in mind as a vain person that she is 'intimately connected' to – proximity to the contradictions of a vain person is a key element of its danger.

Scott shows how an observational distance from a vain person can reveal the contradiction between their virtuous actions and motives based on vice in her later and most famous work, *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent* (1762), a novelistic moral fiction that envisages a utopian community of virtuous and charitable women. She presents the character of Lady Brumpton, a relation of one of the inhabitants at Millenium Hall, as having a 'temper perfectly good; her understanding admirable', but with one failing: vanity.[2]

> She sought to be admired for various merits. To recommend her person she studied dress, and went to considerable expence in ornaments. To shew her taste, she distinguished herself by the elegance of her house, her furniture, and equipage. To prove her fondness for literature, she collected a considerable library; and to shew that all her esteem was not engrossed by the learned dead, she caressed all living geniuses. (190)

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[1] Sarah Scott, *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life, Described in a Variety of Interesting Scenes, Drawn from Real Characters* (1754; repr., S.I.: Gale Ecco, 2012), 1:36. For more on the differences, and sisterly relationship, between Scott and Montagu, see Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 295-98.

[2] Sarah Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall*, ed. Gary Kelly (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1995), 190. Further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

Critics have interpreted Lady Brumpton as a representation of Montagu; her dress, ornamentation, furnishings, library and support of writers certainly recall Montagu's self-presentation strategies.[3] Scott illustrates how Lady Brumpton manipulates people's views of her by presenting particular objects 'her furniture, and equipage' as evidence of her taste, and the books in her library as indicative of her learning. By presenting Brumpton from an observable distance, Scott exposes the artificial, calculated and curated nature of the connection between observed particular – the ornaments, the furniture and the books – and Brumpton's character: her fashion, taste and love for literature. In so doing, Scott reveals to the reader the deceptive process of vanity in action. In her publications, as we shall see, Scott utilises the potentially distancing effects of epistolarity to enable the reader space to identify and reflect upon the behaviour they are observing of the characters in the text. This use of epistolarity sets her work apart from the use of the letter in other epistolary, sentimental works, such as those by Samuel Richardson, in which letter writing 'to the moment', is used to forge an intimate, affective connection between the reader and the characters, and a sentimental response inspiring moral behaviour. As a result, Scott instils in her reader a moral knowledge that, rather than having its roots in sentimental identification, is based on distanced observation and intellectual reflection on the examples of behaviour in her fiction.

In this chapter, I show how Scott uses empirical methods and epistolary conventions in her publications to create moral knowledge amongst her readers. She uses epistolarity in connection with different types of empiricism, in a set of educational cards that she produced with her partner, Lady Barbara Montagu, in 1759, in her moral fiction *Millenium Hall*, and in her very different final work, an epistolary sentimental novel, *The Test of Filial Duty* (1772). Scott uses epistolarity to hold the reader at a certain sentimental distance from the text, encouraging in them a process of observation and rational reflection to acquire moral knowledge. Her educational cards are epistolary in their use of paper exchange as a communicative technology,

[3] Rizzo, *Companions without Vows*, 296.

instilling in their reader the practice of morally productive sociable exchange. Scott applies this characteristic of sociable textual communication into *Millenium Hall* and *Test of Filial Duty*. In these texts, however, the letter also operates as a space in which the characters observe and reflect on their own actions and behaviour; a practice that Scott's readers are invited to emulate. Scott's emphasis on reflection, as I show in the following section, reaches back to earlier traditions of empiricism, namely John Locke's theories of mind and learning, and to what Courtney Weiss Smith calls the 'devotional empiricism' of Royal Society epistemological practices.[4] Although Scott does not deliberately seek to use Royal Society empirical methods, the reflective nature of the observations that the reader is encouraged to make shows that this form of empirical practice still held sway in cultural expression, and it provided Scott a useful form to achieve her moral aims. Using these earlier forms of empiricism, in combination with the distancing effects of epistolarity, and deliberately engaging in contemporary literary debate, Scott creates a forward-looking moral pedagogy and moral knowledge based on reflection, that inspires practical Christian benevolence, and that anticipates the reflective moral fiction of, for example, Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), and the use of letters as fictional devices of reflection and the moral development of character in the works of Frances Burney (1752-1840) and Jane Austen (1775-1817). In the following section, I illustrate how Scott's use of example was dependent on an empirical epistemology. I then outline the aspects of the debate over the morality of novel reading that Scott was interested in. I suggest that the concerns about sentimental fiction are analogous to the problem of induction as, in each, the observed behaviour of an individual is a performance not necessarily consistent with internal motive. In subsequent sections in this chapter, I show how Scott put this relationship between formal epistolarity and reflective observation into practice in the educational cards that she created with Barbara Montagu, in *Millenium Hall* and *The Test of Filial Duty*.

[4] Courtney Weiss Smith, *Empiricist Devotions: Science, Religion, and Poetry in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

I. Example, Empiricism, and Epistolary Distance in Moral Fiction

The reflective mode of moral knowledge that Scott cultivated aimed to combat the problem of an unstable relationship between observed action and internal motive in a pedagogy of example. Eve Tavor Bannet defines a 'pedagogy of example' as a means of behavioural learning, traditional since the Renaissance, which entailed a learner observing and emulating idealised exemplary behaviour in authority figures in life, in history, or in fiction.[5] Bannet suggests, and I agree, that this pedagogy was subject to a process of induction. The learner extrapolates a broader meaning from the observation of a particular movement or action: 'the meaning of an example lies outside itself in its relation to that general idea', or moral system, 'of which it is a particular, local instance'.[6] The reader is then left 'to discover the implicit relation of the particular to the general for herself through inference and interpretation'.[7] The use of example in moral writing, I suggest, was therefore subject to the same instability as any observation that depended on the process of induction: the interpretation of the particular may not lead to the correct general idea, but may go awry. The instability between the particular action that is being emulated, and the meaning it conveys opens a pedagogy of example to exploitation. As in the above example of vanity, the learner may emulate an exemplary behaviour, knowing it demonstrates virtuous intentions, when they are actually fuelled by self-promotion. A pedagogy of example is also at risk of unthinking mimicry, as it does not ensure the learner's moral acts are based on moral thoughts. Scott proposes intellectual reflection as a means to mediate a reader's engagement with an example, to ensure their replication of observed behaviour is motivated by morality. In a letter to Elizabeth Montagu, Scott makes a claim for such rational reflection:

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[5] Eve Tavor Bannet, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 58-59.
[6] Bannet, *Domestic Revolution*, 65.
[7] Bannet, *Domestic Revolution*, 65.

> When a Man has used his reason, to conquer his infirmities, to harmonize his discordant passions […] what study can be so noble and instructing! While we contemplate such a character, there will be a small voice within us which will at least whisper, go & do thou likewise.[8]

Exemplary replication is mediated through a 'small voice', and Scott implies that the contemplation of an exemplary figure is a reflective process that occurs over time. The character worthy of emulation, furthermore, is a man whose 'discordant' passions are subject to his faculty of reason. Reason and contemplation are moral characteristics as well as techniques of moral learning. For Scott, reflection is a process that entails contemplation and subsequent, considered moral action, and is central to the morality of a pedagogy of example.

The process of observation and reflection that Scott encourages of her readers resembles two diverse, but overlapping, forms of empiricism: the conceptual empiricism of Locke, and methodological empiricism as it was conducted by Robert Boyle (1627-91) of the Royal Society. Scott draws explicitly on the Lockean *tabula rasa* theory of mind, in which people are born without innate ideas, and ideas are formed through experience. Ideas form in the mind from two sources: sensation, which describes the perceptions that arise from sensorial contact with external objects, and reflection, whereby perceptions arise from the mind's observation of its own operations.[9] The impressions the mind receives from these two sources are 'simple ideas', and the mind then 'has the Power to repeat, compare, and unite them, even to an almost infinite Variety' to form 'complex *Ideas*'.[10] One of the processes Locke identifies in transforming simple ideas to complex ones is abstraction, in which particular observations are separated from 'all other ideas that accompany them' and produce 'General *Ideas*'.[11] He says of the process of abstraction that ''tis the contemplation of our own abstract *Ideas*, that alone is able to afford us *general Knowledge*'.[12] Scott draws on this and his educational theories in the

[8] Scott to Montagu, 1767, in *Letters of Sarah Scott*, 2:76.
[9] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 105.
[10] Locke, *Essay*, 119.
[11] Locke, *Essay*, 163.
[12] Locke, *Essay*, 591.

cards that she produces with Barbara Montagu. In *Millenium Hall*, the narrator responds sensorially to his surroundings, and these sensory impressions are then subject to a process of contemplation, akin to the Lockean production of complex ideas and general knowledge through abstraction. Scott, in the text, identifies this process as 'reflection'.[13] In *The Test of Filial Duty*, the protagonist, Emilia, enacts this same kind of contemplative reflection but also, by the novel's close, does so with what Locke calls 'reflection', a self-awareness of the processes of her own thoughts.

The process of observation and reflection by abstraction that Scott's exemplary characters perform also draws on the practice of Protestant meditative empiricism, as it was undertaken for the purpose of producing knowledge about the natural world. Smith identifies an 'empirical-devotional mode', of observation, concretised by Boyle in his *Occasional Reflections* (1665) and his work for the Royal Society, which was both knowledge producing and religious. This mode of meditational observation used, in Smith's terms, 'Protestant devotional techniques to forge an empiricist method for reading "the Book of Nature"', and applied Protestant occasional meditation to the natural philosophical observation of objects.[14] It entailed attentive observation to particulars, that might offer the observer, in Boyle's terms, 'Examples to imitate' or that might 'raise his thoughts and affections Heaven-wards'.[15] This devotional empiricism therefore, as Smith argues, embodies the 'sustained fascination in the period with *what else* nature teaches about God's will for humanity, including lessons about morality, society and politics', and it 'led to social exemplars, moral warnings, and religious encouragements'.[16] In *Millenium Hall* and *The Test of Female Duty*, Scott's exemplary characters train their eyes on the social circumstances and people around them as the subjects of their observation, rather than the book

[13] In this chapter I will use the word 'reflection' to refer to the process as Scott seems to be using it: the contemplation on impressions that the mind receives by observation. Locke uses the term 'reflection' to describe the mind's observation of its own operations.
[14] Smith, *Empiricist Devotions*, 33.
[15] Boyle, *Occasional Reflections* (London, 1665), in Robert Boyle, *The Works of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio and Lawrence M. Principe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), 41, quoted in Smith, *Empiricist Devotions*, 33.
[16] Smith, *Empiricist Devotions*, 213n47, 33.

of nature. The reflective process they then follow, however, resembles Protestant devotional meditation in that it is a cognitive process, from which the observer gains moral knowledge. In turn, the reader observes the exemplary characters performing this process, and are invited to replicate it, gaining moral knowledge that might be put into religious practice.

Emma Major shows that Scott's pedagogy of example in *Millenium Hall* is central to the text's endorsement of practical Christianity. Major identifies *Millenium Hall* as 'a specifically English fictional sermon on Anglican femininity' that reflects 'Scott's preference for practical piety'.[17] Scott enacts this preference and her faith in female moral example in her own charitable and benevolent practices while living in Bath with Barbara Montagu, and in her efforts to establish a female community in the model of the fictional Millenium Hall.[18] Scott's aim for practical, Anglican moral reform, and her approach to reflective observation situate her with the group of writers, moralists and philanthropists, that included Catherine Talbot, Hester Chapone (1727-1801) and Elizabeth Carter. These women are critically grouped as Bluestockings for their shared charitable values and encouragement of practical forms of virtue. They each promoted a rational mode of moral reflection, and acted as examples themselves, through a visible programme of active Christian benevolence.[19] Mary Hilton identifies a Latitudinarian strain in their works. Latitudinarian belief followed that, despite the Fall, God endowed humans with rational faculties that gave them an innate knowledge of God and of morality.[20] Nicole Pohl also notes how such 'Protestant principles of introspection' informed the values of 'self-discipline

[17] Major, *Madam Britannia*, 155.
[18] For the community at Hitcham, see Rizzo, *Companions without Vows*, 317-19.
[19] Norma Clarke, "Bluestocking Fictions: Devotional Writings, Didactic Literature and the Imperative of Female Improvement," in *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*, ed. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 460-73; Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain, 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 39-62. See also Gary Kelly, "Women's Provi(de)nce: Religion and Bluestocking Feminism in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762)," in *Female Communities 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities*, ed. Rebecca D'Monté and Nicole Pohl (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 166-183.
[20] Hilton, *Shaping of the Nation's Young*, 49-51. For discussion of the impact of the practical piety of Latitudinarianism on moral fiction, see Donald Greene, "Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of 'The Man of Feeling' Reconsidered," *Modern Philology* 75 (1977): 159-83 and Frans de Bruyn, "Latitudinarianism and its Importance as a Precursor of Sensibility," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 80 (1981): 349-60.

and self-help' that Scott represents in *Millenium Hall*.[21] Critics have hesitated to group her wholly with these individuals, however, as unlike these writers, whose publications included Talbot's *Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week* (1770) and Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), Scott wrote fiction. This meant that her works more directly than theirs participated in debates that followed in the wake of Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48), regarding the morality of fiction.[22] *The Test of Filial Duty*, throws light on how Scott positioned herself with regard to these debates and the values of practical Christian piety of her Bluestocking peers. Scott incorporated the process of reflection into the conventions of epistolary fiction, to realise the moral potential of novelistic epistolarity and to continue her commitment to rational, practical piety into the form of sentimental fiction.

The relationship between sentiment and reflection in moral philosophy also had implications for Scott's moral positioning. Michael Frazer recognises that both 'rationalism' and 'sentimentalism' – the latter as it appeared in the philosophies of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), David Hume and Adam Smith – entailed a process of reflection of some kind. He defines rationalists as those who 'separate the legislative faculties of the mind – identified as "reason" – from the faculties that obey'.[23] Sentimentalists do not see such a distinction. But both, according to Frazer, employ 'reflective regimes': 'while sentimentalism describes reflection as a matter of feeling and imagination as well as cognition, rationalism described reflection as a matter of rational cognition alone'.[24] Scott, in the main, positions herself in this latter category. In *The Test of Filial Duty*, one of the heroines, Charlotte, exclaims that '[p]assions were given us, to be our servants, not our masters', presenting the passions as 'faculties that obey' cognition, and

[21] Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia, 1600-1800* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 77.
[22] Hester Chapone was in direct contact with Richardson, challenging him on the appropriateness of the plot of *Clarissa*. Hilton, *Shaping of the Nation's Young*, 52-54.
[23] Michael Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5. Frazer notes that his reading of Hume's moral philosophy goes against the conventional interpretation that argues Hume also advocates for a hierarchy between reason and the passions, but that the passions are the ruling moral force. See Frazer, *Enlightenment of Sympathy*, chapter two.
[24] Frazer, *Enlightenment of Sympathy*, 7.

reversing Hume's assertion that '[r]eason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions'.[25] What makes Scott's process of reflection rational, and Richardson's sentimental, although they are both writing sentimental fiction, are their respective approaches to mediation. Richardson's moral claims are based on immediate connection and reflection powered by imagination and sympathy, whereas Scott veers away from these faculties to pursue instead a rational mode of reflection. Deborah Weiss argues that Scott uses distancing devices in *Millenium Hall* to position herself as a rationalist, in opposition to theories of moral sentiment.[26] While on the whole Scott advocates the quelling of unruly and dangerous passions by intellectual contemplation, as Scott's letter to Montagu and exemplary protagonists in *The Test of Filial Duty* show, there are moments, as we shall see, when she allows for a more sentimental form of reflection.

Scott manages the reader's distance from the characters and the mode of their reflection through a range of epistolary techniques. Isobel Grundy shows the range of characteristics of Richardsonian epistolarity that later writers, particularly female writers, drew on, which included 'retrospection, self-expression, self-analysis, and variety of narrative tone'.[27] Scott appropriated these qualities for the rational form of reflection that she strived for. Bannet also identifies a set of readerly 'protocols': expectations that readers had of epistolary moral fiction, to which Richardson and subsequent writers of sentimental fiction appealed.[28] These included curiosity, as 'the great driver of reading', that revelled in mystery, secrecy, and scandalous affairs; reading as a 'rational pleasure', which Bannet defines as 'an occasion for reflection and conversation about issues that books raised'; and 'conversing with books', which entailed

[25] Sarah Scott, *Test of Filial Duty, in a Series of Letters*, in *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle*, ed. Gary Kelly (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 6:51. Further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 266.
[26] Deborah Weiss, "Sarah Scott's 'Attick School': Moral Philosophy, Ethical Agency, and *Millenium Hall*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24, no. 3 (Spring, 2012): 463-64.
[27] Isobel Grundy, "'A Novel in a Series of Letters by a Lady': Richardson and some Richardsonian Novels," in *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 224.
[28] Eve Tavor Bannet, "Reading and Readers," in Sabor and Schellenberg, *Richardson in Context*, 136.

'making books party to oral conversations'.[29] Scott, again, used epistolarity to deploy these protocols to achieve her moral aims. Epistolarity, through the first-person perspective, could be used to withhold information in the creation of tension, and deliver it, in an alleviation of curiosity. Emphasising epistolary distance could give rise to rational reflection, and the sociability of letters, and the natural breaks they implemented in epistolary fiction could prompt conversation. Epistolarity afforded writers, including Scott, working in the aftermath of the publication of *Pamela* and *Clarissa* a means to confront moral, practical and literary issues: the threat of sensibility to rational control of the passions, the potentially deceptive nature of a pedagogy of example, and the translation of moral reading into virtuous practice. In the remainder of this chapter, I will show how Scott used epistolary distance to explore these debates surrounding moral fiction. Scott used epistolarity to establish a sentimental distance between the reader and the characters of the text, allowing the reader a discerning, contemplative distance and pause to reflect, instilling in them a moral knowledge that, she hoped, would manifest in active, Anglican, virtuous practice.

I. Epistolarity, Moral Learning and Sociability: Sarah Scott and Lady Barbara Montagu's Educational Cards

The educational cards that Scott created with Barbara Montagu associated moral learning with epistolarity in their creation and as a final product. They were sold in aid of an elderly gentlewoman, Elizabeth Pattillo, and printed by Richardson, as part of the programme of practical Christian charity that the women pursued during their time in Bath.[30] The epistolary exchange between Montagu, Richardson and William Richardson, in which they organise the printing, cost and logistics of producing the cards, in amongst several other printing projects that they were jointly working towards, demonstrates that their moral aim as their core purpose was strongly felt by both parties. In one letter, Richardson writes to Montagu with comments on

[29] Bannet, "Reading and Readers," 136, 139, 142.
[30] Pohl, introduction to *Letters of Sarah Scott*, 1:xix.

her manuscript for her *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen-House as Supposed to be Related by Themselves* (published anonymously in 1759, dated 1760) which, as the title indicates gives instructive fictional moral narratives of women in Magdalen House. He commends her work with high praise, emphasising the moral potential that he sees the text as having, before moving directly on to ask about the progress of the cards:

> Surely these Volumes must be well receiv'd. What Instructions, what Warnings do they abound with!
> […]
> [T]he Fashions of the World are so much changed with regard to the Sex, - that young Women are exposed more than ever to the Seductions of artful and profligate Men.
> This Lady is an admirable Writer.
> How go off the Cards?[31]

It is several letters since either had last mentioned the cards, and he has no business reason to discuss the them at this point; his mention of them directly after his comments on the morality of Montagu's fiction suggest an associative, or at least, ostensible, link between the morality of her text, and the moral purpose of the cards. Furthermore, in the correspondence, there is a broader sense of their success from Montagu's perspective. While she apologises to Richardson for the inconveniences that the project was not as lucrative as she had hoped, there remains a strong sense of the cards' practical benefit. Montagu writes with sincerity to Samuel Richardson that

> I shall not attempt, (if I could) to express what gratitude I feel for the kind and generous Assistance you have given to the distress'd Mrs. Pattillo, who begs to enclose a line from herself, tho' her age and infirmities render her unable to say what she wou'd or ought to say on the occasion […] Mrs. Pattillo hopes she may be enabled by the sale to send your Nephew a payment for the infinite trouble he has had.[32]

[31] Samuel Richardson to Montagu, 2 September 1759, Ithaca, New York, Rare and Manuscript Collections, University Library, Cornell University, Samuel Richardson Correspondence, L (copy). Hereafter 'CU, Richardson Correspondence'.
[32] Montagu to Samuel Richardson, 28 June 1759, CU, Richardson Correspondence, ALS.

Patillo's presence in the letter is almost tangible, the mention of her wish to 'enclose a line' brings her almost as physically close to the page as if she had done, and her gratitude to William Richardson is embodied in her wish to send a physical gift of thanks. The mention of Pattillo brings forth the practical moral effects that the sales of the cards have. Problems around the cards' printing meant the enterprise was not as commercially successful as Montagu, Scott and Richardson had hoped, but they each had a sense of the cards' moral function being their primary purpose.

The sense of morality surrounding the cards manifested in the epistolarity of their correspondence, and in their local and wider sociability. The letters between Montagu and Richardson give a strong indication of the sociability of the cards' physical circulation in the world. Despite the low sales figures, the buyers that they did have responded with enthusiasm, and Montagu reports their response in the letters, repeating to William Richardson for emphasis that they 'please at Bath very much […] people at Bath have approved of them very much', and in another letter that 'those Gentlemen who have perused the Cards are pleased with them'.[33] The epistolary exchange between Montagu and Richardson was part of a network that extended the cards' reach to London, Bath, and Edinburgh; the cards' circulation both locally and more widely was facilitated by epistolarity in a practical sense, and their sociability both permeated into, and was formed by, the epistolary exchange underpinning their production.[34]

The relationship between morality, sociability and epistolarity emerges in the cards themselves, in relation to Scott and Montagu's experimentation with Lockean empirical pedagogical principles.[35] The cards used the epistolary technology of the exchange of paper that contained written and visual information on history, geography and chronology. They consisted of two

[33] Montagu to William Richardson, 29 April 1759, CU, Richardson Correspondence, ALS; Montagu to William Richardson, 8 May 1759, CU, Richardson Correspondence, ALS.
[34] Montagu to William Richardson, 8 May 1759, CU, Richardson Correspondence, ALS.
[35] Betty Rizzo, introduction to Sarah Scott, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), xxii-xxiii.

decks: one containing maps of the world, Europe and its kingdoms, and a second featuring the chronology of England, France, Germany and Turkey.[36] The Lockean use of images and learning through play were key selling points. In their advertisement, the precision and visual attractiveness of the maps were emphasised – all were 'on the same Scale' and 'neatly engraved and coloured' – and the whole set had the aim of enabling children to learn geography 'with greater Ease, than by any other Means hitherto invented' and chronology 'in such a Manner as to make learning of it an Amusement, rather than a Labour to Children'.[37] These characteristics were clearly devised to align with Locke's widely-accepted advice that, for children, learning should be a source of amusement, 'it must never be imposed as a Task, nor made a trouble to them', and that pictures will 'entertain [the child] much the better'.[38] Locke suggests that 'Dice and Play-things' make '*Learning a Sport*'; the epistolarity of the cards, with information printed on them like letters, inviting exchange, implements Locke's empirical educational theory using epistolary technology.[39]

Scott and Montagu's production of the cards coincided with a surge in educational books for children that used innovative material and textual devices to put Locke's advice into practice, usually with a moral dimension. These were pioneered, as Heather Klemann shows, by John Newbery's 'book-toy hybrids' in which toys were sold alongside books, and were used to encourage moral behaviour.[40] For example, a ball or pincushion were sold alongside Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744) which, as Klemann points out, served a moral purpose.[41] Pins were placed in the red side of the pincushion if the child had been well-behaved, and in the black side if not, indicating whether they should receive a reward or punishment. Klemann

[36] *London Chronicle*, 26 April 1759.
[37] *London Chronicle*, 26 April 1759.
[38] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 209, 212.
[39] Locke, *Thoughts*, 209.
[40] Heather Klemann, "The Matter of Moral Education: Locke, Newbery, and the Didactic Book-Toy Hybrid," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011): 223-25.
[41] Klemann, "Moral Education," 223-25.

suggests that objects shaped reading 'not only as experiential act, but also a moral one'.[42] 'Sensual objects do not simply index tangible nouns for children, but may be manipulated to represent such intangible ideas as good or bad morality.'[43] Writers also made use of paper technologies and illustration to create this empirical moral dimension in the reading experience. Gillian Brown notes a rise in quite remarkable 'convertible' or 'metamorphic' books, such as an edition of "The House that Jack Built" which could be shaped into a house.[44] Penny Brown's analysis of illustrations in eighteenth-century children's books reveal how they encoded moral ideals in accordance with a 'pedagogical agenda that aimed to socialise the young and inculcate religious beliefs and social and moral values'.[45] As well as being visual, game-like and appealing, the process of reading book-toy hybrids, movable books and illustrated books, was experiential and phenomenological. Following a Lockean pedagogy that emphasised experience in the learning process, these publications taught concepts of moral behaviour relevant to the child's life beyond their immediate contact with the book.

Scott and Montagu drew on the potential of such pedagogical innovations in the content and format of their cards, which also taught morals through activity and experience. The images on the cards were not exemplary, or demonstrative of specific morals, but they did encourage productive social behaviour and knowledgeable interaction through their form.[46] Gillian Brown suggests that with movable books, as the books' movements and transformations result from the reader's manipulation of the paper, they 'appear coextensive with their readers […] touch leads to sight and identification, which rely on stored experiences and information, leading to association, review, and judgement'.[47] In this process, she suggests, 'the book metamorphosizes

[42] Klemann, "The Matter of Moral Education," 224-26.
[43] Klemann, "The Matter of Moral Education," 224-26.
[44] Gillian Brown, "The Metamorphic Book: Children's Print Culture in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006): 355, 358.
[45] Penny Brown, "Capturing (and Captivating) Childhood: The Role of Illustrations in Eighteenth-Century Children's Books in Britain and France," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 3 (2008): 419.
[46] Brown, "Capturing (and Captivating) Childhood," 429.
[47] Gillian Brown, "The Metamorphic Book," 359.

into a lesson or a story, often into another register'.[48] The reader's tactile contact with the book as interactive paper technology transforms the encounter from reading to another plane of learning experience. Scott and Montagu's cards also demand phenomenological and intellectual engagement from the reader in an experiential learning process that extended into the child's lived experience. Unlike the moveable book, however, which has connected paper parts, Scott and Montagu's cards were stand-alone textual objects. In their tactile engagement with the cards, turning them over, revealing their content, and exchanging them, the children perform in play actions comparable to the exchanging and reading aloud of letters. As well as enhancing the lessons of the cards' content, their use exercises the child's sociability, and encourages the development of knowledge-based conversation following epistolary-style interaction.

The cards may also have sparked conversation that linked the knowledge they contained to active moral practice. Pohl suggests that they may have borne resemblance to Thomas Foubert's *Litterary Cards* (1758).[49] These were accompanied by a booklet containing series of short sentences on topics suitable to polite conversation, including geographical and historical information, philosophical reflections, moral statements and curiosities.[50] These sentences could be used alongside Foubert's cards as a feature of the players' exchanges, and encourage the user to learn polite conversational prompts. Similarly, the chronological information on Scott and Montagu's cards invite memorisation, questioning and speaking aloud. The map images on the cards were also designed to spark conversation. Gillian Brown suggests that illustrations generated conversation through correlations 'between pictures and personal experience', 'between pictures and external information supplied by an adult', and 'between pictures and print'.[51] We may speculate that a conscientious parent or governess might supplement the children's play experience with 'external information', possibly even that supplied on the cards'

[48] Gillian Brown, "The Metamorphic Book," 359.
[49] Nicole Pohl, "A Literary and Charitable Life: 1753-65," in *Letters of Sarah Scott*, 1:148.
[50] Thomas Foubert, *Litterary Cards, being a New Invention to Learn to Read* (London, 1758).
[51] Gillian Brown, "The Metamorphic Book," 354.

advertisement, that they were created and sold for 'A Gentlewoman in Distress'.[52] The cards present an opportunity to guide the child to an understanding of their exemplary practical, charitable, Christian purpose.

II. *Millenium Hall,* Narrative Structure and Exemplary Observational Practices

In *Millenium Hall*, Scott establishes a relationship between empirical observation and epistolary representation which, together, encourage in the reader a process of reflection and moral action. The text has an epistolary frame narrative in which the narrator, George Ellison, writes to his unnamed friend, a publisher, communicating his observations of the benevolent actions of the community that he encounters by chance at Millenium Hall. Ellison's observations in the frame story are interspersed with the back stories of the residents, narrated by Mrs. Maynard, which show the women escaping from vice and finding refuge at Millenium Hall. Like the educational cards that Scott produced with Barbara Montagu, the epistolarity of *Millenium Hall*'s frame narrative establishes a participatory learning process. The reader is invited to engage with the text as a discerning onlooker of the actions contained within it.

The opening epistolary frame announces *Millenium Hall* as a moral text that utilises a pedagogy of example, giving empirical 'circumstantial' representations that might impress its characters on its readers' minds 'as on a sheet of white paper' (53-54). These statements suggest that the text shares procedural characteristics with both the conceptual empiricism of Locke, and of the representation of circumstantial particulars in methodological empiricism. It also, however, from the outset, addresses the potential moral value of fiction. Scott uses epistolarity to draw attention to the text's fictionality. It opens according to epistolary convention in address, layout, and reference to itself as a letter:

[52] *London Chronicle*, 26 April 1759.

> Dear Sir,
> Though, when I left London, I promised to write to you as soon as I had reached my northern retreat, yet, I believe, you little expected instead of a letter to receive a volume. (53)

The relationship between the fictional world of the text and the reader's reality is initially slippery. There is no dedication; this initial epistolary address is in the place a dedication would usually stand, and is the first portion of text that the reader encounters following an 'advertisement'. It is momentarily unclear whether the 'you' in the opening line is a direct address from the author to reader, to another real individual in the form of a dedication, or between fictional characters. Furthermore, conventional self-depreciative prefatory comments ('I presume no apology can be required […] in the description of such virtues as will continually accuse me of my own deficiencies') appear in the body of the letter, rather than as a separate preface, melding the opening pages of the fictional text with the proclamations that the reader might expect from a real author (54). These elements blur the real and the fictional by delaying the moment at which it becomes clear that it is employing what Catherine Gallagher refers to as 'the key mode of nonreferentiality […] that of proper names'.[53] Gallagher identifies the defining feature of fiction as the reference a text makes to individuals and places that do not really exist, but by name, which gives them the illusion of existence. Scott's opening line suspends referentiality until the mention of the 'amiable family' and the inhabitants of 'a place which I shall nominate Millenium Hall'. The narrator's explicit naming of the place gives it a double fictionality that brings the reader from their actual world into the fiction, simultaneously resolving and making them aware of the momentary confusion of the text's opening. The brief step that the text takes into the world of the reader in its epistolary opening invites the reader to engage with the text as recipient, rather than as an external, third-party onlooker. The blurring between fictional action and prefatory textual reality in the opening passage allows the reader to

[53] Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1:341.

see the text as seeping into their reality, and to see the real-world potential of the moral lessons that the text promises.

Scott invites the reader to observe and emulate the narrator, Ellison, as an example of moral development. His learning occurs through a repeated cycle of his curiosity, observation and reflection. Before his chance encounter with Millenium Hall, the chaise that Ellison shared with his companion, Mr. Lamont, broke down, and the two men set out to the nearest village. They find themselves in an idealised pastoral setting and, according to Ellison, 'curiosity now prompted us to walk on' (56). This leads to their encounter with a 'profusion of flowers which ornamented every field' (56). Ellison describes the flowers by name and circumstance of their location: '[s]ome had no other defence than hedges of rose trees and sweet briars […] while at the lower part, pinks, jonquils, hyacinths'; some 'artfully planted' to make a 'thick hedge'; and 'violet, lillies [*sic*] of the valley, and polyanthuses enriched such shady spots' (56-57). He also reports their smells, the 'mixture of perfumes', the 'different scents' that 'regaled the senses alternately', amounting to a precise, circumstantial, and empirical representation. This, he goes on, 'filled us with reflections on the infinite variety of nature' (57). Ellison is led inductively from this empirical encounter to reflect upon the grander themes of nature's variety. His reflections are also empirical in terms of Lockean abstraction, in that his sensory encounter leads to a complex idea, or generalised knowledge of the variety of nature. Scott uses a Lockean model to demonstrate the progress of Ellison's thoughts to expose the progression from observation to broader appreciation of nature as an uncomplicated, direct process of expansion from the particulars of the flowers to general reflections. This combats the problem of a pedagogy of example, in which the conclusion drawn from an observed particular may stray from its intended meaning. Scott's manifestation of the Lockean model in Ellison demonstrates the cognitive movement from observation to general, through reflection, guiding the reader through induction and protecting empirical interpretation from deviation. Ellison also offers an alternative example of inner virtue to that of a Richardsonian protagonist. Rather than

encouraging inner morality through sentiment, Scott aims to instil it through reflection and cognition.

This reflective process also leads Ellison to religious appreciation. It bears some of the qualities of the 'empirical devotion' discussed above. Ellison's appreciation of the 'infinite variety of nature' has a devotional element. His empirical meditation on the flowers raises 'his thoughts and affections Heaven-wards', as Boyle expressed of religious meditation.[54] Curiosity, observation and reflection lead Ellison to religious contemplation more explicitly in the second revolution of this cycle, at the beginning of his friendship with the women of Millenium Hall. He is driven once more by his 'curiosity' to see 'the inhabitants of this hospitable mansion' (58) and then, he and his companion spend the evening entertained by the women with food and music. Ellison describes his experience of the musical performance: 'The sight of so many little innocents joining in the most sublime harmony, made me almost think myself already amongst the heavenly choir, and it was a great mortification to me to be brought back to this sensual world' (63). His response to the music is transcendental, but cognitively it made him 'almost think' himself in heaven, his reflective, intellectual response abstracting from the sensorial stimulus to a devotional religious experience. The next cycle begins the following morning, when Ellison takes a walk through the grounds and, observing a little door, he notes that 'curiosity induced me to pass through it' (65). He meets a woman who lives in an alms-house, supported and organised by the inhabitants at Millenium Hall. He provides the reader a description of their encounter which is, again, followed by a period of reflection in which his 'mind was […] filled with exalted reflections on their virtues' (68). Scott's structuring of Ellison's moral journey around a repeated cycle of curiosity, observation and reflection seems an attempt to inculcate this behavioural pattern in her readers. Its repetition contains and directs

[54] Boyle, *Occasional Reflections*, 41.

the reader's attention on a particular course, that is exemplary of tempered curiosity and cognitive reflection, and of a process of moral and religious development.

The text's consistent return to the epistolary framing narrative structurally invites the reader to emulate Ellison's process of observation and reflection. Mrs. Maynard relates to Ellison the tragic back story of each of the women that explains how they came to reside at Millenium Hall. Between each narrative, the text returns to the epistolary frame story, to Ellison's reflection and commentary. This structural device has the effect of establishing a distance between each of the individual stories related within the text. Ellison's return to moments of reflection in his epistolary account draw out the narrative pace, inserting a moment of breathing space which invites the reader also to reflect alongside him. This technique is a continuation of Scott's use of such pauses in her earlier work, *A Journey*. In *A Journey*, the frame narrative of Princess Carinthia and her carer, Sabrina, present exemplary moral behaviour to the reader through a series of tales of women faced with misfortune. The frame narrative and chapter breaks punctuate the moral stories, and the pauses they create offer opportunity for the reader's moral reflection. For example, in the story of 'Leonora and Louisa', Leonora makes the decision to flee her family home, and Carinthia interrupts the narration to discuss the morality of this decision with Sabrina.[55] The interruption invites the reader to take pause with the characters of the narrative frame, and develop their own moral judgement through reflection. As Caroline Rozell suggests, framing narratives such as in Scott's *A Journey*, encourage 'approaches to critical reading that push the reader into a self-reflective relationship with the text'.[56] The frame narrative of *Millenium Hall* establishes a relationship with the reader that, from the outset, is participatory and, following the model of *A Journey*, sociable and conversational. The epistolary frame invites the reader to interact with the text as they might a communal letter, and in a way that is comparable to the sociability of the educational cards, through reading aloud and related

[55] Scott, *Journey Through Life*, 1:16.
[56] Caroline Rozell, "Women and the Framed-Novelle Sequence in Eighteenth-Century England: Clothing Instruction with Delight" (D.Phil thesis, Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford, 2011), 33.

conversation. Just as Ellison's reflections are occasionally conversational, with Lamont, the insertions of the epistolary frame invite the reader's sociable, reflective engagement with the text.

At the close of the text, Scott presents the letter as a space for reflection, and letter-writing an embodied activity that enables the writer to reflect on their own actions and experiences in the production of moral knowledge. Ellison reveals that his letter has been an exercise in recollection and reflection. He states that his recipient 'may think I have been to prolix in my account of this society; but the pleasure I find in recollection is such, that I could not restrain my pen within moderate bounds […] my thoughts are all engaged in a scheme to imitate them on a smaller scale' (249). He concludes his letter with his resolve to put into practice the virtuous behaviour exemplified by the women at Millenium Hall, and emulate them by establishing a community such as theirs. The letter is the mechanism through which he has recorded his observations, and reflected upon them, that might then become moral action. By using Ellison as an example, Scott encourages her readers not only to emulate the behaviour of Millenium Hall's exemplary women, but invites them to engage in participatory ways with Ellison's epistolary narrative and to emulate his moral journey by, like him, using letter-writing and epistolary description as a means of reflecting on experience. The epistolary framing of the text's close means that its pedagogy is not predicated entirely on example, but entails reflection on empirical experience, and epistolary description constitutes a process of moral learning and development. Observed experienced are not replicated in an unthinking way, but that the moral knowledge gained through observation is reflective and considered, and Scott suggests epistolary space as a site of self-reflection, textual, moral learning.

III. *The Test of Filial Duty*: Familiar Letters, Sentiment, and Reflective Moral Knowledge

In her final, and only conventionally epistolary, novel, *The Test of Filial Duty*, Scott uses epistolarity as a force that dismisses sentimental experience from the textual site of the letter. In terms of plot and structure, the novel has more in common with epistolary moral fiction such as *Pamela* and *Clarissa* than it does with *Millenium Hall*, in being more novelistic in style, more narrative-driven, and in its sentimental plot, which follows the moral development of two young women, Emilia and Charlotte, as they manage the conflict between marriage for love or out of familial duty. The text is distinctive, however, as, unlike Richardsonian epistolary fiction, Scott uses the letter form to distance the reader from the sentimental events that take place within the text, enhancing the spaces between the letters, and highlighting the women's letters as retrospective reports, rather than 'in the moment' representations. Neither do the letters constitute the site of intellectual reflection, as they did in *Millenium Hall*. Scott establishes a distance not only between the reader and the letters, but between the letters and the fictional letter-writer herself. The letter acts as a vehicle in which the heroine can view herself, giving her the opportunity to reflect on her actions as part of the process of moral improvement.

Scott's preface positions the text as an active intervention into the debates surrounding the morality of novels. She gives the commonly rehearsed view that a dichotomy existed between novels that were successfully moral, and those that were not, placing hers firmly into the former camp (5).[57] But, in addition to presenting this commonplace, in the preface Scott also makes her reader an implicit promise of transparency. Although the town 'swarms with novels' she shall not present hers 'as a sort of antidote to the poison conveyed in them' (5). Instead of painting a

[57] See Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 197. This view was sustained in her personal correspondence and discussion of fiction with her sister, Elizabeth Montagu. See Major, *Madam Britannia*, 154-55.

picture of the circulation of novels as ridden with vice, she aims to acknowledge the situation as it is: novels generally encourage virtue, but there are a few 'unfortunate proofs of the contrary' (5). Not only will her novel, this implies, inspire morality, but she will not use the novelistic works of vice that work their way through the literary marketplace as a foil for her own, moral text. This 'would be no less unjust than insolent' (5). She outwardly makes the claim for her work's morality, and sets the tone for a text characterised by transparency and just and true observations.

Structurally, Scott uses several aspects of the letter form to distance the reader from the sentiments of the characters, and to give them an intellectual view of their moral development, rather than an experiential, sentimental one. In her preface, Scott apologies for the length of the letters sent between the two young women, explaining that the 'beginnings and conclusions' of letters are 'generally impertinent, as they break the story, instead of advancing it, and consume the reader's time without giving him any amusement in exchange' (6). This has the converse effect, however, of drawing the reader's attention to the beginnings and conclusions of the letters, and marks the transition, and the space, between each one. The structure of familiar letters, at least towards the beginning of the novel, means that each letter contains discussion of more than one topic, and the narrative develops with a particular kind of epistolary chronology. Each event unfolds over the course of a number of letters, and more than one event advances narratively in each letter, so that simultaneous threads of narrative advance in episodic fashion. One letter might contain, for example, Emilia's discussion of her opinions on her cousin and heir to her father's estate, Charles Leonard, before she states 'I have dwelt too long on this; it is time I should give you some account of Sophia, as a sequel of my last letter' (62). These shifts, necessitated by the epistolary form, break each narrative strand, and insert a hiatus into the advancement of each as it develops. This prevents the build-up of tension and accumulation of pace that a linear, first-person narrative might allow and, as a result, prevents the reader from becoming sentimentally immersed in a particular strand of the story.

Scott makes it clear that the young women's emotional experiences happen off the page, that significant events occur between the letters, and that, consequently, their letters are a retrospective reconstruction of their sentiments at a particular moment. In one instance, Charlotte is preparing to meet her potential suitor, Henry Edmondbury, and breaks off the letter just before she goes downstairs to meet him, and promises to write Emilia a report of the meeting afterwards (20). Other than establishing novelistic tension – and in this case Scott does exploit the reader's curiosity to find out the events of the meeting – it also creates a sense of dramatic irony, in that the reader is aware of the meeting happening off the page, in between letters. Gary Kelly suggests that Scott chose to use the epistolary form in this novel for reasons more akin to Richardson's, that it 'could represent the subject in motion, or emotion, now the presumed core of subjectivity, through the immediacy of "writing to the moment" rather than the otherwise less engaging retrospection characteristic of autobiographical narration'.[58] Scott's use of epistolarity is rather more innovative than Kelly's interpretation allows. Her use of the letter in *The Test of Filial Duty* elides epistolarity with retrospective 'autobiographical narration' demonstrating Scott's acute awareness of the possibilities that the letter form offers to create or close temporal and sentimental distance between the events described and their moment of recounting. Epistolarity does not automatically denote temporal or emotional immediacy, and Scott holds her readers at a sentimental distance from the young women's emotions, making them privy to their intellectual, reflective exchanges after the event, rather than sentimental and 'in the moment' experiences.

Scott also presents the intellectual and discursive letters that the women exchange as exemplary forms of letter writing, that the reader might emulate in their own familiar letters. She presents the ideal content of letters as contemplative, dialogic and circumstantial, reporting social observations, rather than sentiment. In the novel's preface, Scott apologises for the length of the letters that Emilia sends in the second part of the novel when she moves to Wales. Scott states

[58] Gary Kelly, introductory note to Scott, *Test of Filial Duty*, xiv.

that their length is ‘to avoid multiplying letters, which must more frequently have been composed of sentiments than of facts, as no great variety of incidents could occur in so lonely a situation’ (6). There is the implication that letters should more properly be concerned with the reportage of facts, of particular instances and circumstances, than an outpouring of sentiment. Accordingly, in the opening sequence of letters, Emilia and Charlotte discuss their observations of the people and social situations around them. They comment on the poor moral behaviour of Emilia’s sister Sophia, and Sophia’s relationship with Emilia’s mother, who is Sophia’s stepmother; Emilia offers particular visual representations of Sophia’s suitor, their cousin Charles; and Charlotte offers observation on Emilia’s actions and behaviour with regards to Charles. In one instance, Emilia stops short her discussion on the sentiments that attend self-sacrifice, claiming that ‘I shall perhaps too much exercise your patience if I spin sentiment at this rate, instead of answering the question with which you ended your Letter; it is time therefore I should call my pen to order’ (13). Although, of course, there are moments when the protagonists describe sleepless nights, tears, and mortification at unwanted marriage proposals, these descriptions are retrospectively reported and while Scott makes a concession to them, she illustrates that the ideal epistolary exchange is discursive, rather than sentimental. Emilia’s movement away from an extended discussion of emotions in circumstances of self-sacrifice exemplifies to the reader the type of content most suitable for familiar epistolary exchange: observational reflections and dialogue with the recipient. This moment also, however, shows how the form of the letter itself, in which a question sent in one determines the content of another, lends itself to, even demands, reciprocal intellectual discussion and reflection.

The Test of Filial Duty, more so than *Millenium Hall*, raises the issue of the potential disconnect between an action as it is perceived through observation, and the inner emotion that causes the action. Emilia and Charlotte disagree when Emilia herself is not able to identify the own emotional motive for her own actions. Emilia writes to Charlotte a long, flattering description of her sister’s suitor Charles. Charlotte observed this letter as an action of Emilia’s, and replies:

> [A]re you indeed so innocent as to fancy that Mr. Leonard's fine eyes incline you to wish him the husband of Sophia? […] then his sweet smiles, the sensibilities in his countenance, his fine person, his graceful air, - oh! they must make a sister prodigiously happy no doubt […] If you would deceive ME you must be less warm and less circumstantial in your praises, however easy you may find self-deception […] when you think of his marrying Miss Sophia, does not a soft sigh steal from your bosom? (25)

Charlotte picks out specific details that evidence Emilia's true feelings, which Emilia herself has failed to observe and interpret. Emilia falls to 'self-deception', blind to what her own actions – in this case, her descriptions of Charles to Charlotte – reveal about her emotions. In Emilia's next letter to Charlotte, she retorts: 'What then? […] are there not sighs of pleasure, as well as tears of joy?' (31). In the early stages of the novel, Emilia's inability to discriminate between sighs of pleasure and pain, and tears of joy and sadness highlight the potential for the misinterpretation of physical manifestations of emotion. The young women's navigation of this dissonance between what is seen in an observation of a person's behaviour, and the real cause of it, especially in observations of their own actions and motives, forms the basis of their moral development. This development culminates, at the end of the novel, in Emilia's ability to correlate her actions with her emotions in, in the words of her successfully claimed husband Charles, 'external charms and internal virtues' (157).

A key moment of Emilia's moral development is when she begins to be able to recognise and control her emotions. This occurs when Charles declares his love for her, and she realises hers for him. Their love is hindered as he is expected for her sister, and his father has expressed his own romantic designs for Emilia. Distress ensues. Emilia exerts superior control over her emotions than Charles does over his: 'He could say no more, he grew pale and almost breathless […] he seemed ready to faint […] a tear stole down his cheek' (57-58). Although Emilia subsequently suffers a fit of tears, and 'not a coherent sentence passed [between them] for some time', she physically supports him as he swoons (58). Her management of her emotions manifests in her precise articulation of them: she describes 'a variety of sensations; surprize, tenderness, concern', that inspired 'such melancholy, yet pleasing, emotions' (57-58). Over the

course of the day, in her family's presence, her emotions are rationally controlled to a degree that serves as an example both to Charles, who 'endeavour[ed] to acquire strength, by studying [her] example' and, by implication, to the reader (61). Her example at this moment also conforms to the Enlightenment rationalist ideal in which disruptive passions are successfully suppressed by the legislative faculty of reason.[59] This emotional control manifests in Emilia's ability to pinpoint her exact emotional state in a letter to her friend. This epistolary expression enacts the intellectual morality that Scott aims to promote.

Yet Emilia's eloquent sentimental expression only occurs retrospectively, following a process of reflection, which results in Emilia's letter to Charlotte as the final product. Emilia explains that in the moment of emotional turmoil, she had tried but failed to write to Charlotte, saying 'I attempted writing to you […] my mind was too much confused even to arrange in any order the scene that I had this morning been engaged in; my pen, therefore […] was laid aside' (58-59). This is a literal refutation of writing 'in the moment'. Janet Todd shows that the Richardsonian sentimental letter, 'written in the isolation of the closet, can forge rapturous ties of friendship, making "distance, presence" and communicating feelings without intruding the difficulties of physical social presence'.[60] Scott denies her protagonist such closet intimacy, and it is only when Emilia has reflected in solitude, and regained sufficient control of her reason, that she is rewarded by the understanding of her mother and then, by letter, that of her friend (59). The letter in this scene also differs from the epistolary function in *Millenium Hall*, where the letter was a site of reflection in progress. The determinedly retrospective stance of Emilia's letter, which Scott reminds us of with insertions such as '[b]ut to proceed with my relation' (58), secures the protagonist's sentimental distance from the events she is relating. This is further evidenced by the hint of humour in Emilia's retelling of Charles' extravagant reaction: pale, fainting, and 'falling from his seat' (58). Kelly suggests that this scene is related with

[59] Frazer, *Enlightenment of Sympathy*, 5
[60] Todd, *Sensibility*, 87.

'sentimentally humorous relish'.[61] I imagine the relish to be Scott's, poking fun at the overblown expression of emotion in the sentimental literature that has preceded hers, but Emilia's coy humorous probes point towards her increasing self-awareness. Previously, she had no notion of what Charles' actions or her own signified, whereas here, she is sufficiently aware, and suitably distanced, to be amused by her sentimental control, and his lack of it. A typical Richardsonian letter attempts to capture the progress of the sentiments; the epistolary frame of *Millenium Hall* represented the progress of the reflective intellect; the retrospective letter of *The Test of Filial Duty* gives the heroine distance from her emotional experience and subsequent reflection, to step back and view the letter as a representation of herself.

The completion of Emilia's moral development occurs when she becomes self-aware of her reflective process. This occurs when she moves to Wales, having begged her parents to allow her to live in virtuous solitude rather than marry against her will. Her self-awareness is, again, signalled through humour. She writes to Charlotte that her resolution of 'calm reflection', in 'quiet retirement' is challenged by the emotional response that the Welsh scenery inspires:

> Were I disposed to act the part of a despairing love-sick girl, I am placed in the most favourable spot imaginable. Such caves to sigh and mourn in! such pretty rivulets to swell with my tears! Such shady groves to sooth my melancholy […] for I never go out to walk, but I soon perceive myself in some spot, such as one would imagine formed purposely for the retirement of a despairing maiden. Possibly you will laugh at me. (101-102)

Emilia then goes on to explain how she stands by a waterfall, its sounds drowning out her melancholy, but the self-mockery of her description prevents it from conforming to Romantic landscape conventions. Emilia identifies the impulse in herself to indulge lovesickness in the dramatic groves and shades of her surroundings and invites her friend to share her self-mockery. There is, again, a knowing tone in her account, as Emilia incorporates exaggerated sentimental tropes to humorous effect. Before, the subject of her observation was Charles, here it is her own

[61] Kelly, introductory note to Scott, *Test of Filial Duty*, x.

emotional undulations and actions. In addition, by this point, Emilia embodies exemplary virtuous behaviour, both in her approach to reflection, and in her actions. She explicitly recommends reflection while reading, in a way that recalls conduct literature advice: 'That I may not read totally without reflection, I frequently write observations on the passages that strike me most, as I find it the best method of fixing my attention' (103). Like the women at Millenium Hall, she practices reading, painting and music, attends church frequently, and assists disadvantaged members of the local community. Accordingly, this section of the novel, is more tonally consistent with *Millenium Hall*. Emilia adopts a more demonstrative, exemplary persona, offering frequent reflections on the benefits of charitable benevolence, and the pleasure that can be derived from active Christian virtue. Pohl argues that the affective and sensible bonds between the community at Millenium Hall are part of a 'utopian affective sociability that strives for emotional self-fulfilment'. Emilia, by a process of reflection, rather than sentimental connection, still arrives at a comparable position of moral and sentimental fulfilment.[62] Despite writing *Millenium Hall* and *The Test of Filial Duty* ten years apart, Scott insists on the same mode of charitable benevolence as her earlier moral fiction. Madhvi Zutshi acknowledges that one of the implications of Richardson's fictions for moral behaviour was that from the 1760s onwards, by the time that *The Test of Filial Duty* was published, there was a shift from benevolent actions such as charity being the primary visible manifestation of virtue, to the physical display of sensibility itself as evidence of inner virtue.[63] Scott adapts her fiction to be sufficiently in keeping with a readership's interest in sentimental novels, but *The Test of Filial Duty* resists the transition in morality that this type of publication had instigated, and her heroine continues to conform to earlier models of demonstrable virtue. Scott stakes a claim for

[62] Nicole Pohl, "'Creating a Life Together': Utopian Households in the Work of Sarah Scott and Sarah Fielding," in *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900,* ed. Susan Broomhall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 221.
[63] Madhvi Zutshi, "Thinking about Feeling: Sensibility and Self-Consciousness in the Eighteenth-Century Novel" (PhD thesis, New Brunswick Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2015), 7.

the continuing value of active, Christian benevolence which, her novel suggests, can be achieved by teaching by example in moral epistolary fiction.

By the novel's close, when Emilia has arrived at full moral maturity, her letters become a site that allows her observation of the self. We saw how towards the opening of the novel Emilia was ignorant of what her epistolary representations signalled about her emotions. At the end of Emilia's moral development, Scott casts the letter as a space which is the product of Emilia's sentimental experiences and reflection, and a site which enables her to view and reflect upon herself. Scott's use of the letter to demonstrate Emilia's arrival at self-awareness and practice of self-reflection accords with Pohl's analysis of letter-writing practices, in which 'the letter writer is his/her own first reader, the spectator of his/herself'.[64] The letter is not only a space to reflect on societal observations, and to record one's own emotional and reflective experiences, but is a site of self-reflection and enables introspection. Scott achieves this by emphasising epistolary elements that distance the letter from its writer, as well as its reader. Scott represented Emilia's process of reflection as rational, in that a legislative power that constituted the 'real' self took control over disruptive passions. The self as it is expressed in her letters at the close of the novel, however, with demonstrable self-awareness, accords more closely with the more holistic reflection of the sentimentalist.[65] Scott's novel, therefore, leads her heroine, and the reader, through a process of moral development in which letters and the process of observation of others, and of the self, play a part. Scott promotes the ideals of exemplary moral practice in accordance with the writings and piety of Talbot and Chapone, but also, through the novel's approach to epistolary distance, Scott presents a notion of the self and moral knowledge that looks to a more reflective and introspective form of morality.

[64] Pohl, introduction to *Letters of Sarah Scott*, 1:xxv.
[65] Frazer, *Enlightenment of Sympathy*, 7.

Scott uses Emilia's moral development as an example of moral behaviour and of model familiar epistolary writing. She consistently emphasises the distance between sentimental experience and epistolary expression, both between the letter and the reader of epistolary fiction, and between the letter and the letter writer. Her pedagogical method, based on this epistolary distance, was to enable her readers to observe Emilia's moral development from an intellectual, observational distance, rather than through an emotional intimacy and through sharing the same experience. She uses this distance to inculcate the process of reflection in her reader which, she hopes, will encourage active, charitable and benevolent forms of virtue in practice, and a forward-looking, observational and reflective form of moral knowledge.

In this chapter, I have shown how Scott uses the distancing effects of epistolarity to create an observational distance between her readers and the characters of her fiction, which enables her readers to emulate textual examples in reflective, considered ways. This reflective mode of observation draws on earlier empirical epistemologies of Locke and Royal Society practices, which both persisted in thought and practice throughout the eighteenth century. Scott remained committed to exemplifying the practical, charitable forms of virtue like contemporary Bluestocking writers, with whom she shared religious values and ideas about the value of moral reflection, despite the change in what constituted virtuous action, brought about by the swell in sentimental fiction from the mid-century onwards. She did not depart from sentimental fiction, completely, however, but presented a mode of sentimental epistolary fiction that had a process of observation and reflection at its heart. Her texts engage earnestly in debates surrounding the morality of the epistolary sentimental novel; she drew on earlier and contemporaneous modes of observation and reflection and, through her use of epistolarity in different, but consistently distancing, ways across different types of fictive and moral texts, she produced a form of fiction that aimed to instil in her reader a forward-looking, reflective mode of moral knowledge.

Chapter Three

Linnaean Empiricism, Ephemeral Epistolarity and Botany at the Bulstrode Estate

> [A]ll the Three Kingdoms of Nature, the *Animal*, *Vegetable*, and *Fossil*, were comprehended in her Researches […] It was indeed the Intention of the enlightened Possessor to have had every unknown Species described and published to the World […] Had her Life been continued a few Years longer, it is possible that every Subject in this Catalogue would have been properly described and characterized.[1]

This is how John Lightfoot, botanist and clergyman, described the enormous natural history collection and aspirations of its owner, Margaret Bentinck, the Duchess of Portland, when it was sold after her death. Portland inherited the fortune of her mother, Henrietta Cavendish Harley (1694-1755), and the collection of her father, Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford (1689-1741), which enabled her to collect thousands of objects during her lifetime pertaining to art, natural history, conchology and botany. Her collection, housed at her estate at Bulstrode, Buckinghamshire, and at her Whitehall residence, for a time was one of the largest in the country, its auction lasting thirty-eight days. Lightfoot's auction catalogue situates Portland's collection within the Linnaean system of taxonomy. Carl Linnaeus's system organised natural specimens into 'Three Kingdoms of Nature', the '*Animal*, *Vegetable*, and *Fossil*', before categorising them into classes, orders, genera and species. In the catalogue, Lightfoot and the naturalist Daniel Solander listed items in Portland's collection using another Linnaean innovation, the binomial system, which identified specimens using a two-word Latin epithet, which denoted its genus and species.[2] This replaced the former, polynomial descriptions and made the identification of plants, animals and fossils manageable on a wide, global scale. This system demonstrates Linnaeus's ambition to name and identify all living species. Lightfoot's representation of Portland and her collection suggests that this was an ambition that she shared, and he shows how it was to be fulfilled: by species being 'described', 'characterized' and

[1] John Lightfoot, preface to *A Catalogue of the Portland Museum* (London, 1786), iii.
[2] Solander had been Linnaeus's student, and had accompanied Joseph Banks (1743-1820) on the Endeavour voyage of 1768-71, before working at Bulstrode under Portland's patronage from 1779.

'published'. In this chapter, I show the role that empiricism and epistolarity – as components of having a 'Species described and published to the World' – played in the production of botanical knowledge at Bulstrode according to Linnaean principles: a process that was not as achievable, or even as highly desired, as Lightfoot's representation implies.

Bulstrode was Linnaean in its botanical practice, its connection with other institutions, and in its publications. It followed the Linnaean sexual system of classification, which used the empirical process of observation and representation to categorise plants according to their reproductive parts. Bulstrode participated in a national network of botanical institutions that also followed the Linnaean system, maintaining connections with the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, the Chelsea Physic Garden, and Luton Hoo, and with botanising individuals such as Solander, Joseph Banks, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[3] Portland financially supported a number of botanists – who will form the subject of this chapter – and accounted for several Linnaean publications and productions. She sponsored Lightfoot to tour Scotland in 1772, which led to the publication of his *Flora Scotica* (1777), and she employed the botanical draughtsman Georg Dionysius Ehret to teach her daughters botanical drawing and to produce paintings for her collection.[4] Portland also provided her friend and companion in widowhood, Mary Delany, residence for six months every year from 1768, during which time Delany produced her spectacular 'paper mosaicks': nearly 1,000 botanically-accurate paper collages of flowers, modelled on specimens from Portland's collection, and on those exchanged with other botanical institutions.[5] Delany, Ehret,

[3] Mark Laird, *A Natural History of English Gardening, 1650-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 293; Lisa Ford, "A Progress in Plants: Mrs Delany's Botanical Sources," in *Mrs. Delany & Her Circle*, ed. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For a comprehensive analysis of Rousseau's serious botanical practice, see Alexandra Cook, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Botany: The Salutary Science*, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), 173-76.
[4] See Jean K. Bowden, *John Lightfoot his Work and Travels: With a Biographical Introduction and a Catalogue of the Lightfoot Herbarium* (Kew: Bentham-Moxon Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens, 1989); Gerta Calmann, *Ehret: Flower Painter Extraordinary: An Illustrated Biography* (Oxford: Phiadon, 1977).
[5] Although it never reached completion, Delany and Portland also worked on a translation of William Hudson's Linnaean *Flora Anglica* (1762). Mary Delany, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. Augusta Hall (1861-62; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4:243-44 (hereafter *Autobiography*); Alicia Weisberg-Roberts, introduction to Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 10.

Lightfoot, Portland, and Rousseau each had a different approach to Linnaean botany in practice, to which the diversity in the form and nature of their Linnaean productions testify, as each prioritised different elements of Linnaeus's botanical philosophy. Despite the Linnaean form of classification being the dominant botanical epistemology at the estate, and the notion of working towards a shared, global botanical knowledge that it entailed, its adoption there and, as the activities at Bulstrode exemplify, more broadly in Britain, was not a smooth, uncontested, or inevitable process, but one in which botanists carefully questioned and adapted elements of the system's empirical processes as they were put into practice.

At the height of Bulstrode's botanical activity, from the 1760s onwards, the Linnaean system of classification was still relatively new. His *Systema naturae* (1735), *Philosophia botanica* (1751) and *Species Plantarum* (1753), which outline the sexual system and the use of binomials, became more widely available in Britain through individuals who had worked with Linnaeus, such as Ehret and Solander, and through translations of his works into English, for example, James Lee's *Introduction to Botany* (1760), and Phillip Miller's *Short Introduction to the Knowledge of the Science of Botany* (1760). When it was introduced in Britain, Linnaeus's was one of a number of competing systems in the identification and classification of plants. Linnaeus's system manifested an ideal means of organising, describing and categorising botanical specimens that did not always operate smoothly in practice. It was particularly limited, for example, in terms of its application to mycology, the study of fungi. As we will see in more detail below, the system did not have sufficiently diverse categories for fungal morphological forms, or suitable technical language to describe them. Linnaeus's epistemology could therefore not be adopted wholly, and forced the botanists at Bulstrode to negotiate between each other and with themselves over which elements and practices to adopt, prioritise or neglect.

Furthermore, at Bulstrode, a Linnaean epistemology jostled against and overlapped with other empirical knowledge-producing practices: collecting and crafting. We saw in the introduction

how the epistemology of collecting had an empirical element as it entailed sensorial contact with the specimen. Arthur MacGregor highlights that the 'very act of handling, examining, and arranging the specimens under consideration […] is central to the process of gaining an understanding of them'.[6] The interaction of Portland, Delany, and the botanists at Bulstrode with the material specimens they collected was part of the process of their analysis and classification. Crafting is another knowledge-producing activity for which Bulstrode is particularly noted, which also had an empirical element, as it entailed experiential contact between the practitioner and the material object. Janice Neri has suggested that Delany's mobilisation of natural objects across different forms of craft work, using images of flowers and insects in embroidery, and decorating a grotto in Portland's grounds with shells, minerals and fossils, is indicative of her intricate knowledge of their morphological characteristics.[7] Both collecting and crafting were epistemologies that had particular opportunities for the establishment and projection of individual personal identity; Madeleine Pelling has examined the collecting and crafting activities at Bulstrode as an assertion of feminine and Bluestocking identities and friendships.[8] These discussions provide a useful context in which to consider the botanical activities of Delany, Ehret, Lightfoot, Portland and Rousseau. The backdrop of crafting and collecting epistemologies against which they were working meant, I suggest, that the botanists at Bulstrode had a heightened awareness of the way in which their botanical work embodied and inflected their social positioning in the estate as they navigated various aspects of the Linnaean system.

Some of the practical complications that the botanists at Bulstrode faced are encompassed in a letter that Delany wrote to her niece, Mary Dewes Port (c.1750-1777). She describes the scene

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[6] Arthur MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 119.
[7] Janice Neri, "Mrs. Delany's Natural History and Zoological Activities: 'A Beautiful Mixture of Pretty Objects'," in *Mrs. Delany*, 172-87.
[8] Madeleine Pelling, "Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft at Bulstrode Park," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 1 (2018): 101-20.

of mycological activity, in which specimens of fungi – agarics and boletuses – await examination by one of the botanists:

> Mr. Lightfoot and botany go on as usual; we are now in the chapter of *Agaricks and Boletus's*, &c. &c., […] and her Grace's breakfast-room, which is now the repository of sieves, pans, platters, and filled with all the productions of *that nature*, are spread on tables, windows, chairs which with books of all kinds, (opened in their useful places), make an agreeable confusion; sometimes, notwithstanding twelve chairs and a couch, *it is* indeed a little *difficult* to find a *seat*![9]

The lightness and anecdotal quality of the scene belie its sharply accurate representation of the estate's botanical epistemology and practice. Specimens of fungi mingle with open books; categorisation, according to the Linnaean system, entailed an intertextual, inductive, empirical process of observing specimens and comparing them with others, either directly, or through written descriptions in publications. The scene also suggests the sociability of botanical study. The furniture is repurposed for botanical specimens, and collective activity is implied in the room's 'agreeable confusion'. This points to the collaborative nature of Linnaean botany, and illustrates the particular sociable, collaborative and communicative elements of scientific practice at Bulstrode, which was shaped by letters and epistolary productions between individuals at the estate and beyond. The humour and charm of Delany's representation curates an image of Bulstrode's botanical activity as a scene of cheerful domestic clutter, in a way that might appeal to and amuse her young correspondent. Delany's angling of the scene towards Dewes's interests illustrates how the letter's intended audience might influence the botanical content of epistolary writing: a feature that occurs across Bulstrode's epistolary botanical productions. Finally, Delany suggests that fungi pose a problem to Linnaean botany. They assert a physical presence, taking the place of people on window ledges and chairs. Although playfully 'agreeable', the specimens cause 'confusion'. Delany shields their physical characteristics beneath repeated iterations of '&c', and behind euphemistic turns of phrase – 'productions of

[9] Delany to Dewes, Bulstrode, 3 September 1769, in *Autobiography*, 4:238.

that nature' – implying that their features should not, or cannot, be verbally represented. The representational challenges that fungi posed, and their incompatibility with the Linnaean system, gave the botanists at Bulstrode the opportunity to test their own modes of Linnaean botanical practice in seeking adequate solutions.

In this chapter, I argue that the botanists at Bulstrode contested and experimented with the epistolary and empirical elements of Linnaeus's botanical philosophy, negotiating and prioritising different aspects in order to produce their own ways of producing botanical knowledge. This chapter differs from the others in this thesis as it does not focus on the work of one individual, but considers the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity in the knowledge-producing botanical practices of connected individuals. In doing so, I capture their sense of collective botanical endeavour as they pursued a Linnaean botanical philosophy, and illuminate the debate and variation that accompanied the adoption of his system in a botanical institution. Much of their botanical work was epistolary. Lightfoot and Rousseau's letters were a site of analytical and representational descriptions of specimens, and Delany and Rousseau's herbaria – collections of dried plants, labelled and organised for botanical study – responded to Linnaeus's guidelines whereby herbaria operated on an epistolary technology of paper exchange. Botanical work produced at the estate was also epistolary in its ephemerality; the botanists were keenly aware of the varying extent of circulation of sketches, notes, letters, art productions and publications. This influenced the nature and content of the botanical knowledge that it produced. The ways in which the botanists utilised epistolary elements of their work interacted with an empirical Linnaean epistemology in different ways, and allowed them to prioritise different elements, and create their own modes of botanical practice.

In the first section of this chapter, I show that Linnaeus's botanical epistemology had, at its core, a notion of botany as a collective endeavour, which depended on the epistolary technologies of description and communication, and I examine how it utilised empirical

observational and representational processes in its practice. I also consider the epistemologies of other forms of knowledge-producing activities that took place at the estate: crafting and collecting. I then go on to show how epistolarity operates in tandem with Linnaean empiricism in the works of Lightfoot, Delany, Ehret, Portland and Rousseau. Lightfoot, Delany, Ehret and Portland each negotiated the ambiguities of fungi, which proffered a space for them to find solutions to the shortcomings of a Linnaean epistemology, and to angle the image of Bulstrode's botanical activity to those beyond. Lightfoot utilised epistolary description as a means of diagnosing and identifying botanical specimens, but also looked ahead to the possible publications of these descriptions, and their participation in Linnaean botany as a global, collective endeavour. Delany in particular was aware of the social and epistemological perversions of fungi, and of how they, and botanical activity more broadly, might be manipulated in letters leaving the estate according to the tastes of her correspondents. Ehret was experimental in his response to fungal challenges, but the contrast between his draft and final sketches and drawings illustrate that his representational methods were ultimately determined by the social expectations of his position as an employee at Bulstrode and a Linnaean botanical artist. Portland offered an alternative approach to Linnaean empiricism by performing mycological study more in line with the empirical elements of an epistemology of collecting.

In the final section of this chapter, I expand my consideration of Bulstrode's botanical practice from mycology to encompass flowering plants, with a focus on the epistolarity of Rousseau's and Delany's herbaria. An herbarium constructed in the Linnaean style used epistolary technology; it was composed of loose sheets of paper containing botanical specimens, that could be transported easily between botanists. Rousseau in his letters, and Delany in her 'paper mosaick' or *hortus siccus*, negotiated the sociable, epistolary element of herbaria construction against other motives that they had in their botanical practice. In his letters to Portland and to another botanical correspondent, Madeleine-Catherine Delessert (1747-1816), Rousseau embraced the mobility of specimens in the form of dried plants, apparently in line with

Linnaean recommendations. He rejected, however, the sociable aspect of botanising and, in his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1776-78), it becomes clear that he valued herbaria for its diary-like qualities, which allowed him to refer to it at a later stage, and for the distance it upheld between him and his botanical correspondent. Delany's *hortus siccus*, by contrast, was produced at the epicentre of Bulstrode sociability, its form and content were encouraged from within the estate, by Portland through the craft practices that characterised Bulstrode, and beyond by the Linnaean resources of other estates that Bulstrode had contact with. Conversely, however, Delany's *hortus siccus* was bound into volumes, limiting its mobility, but enabling it instead to fulfil a different function, as an emblem of the various strands of Linnaean botanical practice of the Bulstrode botanists. In sum, I show how the botanists connected to Bulstrode used epistolarity in various forms in their empirical Linnaean practice, which influenced the form and the content of the botanical knowledge they produced, and enabled them to forge their own unique ways of practicing Linnaean botany, as part of a broader, collective, botanical endeavour.

I. Linnaean Botanical Epistemology and Practice: Empiricism, Paper Technologies and Communication.

Linnaeus's sexual system of the classification of plants was a collative, open and ongoing endeavour that looked forward to an ideal, global cataloguing of all vegetable species, and depended on the technologies of description, exchange and comparison. The sexual system divided plants into twenty-three classes, and then into orders, based on the number, size and arrangement of their stamen and pistils – their male and female reproductive organs. The genus, or family, of the plant was determined by the structures in its fruit body, and the species by other characteristics such as herbage and roots.[10] The mode of analysis was empirical, as it was

[10] Carl Linnaeus, *Linnaeus' Philosophia Botanica*, trans. Stephen Freer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111-115.

based on the plant's morphological – the physical, visual – characteristics.[11] The system was a combination of artificial groupings and those which drew on the 'natural', or essential, characteristics between plants. Linnaeus considered his artificial groupings as a sort of stop gap, until all the plants of the world had been described, and the natural relations between them could be discerned, at which point the true relations between classes would become apparent, and a full natural system, 'the ultimate end of botany', would be achieved.[12] The possibility of this vision depended on the collaboration of botanists across geographical space and over time. Linnaeus accordingly opens his *Philosophia Botanica* (1751) with a call to botanists throughout Europe to send him plant specimens.[13] The text then continues with a 'Library', which traces a tradition of international botanical practitioners, and in which he outlines the often communicative skills, practices and publications necessary to fulfil his botanical project. He identifies the 'FATHERS', who 'established the first rudiments of botany'; the 'ILLUSTRATORS', such as Ehret, who have 'represented the figures of vegetables in pictures'; the 'DESCRIBERS', who produce written sketches of plants, and 'the compilers of FLORAS', botanical publications that 'list the vegetables that grow *naturally* in any particular place', such as Hudson's *Flora Anglica* and Lightfoot's *Flora Scotica*.[14] Linnaeus posits a botanical philosophy in which his sexual system will be built upon over time, in a collective, collaborative and global way, until enough knowledge has been amassed to ascertain the natural relations between plants. In Alexandra Cook's terms, Linnaeus's system of classification was 'an open-ended, inductive and empirical project of collation, compilation and revision'.[15] The Bulstrode botanists' participation in Linnaean botany was therefore a contribution to this growing, global,

[11] Staffan Müller-Wille, "Collection and Collation: Theory and Practice of Linnaean botany," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 38 (2007): 559.
[12] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 115, 149. See also 40, 49. Cook, *Rousseau and Botany*, 173-76. See also Sara T. Scharf, "Identification Keys, the 'Natural Method,' and the Development of Plant Identification Manuals," *Journal of the History of Biology* 42, no. 1 (2009): 92-95.
[13] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 6.
[14] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 15, 17, 20.
[15] Cook, *Rousseau and Botany*, 175; Müller-Wille, "Collection and Collation," 559-60.

teleological stock of knowledge, a notion for which Lightfoot, as I show below, had particular enthusiasm.

The epistemology of the Linnaean system of classification, as recent historians of science have shown, was empirical in its similarities to the process of Baconian induction. As we saw in the introduction, Francis Bacon's inductive epistemology entailed the recording and comparison of particular observations of an entity's visible properties, and the subsequent abstraction of patterns and broader truths. Staffan Müller-Wille shows that Linnaean botany also used such an epistemology, as it drew on particular specimens, 'concrete exemplars', as its starting point, and arrived at knowledge about that specimen through a process of 'inscription', collation and comparison.[16] The empirical process of observation and representation established the commonalities and differences between plant specimens, and enabled their categorisation.[17] The act of 'inscription', in either written descriptions or visual representations, was therefore integral to a Linnaean method in terms of its epistemology, as well as being the means of communicating a specimen's characteristics, or knowledge about that specimen, to other botanists. The procedure of 'collation', Müller-Wille explains, is inductive in that it integrates the analysis of a plant's physical features with 'the material practice of shuffling concrete exemplars around in order to observe equivalences in the morphological structure of plants'.[18] In the context of Bulstrode's botanical practice, this explanation brings to mind Delany's representation of Portland's breakfast room that we saw above. The botanists have collated the material specimens of fungi into one place, and they shuffle them around, comparing them with each other, and with inscriptions – written descriptions and visual representations – as they appear in 'books of all kinds, (opened in their useful places)'.[19]

[16] Müller-Wille, "Collection and Collation," 559.
[17] Müller-Wille, "Collection and Collation," 559.
[18] Müller-Wille, "Collection and Collation," 559.
[19] Delany to Dewes, Bulstrode, 3 September 1769, in *Autobiography*, 4:238.

Linnaeus was innovative in his use of print and paper technologies to facilitate the comparison of specimens with their descriptions in such books. As representation, comparison and communication were central to Linnaeus's botanical epistemology, his botany in practice depended on the technologies that facilitated these activities: herbaria, indexes, lists, tables and, as we will see in the practice at Bulstrode, letters, notes and sketches. Sara T. Scharf has shown how certain textual technologies in botanical publications, such as the standardisation of layout on the page, and the use of indexes and cross-references, enabled readers to quickly find the information they sought about a given specimen.[20] Linnaeus itemised descriptions to an even further degree than his predecessors, he used the minimum number of words to describe the plant specimen, and he italicised words that were critical to the diagnosis – the identification – of a specimen.[21] Linnaeus also proposed an innovative design for herbaria, making use of communicative paper technologies to enable easier, and sociable, comparison of specimens. He proposed that specimens of dried plants were glued individually to loose pieces of paper, and stored in a cupboard, on twenty-three shelves that corresponded with the classes of flowering plants in his sexual system.[22] This format marked a change from previous herbaria which were held in bound volumes, and were arranged alphabetically or by date or location of discovery. Like his textual innovations, Linnaeus's new design ensured that a specimen could be located quickly, in his terms, that 'any plant can be pulled out and produced without delay'.[23] There is also an epistolary, sociable dimension to this design. The specimens, unlike those bound in a volume, are extractable, portable, and can be passed between people more easily. Linnaeus's herbaria innovations ensured that the information it contained could be accessed, referred to,

[20] Scharf, "Identification Keys," 75 and 81-82.
[21] Scharf, "Identification Keys," 81-82. Scharf also demonstrates how these technologies played into debates about natural and artificial methods of plant categorisation: it was impossible for textual systems of categorising plants to both maximise ease of use, and to reflect the natural relationships between specimens. Scharf, "Identification Keys," 86-91.
[22] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 329.
[23] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 330.

shared, and exchanged, in support of the collaborative, collative demands of the philosophy of botanical classification.

Linnaeus's system of binomial nomenclature also depended on these communicative technologies. A polynomial, a plant name of many words, as was previously used, contained a description of the plant. A binomial, however, is arbitrary, meaning that it does not describe the plant that it refers to. It is 'designatory', it gives the specimen a name and a location in the sexual system, but it is not 'diagnostic', it does not describe the characteristics of the plant, or show why it has that particular location in the system.[24] The binomial, therefore, has to operate in tandem with a full, clear description or visual representation that contains this diagnostic information. As William Stearn explains, the binomial can only work when it is part of a system of 'organised knowledge': 'Linnaeus's big achievement was thus not the invention of binomial nomenclature […] but the linking of these names with some 10,000 descriptions and carefully drafted definitions […] so that other people could thereafter associate the same binomial with the same concept.'[25] The binomial has to be linked to a clear, unambiguous description or visual representation, in a publication such as a flora, or in an illustration or an herbarium, that future botanists can refer back to.

Linnaean Botany in Practice: Analytical and Representational Drawings and Descriptions

Written or visual representations of specimens had two functions in botanical practice: analytical or representational. According to Isabelle Charmantier, '[r]epresentational drawings' or descriptions served a communicative purpose; they are the referential records that operate with binomials, and contain observed data that communicate the diagnostic or definitive

[24] W. T. Stearn, "The Background of Linnaeus's Contributions to the Nomenclature and Methods of Systematic Biology," *Systematic Zoology* 8, no. 1 (1959): 5.
[25] Stearn, "Linnaeus's Contributions," 7.

features of a specimen.[26] 'Analytical drawings' served as an interpretive tool; when a botanist encountered a specimen, he or she drew or described it, to interpret and understand its features, and to analyse where that specimen might belong in the Linnaean system of classification.[27] This could be a solitary or sociable process: a botanist might, and the Bulstrode botanists did, share these descriptions to garner opinion during the analysis and diagnosis of a specimen. As we see in the letters of Lightfoot and Delany, epistolary description was an important site where the practices of description – both analytical and representational – could be fulfilled. But written description, particularly in epistolary form, was malleable. It could be angled, directed, or could adopt a certain register according to the audience or intended use of that description. The centrality of representation to Linnaeus's botanical philosophy, and its openness to manipulation, meant that epistolary botanical description was a prime means by which the botanists at Bulstrode could pursue their own particular interpretation of Linnaeus's epistemology, and form and project their own botanical ambitions.

Linnaeus set out a series of guidelines to standardise the content of written and visual representations of botanical specimens. Written description 'should follow the order of growth', beginning with the root, then progressing to the stem, petioles, leaves and flowers.[28] He emphasises brevity: '[t]he pompous and their flourishes of eloquence are to be rejected […] technical terms enable us to express our ideas in a few words'.[29] He warns against analogy and simile in alignment with broader concerns about the obscurity of figurative language in an empirical epistemology, such as those expressed in Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (1667).[30] For visual representation, Linnaeus states that plants 'should be drawn in the natural size and position […] The best pictures should show all the parts of the plants, even the smallest

[26] Isabelle Charmantier, "Carl Linnaeus and the Visual Representation of Nature," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 41, no. 4 (Fall, 2011): 374-75; Brian W. Ogilvie, "Image and Text," 146.
[27] Charmantier, "Visual Representation of Nature," 378; Brian W. Ogilvie, "Image and Text," 146.
[28] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 279, 280.
[29] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 145. See also 281-82.
[30] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 145, 251.

parts of the fruit body'.[31] Ehret's representational image of the 'VIBERNUM. Americanum' (fig. 1), created for Robert More (1703-89), a friend of Linnaeus, fulfils these requirements.[32]

Figure 1. Georg Dionysius Ehret, drawing titled "VIBERNUM. Americanum, folüs latioribus mucronatis & ferratis floribus albis," 1740-41. 65 original water-colour drawings of Plants from the collection of Sir R. More, 5. Natural History Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London. Photo by author.

The flower is shown at different growth stages, from the buds at the top, to the third branch's full flowers. The leaf on the bottom is bent to expose its underside. In accordance with Linnaeus's demands, and those of his former patron Christoph Jacob Trew (1695-1769), Ehret has extracted and displayed the pistils and stamen from the main plant, so that 'even the

[31] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 283-84.
[32] Robert More was an MP, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a friend of Linnaeus. He commissioned sixty-five finished drawings by Ehret, thirteen of which are of fungi. After More's death, Joseph Banks bought the drawings. Calmann, *Ehret*, 65.

smallest parts of the fruit body', its diagnostic features, are clearly visible.[33] These guidelines, in theory, standardise descriptions and visual representations of botanical specimens, making them easily comparable and identifiable.

Linnaeus's representational stipulations did not, however, cater well for fungal features. Ehret's representations of fungi in the same set of works struggle to conform to these conventions, most notably through their varying sizes. He represents a group of small, toadstool-like fungi growing from a piece of wood, apparently in accordance with their 'natural size and position' (fig. 2), but the minute image, 40mm by 40mm, is dwarfed in the otherwise blank folio page, and their diagnostic features are difficult to see.[34]

Figure 2. Georg Dionysius Ehret, drawing of fungi, 1740-41. 65 original water-colour drawings of Plants from the collection of Sir R. More, 38. Natural History Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London. Photo by author.

[33] Kärin Nickelsen, *Draughtsmen, Botanists and Nature: The Construction of Eighteenth-Century Botanical Illustrations* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 26; Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 284.
[34] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 284.

In another, the spectacular *Agaricus ramosus* in the same collection, measuring 660mm by 510mm spills from one folio sheet onto two, and has to be folded into the bound volume (fig. 3).

Figure 3. Georg Dionysius Ehret, drawing of *Agaricus ramosus*, 1740-41. 65 original water-colour drawings of Plants from the collection of Sir R. More, np. Natural History Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London. Photo by author.

Despite Ehret's efforts, the specimens seem to defy standardised representation. Lightfoot had similar problems adhering to Linnaean standards when representing the morphological features of fungi in writing. Fungi have previously, he states in *Flora Scotica*, been 'ill-described by authors', and he bemoans that in compiling his flora the '*Cryptogamia class*', containing the non-flowering plants, 'cost more time and attention than all the other twenty-three classes together'.[35] The forms of fungi do not conform to the order of growth of flowering plants, as they have a stalk and a pileus (the shield or cap), and lamellae or gills underneath, or they have the formal properties of sponges or mould. The botanists at Bulstrode had insufficient technical language to describe them, and the strange textures of fungi made their descriptions susceptible to recourse to simile and creative expression. Fungi posed further problems to the Bulstrode botanists in being systemically incompatible with Linnaean classification.[36] Flowering plants were categorised by their pistils and stamen but, in fungi, these sexual parts are hidden. They were thus categorised, along with mosses and lichens, in a miscellaneous twenty-fourth class – the 'cryptogamous' class. As Theresa Kelley argues, Linnaeus's relegation of cryptogams to the twenty-fourth class 'hides and harbours the very class of plants that undermines his claim to have created a global systematic based on visible criteria'.[37] Fungi conceal their diagnostic criteria, and therefore categorically resist Linnaeus's system, as it is based on a visual inductive epistemology and a descriptive, communicative methodology. Lightfoot and Portland tackled the problems posed by fungi on both these fronts. Doing so gave them the opportunity to make advances in mycological work, and to reorientate and, in the case of Portland, re-evaluate the inductive epistemology of Linnaeus's sexual system of classification.

[35] John Lightfoot, preface to *Flora Scotica* (London, 1777), 1:ix-x.
[36] G. C. Ainsworth, *Introduction to the History of Mycology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 251.
[37] Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 5.

II. Letters, Drafts, and the Problem of Mycology

Lightfoot: Diagnostic and Analytical Description and Global Botanical Endeavour

The series of mycological letters that Lightfoot exchanged with Portland between 1769 and 1771 incorporate elements of analytical and representational descriptions.[38] Portland sent Lightfoot specimens of fungi from Bulstrode while he was at his clergy residence in Uxbridge, to which he responded with descriptions, and confirmed the identification of each specimen. For example:

> The dark-colour'd blueish Fungus, growing flat upon decayed Wood, variously wrinkled on the upper side, & somewhat resembling Tripe in Form & Substance, I take to be what Ray calls
> Agaricus mesebterious violacein coloris. Ray Pag: 22 He observes that it is of a substance between Jelly & Leather.[39]

Lightfoot performs an inductive analytical process: he identifies the specimen through empirical written description, and comparison with an earlier representation, to conclude that it is the 'Agaricus mesebterious violacein coloris', previously identified by John Ray (1627-1705) in his *Synopsis of British Plants* (1690). Despite its Linnaean methodology, the description does not conform to Linnaeus's representational standards. His description of texture uses simile, and the language is vague, beset with qualifications – 'ish', 'variously', 'somewhat'. He fails to depict the specimen as a cohesive whole, yet he succeeds in identifying it in an analytical description that fulfils a particular communicative function within the Bulstrode circle. Lightfoot is writing to Portland about a specimen she has already seen, so his description only needs to contain sufficient information for her to recognise it, but not to imagine it from scratch. As such, his

[38] Lightfoot to Portland, Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 14-29. PwE 20-29 are currently archived as 'no year'. Lightfoot included the date, month and day of the week in several letters. Cross referencing his regards to Delany with her location as evidenced in her letters, we can deduce that PwE 24-27 were all written in 1770, and PwE 28 was written in 1769. There is not enough information to date letters PwE 21, 22, 23 and 29.
[39] Lightfoot to Portland, [No date], Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 29.

analytical description demonstrates the use of a shared, exclusive botanical language, which is the product of an internal moment of collaborative botanical practice between botanists at Bulstrode.

Rather than comparing the specimen directly to another, he looks back to the description of his botanical predecessor, Ray, in a manner reminiscent of Linnaeus's 'Library' in *Philosophia Botanica*. Similarly, in another letter to Portland, he first quotes Ray's description of the specimen, and then provides his own:

> "It is a small Agaric with a long stalk, & a hemispherical Shield of a yellowish white Colour, besmear'd with a shining Viscidity, having many livid or dark grey Lamellae extended in right Lines from the Rim of the Stalk […] The Stalk is often 3 or 4 Inches high, slender round & tough & commonly somewhat bulbous at the Base." […] Mr Li[ghtfoot] would now wish to denominate it Agaricus (Hemisphaericus) having a tough, slender, round stalk 3 or 4 Inches high, an hemisphaerical [*sic*] viscid Pileus of a yellowish white colour ¾ of an inch in diameter, & dark grey Lamella extended horizontally from the Rim to the Stalk.__ Bullstrode Octr.[40]

Lightfoot adjusts Ray's description to bring it in line with Linnaean standards. He restructures it to 'follow the order of growth' as far as possible, beginning the description with the stem, rather than the cap.[41] He also tempers Ray's vivid adjectives, eliminating the imprecise 'livid', and rephrasing 'besmear'd with a shining Viscidity' simply to 'viscid', to avoid, in Linnaeus's terms, a potential 'flourish of eloquence'.[42] The description of the 'Agaricus (Hemisphaericus)' is representational, designed to communicate the specimen's diagnostic criteria, and Lightfoot writes with an eye to publication. He formally denominates the specimen, attaches his own name to it, and announces the date and location of its discovery. Lightfoot treats his letter as a performance that describes and publishes its findings to its audience, and which serves to position him as part of a collective, global, Linnaean botanical endeavour. The description of

[40] Lightfoot to Portland, 29 October [1770], Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 27.
[41] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 145.
[42] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 145.

the material specimen contained within their epistolary exchange becomes part of a collaborative, collative botanical practice, in which the content of his letter is a rehearsal for the representational descriptions of botanical publications. Lightfoot's ambition to follow an inherited lineage of botanists is evidenced elsewhere in his botanical activities. He took a botanical trip to Wales in 1773 with Banks, where they made efforts to follow the route and examine the same specimens as Ray's excursion of 1662.[43] In deliberately formalising Ray's description according to Linnaean representational stipulations in his letter to Portland, Lightfoot places himself within an ongoing, collective tradition which builds teleologically towards the Linnaean ideal of botanical practice.

Lightfoot used epistolarity to perform the collative aspect of Linnaean botany:

> The Agaric sent a Week ago is figur'd by Vaillant Tab: 13. Fig: 4, 5, 6. and his Account of it may be seen at Pag: 67 No. 42 where he calls it […] Small Agaric or Fungus having the surface of the shield cover'd with brown, wooly scales.[44]

The description interacts with a range of textual, material and visual sources, directing the reader to specific pages of Sebastien Vaillant's (1669-1722) *Botanicon Parisiense* (1727) that contains a textual description of the specimen and an image. In the letter, it appears that Lightfoot has left a space for the page number and supplied it – '67 No. 42' – at a later stage, once he had referred to the text, as the ink is darker than the rest of his writing (fig. 4).

[43] Bowden, *John Lightfoot*, 88-91.
[44] Lightfoot to Portland, 8 October [1770], Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 25.

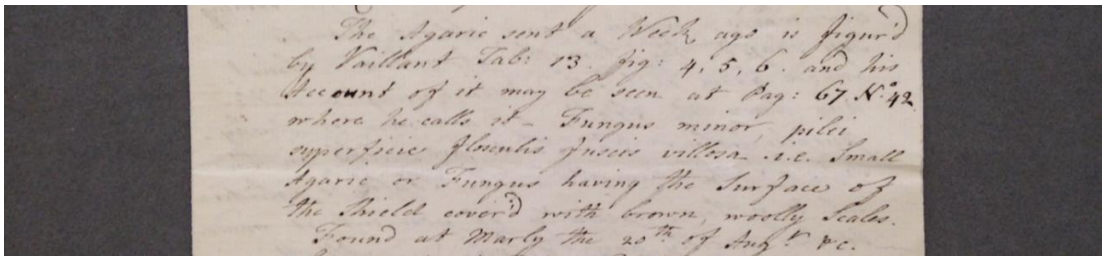

Figure 4. Lightfoot to Portland, 8 October [1770]. Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 25. Photo by author.

The epistolary dimension of Lightfoot's botanical activity allows for and makes possible the kind of collective, collaborative and dynamic botanical practice that Linnaeus outlines in his 'Library'. Lightfoot's intertextual movements are inscribed into the letter, and the letter serves as a dynamic meeting point of botanical representations, in a textual manifestation of botanical practice characterised by 'books of all kinds, (opened in their useful places)'.[45]

Lightfoot's collaborative approach transferred into his work towards his publication, *Flora Scotica*, in which he collated information from letters, other texts and tours. During his trips to Scotland in 1772, sponsored by Portland, and to Wales with Banks the following year, he drew on the expertise of local guides, John Stuart and Hugh Jones. From Stuart, he gained knowledge that appeared in *Flora Scotica* in the addition of 'the superstitious uses' to the written descriptions of many of the plants featured.[46] His mycological descriptions are particularly collative. He draws on *Methodus Fungorum* (1753) by the German botanist Johann Gottlieb Gleditsch (1714-1786), for example, to describe the *Boletus igniarius*. 'We are inform'd by *Gleditch*, that in *Francomia*, a circle of *Germany*, he had seen these beaten pieces of *Boletus*, which resemble the softest leather, curiously sew'd together and made into garments'.[47] Lightfoot's published account was also informed by activity closer to home. It bears resemblance to an analytical description of the *Boletus igniarius* – a species native to Scotland,

[45] Delany to Dewes, Bulstrode, 3 September 1769, in *Autobiography*, 4:238.
[46] Bowden, *John Lightfoot*, 83, 88; Lightfoot, preface to *Flora Scotica*, 1:x.
[47] Lightfoot, *Flora Scotica*, 2:1034-35.

but not exclusively so – that he wrote to Portland, in response to her discovery of one at Bulstrode.[48] Lightfoot appears to have revelled in the intertextual nature of Linnaean botanical practice, and he saw the letters exchanged within the Bulstrode network as conduits of sites of analysis, representational descriptions of specimens, and a space to prepare descriptions for potential publication in his pursuit of a collaborative, communicative Linnaean botany.

Lightfoot's emphasis on the collaborative and collative elements of Linnaeus's botanical philosophy came at some cost. In *Flora Scotica*, he conforms to Linnaeus's suggestions of layout, indexes and italics to facilitate ease of use, but his incorporation of the local uses of fungal species diverges from Linnaeus's inclusion of only diagnostic criteria. The publication also met with criticism for prioritising second-hand knowledge through collaboration over direct contact with natural specimens, one reviewer commenting that Lightfoot's 'own trouble [in producing the work] was the least in the collection of the materials'.[49] However, a later review shows that Lightfoot's attempts to work within a global community of botanists eventually paid off. Sir J. E. Smith acknowledged Lightfoot's as 'one of the most popular Floras. It has found its way to the continent, where it is generally quoted, especially for the Cryptogamous class'.[50] Lightfoot's responses to the difficulties of describing fungi – rehearsing representational descriptions in his correspondence with Portland, and turning to books, local experts and botanical activity within the Bulstrode circle as points of contact and collaboration – enabled him to assert himself as a botanist dedicated to Linnaean botany as an ongoing, collective, endeavour. While Lightfoot angled his botanical descriptions toward an imagined or actual wide community of botanists, Delany slanted botanical representation in her letters towards specific correspondents.

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[48] Lightfoot to Portland, 12 November [1769], Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 28.
[49] *The Critical Review or Annals of Literature*, 1777, 285-87, quoted in Bowden, *John Lightfoot*, 105.
[50] J. E. Smith, "John Lightfoot," in Abraham Rees, *Cyclopædia* (London, 1819), quoted in Bowden, *John Lightfoot*, 107.

Delany's Letters: Managing Bulstrode's Image

Delany used letters to shape the outward-facing image of the Bulstrode estate in a way that carved a distinction between a polished, polite representation of the knowledge-producing activities that took place there, and the more unrefined, messy manifestation of those activities in ephemera that circulated only amongst its participants. Delany moulded the representation of the estate and highlighted different aspects of its knowledge-producing activities according to the purpose of her correspondence, and the interests of her recipient. This emerges most sharply in an instance when she describes the same meeting with Banks on Monday 16 December 1771, to two different correspondents. Firstly, she wrote the following day to her brother, Bernard Granville, who also enjoyed botany:

> We were yesterday together at Mr. Banks's to see some of the fruits of his travels, and were delighted with paintings of the Otaheitie plants […] there is one in particular (the name I cannot recollect), that bears vast flowers […] the leaves all fungid; the petals that are like threads, are at the calyx *white*, by degrees shaded with pale *purple*, ending with *crimson*. The leaf of the tree large and of a fine green.[51]

Her use of the invented word 'fungid' and the comparison through simile of the petals to threads recall the mycological and crafting contexts of Bulstrode, harnessed creatively in vivid epistolary descriptions. She downplays the extent of her botanical knowledge, and shies away from providing the specimen's binomial, but the detailed empirical description – the petals shaded by degrees and tipped crimson – evidences her keen botanical eye that will later serve in her production of the *hortus siccus*. She provides morphological botanical information, using technical terms to describe the calyx, petals and leaves, but falls short of a description that conforms to Linnaean conventions, maintaining modesty in the extent of her knowledge. Ann Bermingham suggests that young women adjusted the display of their identities according to the expectations of those around them, forming 'an image' of herself, by identifying with another's

[51] Delany to Granville, 17 December 1771, in *Autobiography*, 384.

'perception and expectations'.[52] Bermingham's analysis is concerned with expertise in visual art, rather than botany, but similar principles are at play. Delany presents the meeting with Banks as one of polite scientific sociability, balancing her brother's interest in botany with his expectation of the extent of her botanical engagement.

Delany downplays her botanical knowledge to an even greater degree when she relates the same occasion to her niece. She provides more information on the 'Otaheite dress', and rolls any mention of botanical specimens into the category of 'a charming entertainment of oddities':

> We had last Monday at Mr. Banks's house in New Burlington Street, a charming entertainment of oddities […] we saw the Otaheite dress, something more simple, but not so well suited to our climate, as our compound dress […] Feathers in their heads, and caps almost as top gallant as a modern English lady's.[53]

In this account, the botanical content of the meeting is eradicated, and Delany instead compares Otaheite dress with British fashion; a topic either more suited to her niece as a young woman, or more suited to her interests. In other letters to Dewes, Delany conceals her botanical knowledge, recounting, for example, that Ehret's mycological lectures were 'uttered in *such a dialect* as sometimes puzzles me (though he calls it English)', and that when Portland is botanising, she shall 'come in for some scraps of knowledge'.[54] In all of these representations, we see Delany manage the paradox of a performed modesty. She consistently downplays the extent of her botanical knowledge but also directs attention to her supposed lack of knowledge. Alicia Weisberg-Roberts identifies how Delany's social circles shifted once she began to reside more regularly at Bulstrode, a move that marked her entrance into 'a choice, but surprisingly various, milieu' of elites, in social and botanical capacities.[55] This, Weisberg-Roberts suggests, gave

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[52] Ann Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship," *Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (1993): 8.
[53] Delany to Port (née Dewes), 18 December 1771, in *Autobiography*, 387.
[54] Delany to Dewes, 21 September 1768, in *Autobiography*, 4:168; Delany to Dewes, 17 September 1769, in *Autobiography*, 4:240.
[55] Weisberg-Roberts, introduction to Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 9.

Delany the resources to embark on more ambitious botanical and craft projects, such as her *hortus siccus*, but also required her to increasingly evoke 'the ideals of privacy and discretion' as she managed her own identity, and that of the estate.[56] Her correspondence with Granville and Dewes constitutes the seeds of this later careful management, and demonstrates her mastery of the performance of modesty as she began to circulate within a wider social and botanical network.

Delany seemed to consistently perform the role of smoothing over the messiness of botanical activity, in letters and in person. In the same letter in which she described fungi drying on platters and seats in Portland's breakfast room, Delany gives her niece an anecdote of a moment when her and Portland's dinner was interrupted by Portland spying a coach and six out the window, signalling an unexpected guest. Portland exclaims:

> 'A *coach and six!* My Lord Godolphin – it is his livery […] take away the dinner – will you have any apricot tart? what will they think of all these *great puff balls*?' – 'Well, but I must have some tart.' So we both eat tart, still her Grace watching the road – 'Well – now they are just here, where's my knotting? what shall I do without my bag?' Said I, 'Pray let me retire.' 'No, no, you must stay and entertain them.'[57]

Portland's comments, flitting between apricot tart and specimens of *Lycoperdon* or '*puff balls*', amidst orders to take away the dinner, conjure a sense of the flurry of activity to readjust the room so that it is suitable for company. The description implies that while servants clear the dinner and fungal specimens roll from view, Portland is only momentarily interested in the appearance of the room, and turns her attention back to the apricot tart. It falls to Delany, it seems, to prepare the scene for company, arrange herself with her knotting, and to entertain Francis Godolphin, 2nd Baron Godolphin (1706-85), on his arrival. Amanda Vickery notes how some craft and domestic work were more suitable for domestic sociability than others, on

[56] Weisberg-Roberts, introduction to Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 9.
[57] Delany to Dewes, 3 September 1769, in *Autobiography*, 4:238-39.

account of their cleanliness: 'cleaner crafts' were suitable for drawing room sociability, allowing women to simultaneously 'display their company manners'.[58] Mycology does not fall into this category. Delany reorients the room both to the company they are expecting, and to the tastes of her epistolary recipient. As we imagine the fungal specimens falling from view in the actual scene, as Delany makes way for eating tart, knotting and Lord Godolphin, they are also shifted aside and diminished in the epistolary space that her recipient comes into contact with. This passage reveals Delany's responsibility in managing the image of the estate before guests, and in the epistolary representations that export its image outwards in correspondence beyond the bounds of the physical site of Bulstrode. The degree of polish of these representations is dramatically marked, as I will now show, in comparison with some of the more ephemeral productions – mycological sketches and notes by Ehret and Portland – that did not leave the estate, and were only circulated amongst its botanists.

Ehret: Sketches and Diagnostic Ephemera

Ehret brought to Bulstrode the techniques in botanical representation gained during his intensive training with Trew from 1731, and his employment by Linnaeus in the 1730s.[59] This training, as Kärin Nickelsen and Gill Saunders acknowledge, and his early experiences of learning to draw from his father, a gardener, resulted in his exceptional ability to combine intricately observed empirical representation with the botanical conventions required by his employer.[60] His representations are not only Linnaean in their conventions employ, as we saw above, but also in the inductive epistemology they favoured in their commitment to an observational empirical relationship with the specimen.

[58] Amanda Vickery, "The Theory & Practice of Female Accomplishment," in Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 102.
[59] Nickelsen, *Draughtsmen, Botanists and Nature*, 26-30.
[60] Nickelsen, *Draughtsmen, Botanists and Nature*, 33.

Ehret strayed from this approach, however, in the analysis of one particular specimen at Bulstrode: the *Phallus impudicus*, found by Mr. Achard at Bulstrode in 1763. As the name denotes, the specimen resembles male genitalia in form, which caused Ehret to exploit Linnaeus's caveat for the use of bodily similes in botanical description in his analytical sketch and accompanying description (fig. 5):[61]

Figure 5. Georg Dionysius Ehret. Ehret Sketch 228, 1763. Natural History Museum Archives. © The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London. Photo by author.

> The whole Plant or Penis was near 10 Inches long, The swelling part mesured [*sic*] two Inches in diameter the inside of this was of a Gelatinous Substance of a brownish yellow […] The Penis or rather the whole Plant resemble the figure of the God Priapus, the Penis goes through the Testicles and the whole was a Spungy [*sic*] Appearance of a Snow white colour.[62]

[61] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 251.
[62] Georg Dionysius Ehret, Ehret Sketch 231, Natural History Museum Archives.

This description is the first of three extant drafts for the text that accompanies his 'High-Finished Drawing' (1763) of the specimen, which went into Portland's collection.[63] Although the description chiefly conforms to Linnaeus's guidelines, Ehret allows cultural associations to intervene in his analytical description through its comparison to the god Priapus, who signifies male virility.[64] Its precise connotations are contingent on his location at Bulstrode and related social dynamics. Knowingly or not, Ehret's reference to Priapus draws Bulstrode's botanical practices into parallel with its neighbouring estate: West Wycombe. Sir Francis Dashwood (1708-1781), its owner, was one of the founding members of the Society of the Dilettanti and, prior to that, he ran a libertine club that met at West Wycombe and reportedly performed sexual and pagan acts of worship to Bacchus and Venus.[65] From 1745 onwards, Dashwood landscaped his garden to suit the theme of these 'ribald' activities, such as a cavernous "Venus Temple" adorned with erotic statues including, allegedly, one of Priapus.[66] The residents at Bulstrode, fifteen miles away, were likely to be aware of rumours, at least, about their neighbour's estate, and Lisa Moore presents the case for Delany's familiarity with the garden at West Wycombe in the 1740s and 1750s.[67] Ehret records that Portland, 'Lord Edward', 'Mr. Achard', 'and other persons' observed the specimen together; it is easy to imagine them as working botanists and friends sharing a joke at the specimen's appearance, with this parallel in mind.[68] This interpretation of the specimen also taps into broader cultural associations between scientific and antiquarian collection and promiscuous sexual behaviour, of which the Bulstrode circle, avidly

[63] Lightfoot, *Catalogue of the Portland Museum*, 127.
[64] Priapus as a cultural figure underwent a change later in the century, with the publication of *An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus* (London, 1786) by Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824). The text contained an essay by Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803), who would later sell Portland the famous Barbarini vase.
[65] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, online ed. (London, Routledge, 2013), 205. Lisa L. Moore, "Queer Gardens: Mary Delany's Flowers and Friendships," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 1 (2005): 57; Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality* (Sutton: Stroud, 2000), 114; Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 205.
[66] Stephanie Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 66, 67n58; Moore, "Queer Gardens," 57; Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, 114.
[67] A letter by Delany's great-niece, Mary Hamilton (1756-1816, niece of Sir William Hamilton) mentions Delany's awareness of Dashwood's group. Ruth Hayden, *Mrs Delany and her Flower Collages*, 2nd ed. (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 128; Moore, "Queer Gardens," 57-58.
[68] Ehret, Ehret Sketch 231, Natural History Museum Archives.

developing one of the largest collections in the country, would have no doubt been aware. John Brewer identifies Dashwood's activities as part of a context of aristocratic male collectors in which 'the very study of *virtu* was tainted with sex': the 'collector's gaze' was the look of 'private sexual desire'.[69] Given that he was writing in the wake of the discovery of Herculaneum, which revived interest in Priapus and became a destination for sexually explorative young men on the Grand Tour, Ehret's references tie the mycological specimen to a culture of eroticised antiquarian pursuit, and endow it with what Bermingham has identified as the 'exclusionary power' of male connoisseurship in homosocial groups such as the Dilettanti.[70] The associations of the Priapian penis Ehret features in his text push against the dynamics of status in the Bulstrode circle, in which the female antiquarian and botanical collector, Portland, was his employer.

These gendered associations form part of Ehret's analytical process, apparently to his enthusiasm. He announces that the specimen was 'much more lik [*sic*] the Penis of the God Priapus', and agrees with Achard's commentary that although the species was previously identified as 'Phallus penem imaginem referems', it might rather be 'Priapi penem representans'.[71] His endorsement of Achard's comparison during the specimen's analysis suggests his respect for the collaborative process of diagnosing the specimen, and he welcomes its comparison with Priapus as an analytical tool. Tellingly, however, he does not claim the Priapian interpretation as his own and is careful to expunge any reference to the specimen as Priapus, or as a penis, from his final representational drawing and description of the specimen that describes a 'Cylindrical / Tube' of a 'fleshy Gelatinous substance'.[72] In doing so, he preserves his identity as a highly-trained botanical draughtsman, working empirically with the

[69] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 205.
[70] Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 211; Giancarlo Carabelli, *In the Image of Priapus* (London: Duckworth, 1996), 33; Bermingham, "The Aesthetics of Ignorance," 14, 15.
[71] Ehret, Ehret Sketch 231, Natural History Museum Archives.
[72] Georg Dionysius Ehret, "Phallus impudicus (Stinkhorn) [drawing]," 1763, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, B3 026 A12, digital collection, https://www.themorgan.org/drawings/item/282759.

specimen, and retains and the balance of status in his position as Portland's patronee. Like Delany, Ehret monitored the botanical content of the material that was circulated within and without the estate. His ephemeral sketches show the cultural and social contingency of botanical observational and representational practices at Bulstrode, and how this informed the content of analytical representations of specimens, and of diagnostic representations that were circulated beyond.

Portland: Notes, Collections, and Alternative Empirical Practice

For Portland, like Ehret, botanical representation in ephemeral form affected an opportunity to experiment with or challenge elements of the Linnaean epistemology. Portland kept mycological notes that constitute a running record of the fungal specimens found at Bulstrode between 1763 and 1769. Her notes suggest that she aimed to discover a new species. She identifies, for example, the 'Lycoperdon Variolosum', which 'perhaps Merits the name of a new species'.[73] On another occasion, Delany reports Portland 'transported by the discovery of a *new* wild plant', seemingly pursuing the Linnaean ideal of botanical expansion and discovery.[74] However, as Müller-Wille suggests, 'every new species discovered could, and in many cases actually did, prompt [the sexual system's] failure by exhibiting characteristics that were represented inadequately by the sexual system'.[75] This is the case with Portland's 'Bursa Homalodes', a 'Genus' that 'seems different from all the rest of the fungus Tribe'; it is incompatible with the categorical structures available for fungi.[76] The arrangement of her notes probes the weakness in the functioning of the system as a whole. She arranged her descriptions under the title 'Fungi […] which do not seem to be described by Ray or Linnaeus'.[77] Each newly discovered specimen called attention to the system's lack of completion, undermining

[73] Lists of plants and fungi, Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 63/3.
[74] Delany to Dewes, Bulstrode, 6 September 1768, in *Autobiography*, 4:163.
[75] Müller-Wille, "Collection and Collation," 559.
[76] Lists of plants and fungi, Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 63/3.
[77] Lists of plants and fungi, Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 63/3.

Linnaeus's claim that the discovery of a new species is a movement towards establishing a complete, natural system, that the 'acquisition of knowledge of more things will make it perfect'.[78] Portland's list of fungal specimens undescribed by Linnaeus signalled the impossibility of his botanical endeavour: it is a system that aimed towards an unattainable ideal, exposing its own incompletion in the same moment that it advances.[79]

In response to the problems she perceived with fungal categorisation, Portland used her descriptions to reconfigure the empirical element of Linnaeus's epistemology. She adjusts the relationship between the botanist and the specimen to propose a different analytical approach. She describes the 'Lycoperdon Echinatum', or 'Echinated Puff Ball,' as having

> a short neck roundish head & the whole Covered with setæ (or bristly hairs) four or five of them converging to a pyramidal point, which when rub'd off leave skin spotted it differs from the Shagreen Lycoperdon in being covered with bristly & not warted pyramids.[80]

While Ehret's draft description contained elements of a collaborative observational process, Portland's shows traces of the experiential encounter with the specimen. As she rubs the specimen, its hairs fall at the touch, and it is unclear whether the 'skin' belongs to her or the fungus. In other entries in her notes, the sensory experience is part of the analytical process. She describes the visual result of experiments – 'when put into spirits it tinges it of a bright Ruby colour' – and their smell: 'the whole has a spirituous volatile smell'.[81] Furthermore, she gives her specimens a degree of agency in the experimenter/specimen relationship; they 'leave skin spotted', 'tinge' spirits and they give off smell. She shifts the focus of the analytical process from observation and alignment within a system, to the physical moment of inductive, empirical inquiry. She does not, as Lightfoot does, use written description as a means to represent findings

[78] Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, 49.
[79] Cook, *Rousseau and Botany*, 175.
[80] Lists of plants and fungi, Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 63/3.
[81] Lists of plants and fungi, Papers of Margaret Bentinck, PwE 63/3.

and make them communicable to a collaborative community of botanists, but rather to reconsider the place of empiricism in Linnaeus's epistemology.

This sensorial, empirical approach drew on the epistemology of her collecting practices more broadly. Beth Fowkes Tobin has reconstructed Portland's shell-collecting practices, which she describes as an epistemology 'built upon specific material-based activities located at the intersection of touch and sight, where the tangible was as central as the visible in the production of knowledge about nature'.[82] Portland incorporates this empirical element of a collecting epistemology into her mycological practices. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal suggest that an individual's collection represented an effort 'to accommodate, to appropriate and to extend the taxonomies and systems of knowledge they have inherited'.[83] This perspective reveals that Portland's application of an empirical collecting epistemology in her mycological practices not only encoded a specific botanical identity into her mycological description – that of an empirically driven collector – but she also built upon the taxonomy inherited from Linnaeus. She directly tackled the problems that fungi posed to the Linnaean system that caused him to relegate them to a miscellaneous twenty-fourth class: that they do not have visual sexual parts and did not fit within a system that used visual observation as its basis. She extended the inductive element of Linnaeus's system to include experientiality, an empirical method that encompassed the senses of touch and smell to aid the identification and categorisation of fungi. Thus, Portland responded to Linnaeus's call in *Philosophia Botanica*, and contributed specimens to his collative botanical endeavour, but also pursued an approach to identification, born from her experience as a collector, that enabled her to confront the problem of fungi within a visual inductive system.

[82] Tobin, "The Duchess's Shells," 249.
[83] John and Roger Cardinal, introduction to *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), 2.

III. Herbaria, Epistolarity and Sociability in Linnaean Botany

Rousseau: Letters, Herbaria, and Contemplative Botany

Both Rousseau's and Delany's herbaria challenged the ideal Linnaean version of epistolary, portable herbaria specimens in different ways.[84] Rousseau's herbaria was epistolary in form and his botanical exchanges with Portland were in the medium of letters, but he resisted the sociable and communicative elements of Linnaean botany: both the dependence of binomials on an intertextual system of written descriptions, and the notion of botany as a collaborative endeavour, with a shared, global end. During his ten-year correspondence with Portland, which began in 1766 when he lived in Wootton Hall, Staffordshire, and was the neighbour of Delany's botanising brother, Bernard Granville, Rousseau was suspicious of the epistemology of the binomial system. 'And in connection with these names', he says in one instance, 'how will we arrive, Madame, at understanding each other?'[85] Early in their correspondence he rejects some books that she sends him, saying 'I fear this is wasted effort; I retain nothing of what I read; I have no more memory for books'.[86] He reluctantly agrees on using Linnaeus's *Species Plantarum* as a mutual point of reference, but bemoans the presence of the words alone, without an accompanying referent:

> When I saw in my Linnaeus the class and order of a plant which I did not know, I wanted to envision this plant to myself, to know whether it is large or small, if the flower is blue or red, to represent to myself its appearance. Nothing.[87]

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[84] Alexandra Cook's *Rousseau and Botany* is a comprehensive analysis of Rousseau's serious botanical practice. Rousseau wrote a series of letters for publication which explained botany to a beginner, according to the natural system. These were later expanded and published by Thomas Martyn as *Letters on the Elements of Botany, Addressed to a Lady* (1787), which favoured a Linnaean epistemology. Cook, *Rousseau and Botany*, 208.

[85] Rousseau to Portland, 20 October 1766, in *Botanical Writings*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker, Botanical Writings, and Letter to Franquières*, ed. Christopher Kelly, trans. Alexandra Cook, Charles E. Butterworth, and Terence E. Marshall, vol. 8, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 175. Hereafter *Botanical Writings*.

[86] Rousseau to Portland, 20 October 1766, in *Botanical Writings*, 8:175.

[87] Rousseau to Portland, Wootton, 12 February 1767, in *Botanical Writings*, 8:177.

Yet, while he insists that a visual image, or direct contact with the specimen, rather than a written description or a book is necessary for botanical practice, he is equally frustrated when in the company of another botanist, looking at plants together. He reports of an afternoon spent with Granville in his garden that:

> I see plants, he names them for me, I forget them; I see them again, he names them again, I forget them once more, and there results from this nothing but the proof that we make without ceasing, I of his accommodating attitude, and he of my incapacity.[88]

For Rousseau, botanising textually, without the specimen, is inadequate, as is sociable botany, with the specimen but without the accompanying text. Rousseau rejects the sociability of botany and, while he understands the necessity of the intertextual nature of the binomial epistemology, he is wary of its workings and sceptical of its success.

The sociability of epistolary exchange, for Rousseau, seems to offer a solution to these problems. When he writes to Portland from Switzerland, he emphasises the distance between himself and his correspondent. He foregrounds his geographical location, and expresses his enthusiasm for expanding Portland's botanical collection with specimens from distant locations. He sends her a written catalogue of plants, and requests that she marks it with those that she lacks so that, he says, 'I might have the honor of sending them to you fresh or dried […] for the augmentation of your garden or herbarium. Give me your requests, Madam, for the Alps, a few of which I am going to traverse'.[89] When he does send the specimens that he has acquired, he encloses the list of them, with their Linnaean binomials. Epistolary exchange provides a way for Rousseau and Portland to communicate botanically, that gives both of them access to the Linnaean binomial and the specimen it refers to. Rousseau's letters function as documents of reference, like a published book, and so contain the requisite information about specimens, but

[88] Rousseau to Portland, 20 October 1766, in *Botanical Writings* 8:174.
[89] Rousseau to Portland, Lyon, 2 July 1768, in *Botanical Writings*, 8:183.

exist outside of the world of published books, and avoid the face-to-face teaching and learning that he is so keen to avoid.

Rousseau sees herbaria as mechanisms that, like letters, facilitate sociable botanising at a physical distance. In his botanical correspondence with his friend, Delessert, he suggests that she dries specimens into an herbarium, and sends them to him that he might provide their names. 'I am not in a position to show you objects first-hand', he says, 'but if we can both have similar ones before our eyes, we will be able to understand each other very well in speaking of what we see'.[90] Rousseau follows the Linnaean mode of herbarium construction, and encourages Delessert to do the same but, rather than emblematising their sociable connection, it enables him to maintain his distance from her as a botanical colleague. His use of herbaria as entities that hold botanists apart, rather than bring them together, is intensified in his description of his herbarium in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782). He establishes a distance from any sense of botanical community, and positions the herbarium and specimens in relation to their natural environments:

> All my botanical walks […] have all left me with impressions which are renewed by the sight of the plants I collected in those very places. I shall never again see those beautiful landscapes, those forests, those lakes […] but now that I can no longer roam about those glorious places, all I have to do is open my herbarium and it quickly transports me there. The pieces of plants that I gathered there are enough to remind me of the whole magnificent spectacle. This herbarium is for me a diary of my botanical expeditions which makes me set off on them again.[91]

Rousseau's herbarium recalls the specimen in its natural situation, and revives his experience of his solitary botanical walks. His herbarium becomes a 'diary', a personal record of his movements in exile, away from a botanical collaboration, such as that he pursued with Portland. His herbarium does not work in tandem with another botanical text, but goes directly back to

[90] Rousseau to Delessert, 11 April [1773], 8:160.
[91] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. and ed. Russell Goulbourne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 67.

nature as its point of reference. For Rousseau, reference should not be made between the herbarium and a book (other than his own) but between the herbarium and nature itself.

Flora Delanica or hortus siccus?: Sociability, Form and Botanical Purpose in Mary Delany's Flower Collages

Delany's approach to Linnaean botanical philosophy as expressed through her herbaria – her *hortus siccus* – was, in some senses, similar to Rousseau's, which is surprising given its extreme difference in form. Like Rousseau's, Delany's herbaria had epistolary qualities in the mode of its construction, and its primary botanical function was that it served as a referent for the successful functioning of the Linnaean binomial system. Also like Rousseau's, Delany's *hortus siccus* reflected the approach to botany of its creator, and the social circumstances of its production were inflected in its creation and subsequent use. I suggest that Delany constructed her *hortus siccus* as a permanent emblem of all of the manifestations of the botanical activity that took place at Bulstrode. She did not wholly embrace the epistolarity of the ideal Linnaean herbarium but chose to use the earlier method of binding the specimens into volumes which, unlike the Linnaean herbarium, precluded any future additions. Binding her collages in this way denotes its intended use in a Linnaean epistemology, as a referent for binomials, and as an end point, a record, of the botanists' various pursuits at Bulstrode.

Delany's rare comments in her letters about her *hortus siccus* imply that its production was something other than an expression of friendship for Portland. Augusta Hall, Lady of Llanover (1802-1896), editor of the nineteenth-century edition of Delany's letters, promoted Delany's *hortus siccus* as a craft-based activity that Delany continued to work on out of esteem for Portland. Llanover explains the genesis of the flower collages: Delany had a scarlet piece of Chinese paper on the table before her, and a geranium of the same colour caught her eye, which inspired her to cut out the form. Portland entered and mistook the paper cut-out for the real

flower to which, according to Llanover, Delany replied 'if the Duchess really thought it so like the original, that a new work was begun from that moment'.[92] Delany's own comments in a note ostensibly support this account

> I shou'd have dropp'd the attempt as vain, had not the Duchess Dowager of Portland look'd on it with favourable eyes. Her approbation was such a sanction to my undertaking, as made it appear of consequence and gave me courage to go on with confidence To *her* I owe the spirit of pursuing it with diligence and pleasure. To *her* I owe more than I dare express, but my heart will ever feel with the utmost gratitude, and tenderest affection, the honour and delight I have enjoy'd in her most generous, steady, and delicate friendship, for above forty years.[93]

Although she proclaims their friendship, her expressions read more like the dedication at the opening of a written work. Portland is named in full, and Delany makes the conventional appeal that undertaking the work without encouragement would have been an act of vanity. She emphasises her indebtedness, and the description of their friendship as 'generous' and 'steady' hints that Portland's reliable and ongoing support was perhaps financial, or at least practical. The description bears more resemblance to the dedication at the opening of Lightfoot's *Flora Scotica,* which reads: 'To her Grace, The Most Noble, Margaret Cavendishe, Duchess Dowager of Portland, that Great and Intelligent Admirer and Patroness of Natural History in General, the Following Flora, (as an Humble Expression of Gratitutde for the Many Unsolicited Favors her Grace has Thought Fit to Confer upon him)'.[94] This suggests the work was more akin to the sponsored botanical productions of Ehret's illustrations and Lightfoot's floras, perhaps in exchange for her residence at Bulstrode for six months each year, rather than a leisurely pastime or expression of friendship.

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[92] Augusta Hall, note to Delany to Port (née Dewes), St. James's Place, 29 April 1776, in *Autobiography*, 5:215

[93] Mary Delany, note to Delany to the Countess of Bute, Luton Park, 5 July 1779, in *Autobiography*, 5:443-44.

[94] Lightfoot, dedication to *Flora Scotica*, np.

Delany's collages met Linnaean representational stipulations, making them useful as a part of a Linnaean epistemology. The representation of the *Anemone nemorosa*, for example, shows the plant with stem, leaves and flower and, like Ehret's 'VIBERNUM. Americanum' (fig. 1), the flowers and leaves in various stages of bloom, seen from different angles. The stamens and pistils are visible, displaying Linnaean diagnostic criteria. The *hortus siccus* operated in tandem with a catalogue that Delany wrote and printed, which listed the Linnaean binomials of the specimens that she depicts, that can be cross-referenced with her visual representations (figs. 6 and 7).

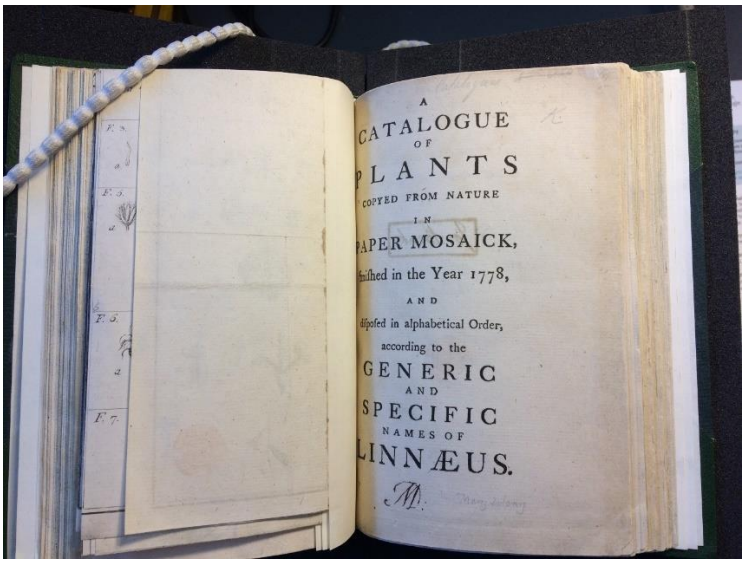

Figure 6. Mary Delany, title page to *A Catalogue of Plants Copyed from Nature in Paper Mosaick* (1778). British Library. Photo by author.

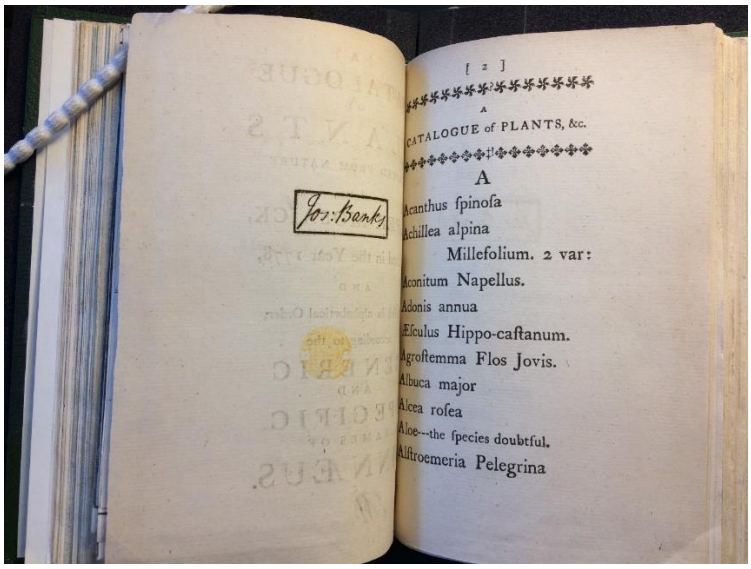

Figure 7. Mary Delany, *A Catalogue of Plants Copyed from Nature in Paper Mosaick* (1778), 2, showing that the catalogue was part of Joseph Banks's collection. British Library. Photo by author.

Although the representational qualities and function adhered to Linnaean ideas, the form of the *hortus siccus* is exceptional, both as a work of art and as a botanical piece. Weisberg-Roberts has identified its theatrical quality, which throws light on its uniqueness, its functioning within a botanical system, and how these two elements are mutually formative.[95] The brightness of the colours against the black backgrounds, and the sharp, minutely detailed cut lines are dramatic, graceful, and they catch the eye and hold the attention as though in performance. Their display of exceptionally close and intricate observation, and of Delany's scissor work skill creates their striking visual appeal, and enables them to function as accurate points of botanical reference; the diagnostic criteria of the specimens are quick and easy to locate.

But a further effect of this theatricality is that it conceals the labour behind the work, which suggests again that this was other than craft work expressing friendship.[96] Although the skill of the work is discernible, the hours spent in their production is concealed. Specifically, the

[95] "A Theater of Mrs. Delany's Collages," in Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 20.
[96] See Kohleen Reeder, "The 'Paper Mosaick' Practice of Mary Delany & her Circle," in Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 224-35.

collages conceal botanical labour: the selection of each specimen; its examination from all angles, at different points in its life cycle, and possibly dissection; the research about each specimen; and sourcing its image and descriptions in other publications. Delany claims that the representations are all from life, but this claim to authority was commonplace across botanical publications, and is unlikely to be the case. Her collage of the *Portlandia grandiflora*, is annotated with the page reference of a representation of the same species in Patrick Brown's *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* (1756), indicating that Delany had researched the specimen during the process of its production. Cook notes that in the production of an herbarium, 'one must be in possession […] of considerable knowledge about plant collecting and identification', and that the work takes 'painstaking care and exactitude'.[97] Cook emphasises the time and care required to dry and physically arrange and adhere the specimens to paper in an herbarium; a part of the process that was even more labour intensive in Delany's collages. A comparison between Delany's representation of the *Anemone nemorosa* and the same specimen in Linnaeus's herbarium illustrates the concealment of labour in Delany's representative practice (figs. 8 and 9).

[97] Cook, "Botanical Exchanges," 150.

Figure 8. Mary Delany, Anemone Nemorosa (Polyandria Polygynia), 1776. Collage of coloured papers, with bodycolour and watercolour, and with leaf samples, on black ink background. Album vol. I, 55. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 9. Carl Linnaeus, Anemone nemorosa. Specimen in the Linnean Herbarium, LINN 710.26, The Linnaean Society. Reproduced courtesy of the Linnean Society of London.

In the pressed Anemone nemorosa, the specimens on the page contain traces of their arrival there. Their shortened stems evidence their removal from their original situation, and their flattened and dried appearance attests to the pressing and drying they have undergone. Delany's collages bear no traces of their productive processes, but stand as final articles. They hide behind-the-scenes observations; unlike Lightfoot's letters, Ehret's sketches and Portland's notes, Delany's *hortus siccus* conceals the analytical process, and presents itself as exclusively representational.

This polished, theatrical quality of the *hortus siccus* is, I suggest, influenced by Delany's approach to epistolarity as we saw it in her letters to her niece. Delany smoothed over the unruly, dirty, and epistemologically ambiguous elements of botanical practice in her letters to contacts beyond the inner social network of the estate. These letters manifested a performance of modesty, as Weisberg-Roberts noted, in which Delany downplayed the degree of her knowledge of, and participation in, botanical practice.[98] Similarly, her *hortus siccus* conceals the botanical labour of her work, and their vibrant display distracts from her botanical knowledge. Moore interprets the drama of their appearance as 'explorations of both female intimacy and female sexual anatomy'.[99] I fail to see the representation of female anatomy in Delany's collages, and agree rather with the interpretation Kelley offers, that Delany's innovative form presents 'a slightly wayward difference that survived inside a manner of living and working that was unquestionably polite', it 'subverts norms without kicking over fences'.[100] Delany's *hortus siccus* challenges botanical and artistic floral representation through their form, but conformed to social expectations of craft work, and the representational system of Linnaean botany. The specimens' concealment of their own labour constitutes a spectacular performance of modesty, a characteristic common with, and perhaps even born from, her approach to the treatment of botanical knowledge in epistolary form.

Delany's approach to epistolarity, the way in which she angled the content of her letters towards her correspondent, manifested in her *hortus siccus* in the contact that she had with other botanical institutions. Lisa Ford has delineated Delany's connection with other botanists, for example, with John Stuart, 3rd earl of Bute (1713-1792) at Luton, and James Lee (1715-1795) at Hammersmith.[101] Delany's use of Linnaean representational conventions accords – I suggest deliberately – with the Linnaean interests of the individuals in her botanical network, who were

[98] Weisberg-Roberts, introduction to Laird and Weisberg-Roberts, *Mrs. Delany*, 9.
[99] Moore, "Queer Gardens," 61.
[100] Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage*, 112.
[101] Ford, "A Progress in Plants," 208.

keen Linnaeans. Lee was the writer of the Linnaean *Introduction to Botany* (1760) and Stuart was a proponent of the Linnaean system in his contributions to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and his production of the nine-volume *Botanical Tables* (1785), with illustrations showing the diagnostic sexual parts of plants.[102] In line with these influences, Delany's floral collages conform to Linnaeus's conventions for botanical illustration. Her *hortus siccus*, while it explores new formal modes of representation, is carefully constructed to conform to external expectations in its social and botanical contexts. This interpretation is corroborated by the absence of certain elements of her botanical practice of Bulstrode from her *hortus siccus*, such as her mycological pursuits. Fungi are present in her botanical activities only as part of the internal botanical work of the Bulstrode circle, and they remain concealed from external view. As with her letters, Delany ensured that her *hortus siccus* met the expectations of the individuals and institutions that supported her work, both in terms of content, and the epistemology that they favoured.

Superficially, the construction of Delany's *hortus siccus* was sociable according to the Linnaean ideal for the herbaria, in which loose sheets of paper bearing specimens enabled exchange and collaboration between botanists working towards a common aim. In practice, however, Delany's *hortus siccus* did not embrace this ideal culture. Unlike a Linnaean herbarium, her representations were bound into books, rather than loose sheets of paper. Delany chose not to take advantage of the potential of epistolary technology. The immobility of her representations implies alternative uses of the *hortus siccus*, in sociable and botanical contexts. Delany describes in a letter to Frances Boscawen (1719-1805) that a social visit concluded when 'one of my mosaic books was desired and hurried over with a volley of compliments'.[103] The *hortus siccus* functioned as a conversation prompt in polite domestic sociability, and as the pinnacle of Bulstrode's craft and artistic activity. Deirdre Lynch has commented that Delany's *hortus siccus*

[102] James Lee, *An Introduction to Botany* (London, 1760); John Stuart, *Botanical Tables* (1785).
[103] Delany to Boscawen, Audley Street, 7 December 1778, in *Autobiography*, 5:399.

participated in a feminine tradition of sentimental craft books that included family books, friendship albums, and scrap books, and that contained expressions of friendship, fragments of poetry and, in Delany's case, her flower collages.[104] This may have been the case, but it is not to say that the binding of Delany's *hortus siccus* denotes that its function was entirely sociable. It was, I suggest, bound and static in accordance with its role as a reference item in Linnaean botany. The exchange of botanical specimens with other institutions does not appear to be reciprocal; Delany examined their specimens, reproduced them in collage form, and then bound them, it seems, in collection, in her *hortus siccus*. The process is collective, and collative, but it is unidirectional – it is not collaborative. The contribution that the bound *hortus siccus* aims to make to a broader, global botanical endeavour occurs over the longer term, rather than the immediate circulation and exchange that Linnaeus envisaged in his epistolary herbaria design. The *hortus siccus* therefore positions Bulstrode as the end point, as the culmination of botanical knowledge from the practices at Bulstrode and connected institutions. It is angled towards other institutions, but is a site of collation, rather than a production that pans out across a wide collaboration.

Furthermore, the binding of the *hortus siccus* recasts it from operating as an herbarium, to a flora, more similar to Lightfoot's *Flora Scotica* and those that Linnaeus discusses in his 'Library' in his *Philosophia Botanica*. The binding illustrates Delany's intended use for the *hortus siccus* as a work that had longevity, and that could operate as a point of reference for botanists into the future. In this context, it is significant that Delany also referred to the work as her *Flora Delanica*.[105] Its success in this role as an object of reference for future botanists is evidenced in its later use by Banks. He owned a copy of the catalogue (fig. 7), and allegedly claimed, according to Llanover, that Delany's flowers were '*the only* imitations of nature that he

[104] Deidre Lynch, "Paper Mosaics and Paper Sentiments: Mary Delany's Love of the Plants" (abstract to keynote lecture, ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 11 December 2017).
[105] Augusta Hall, note to Delany to Port (née Dewes), St. James's Place, 29 April 1776, in *Autobiography*, 5:215; Delany to Port (née Dewes), St, James's Place, 3 May 1781, in *Autobiography*, 6: 15.

had ever seen, from which he could *venture* to describe botanically any plant without the least fear of committing an error'.[106] The *hortus siccus* was epistolary in that, similarly to her letters, its content and polish were inflected by her specific social context and the interests of her botanical colleagues, both within the immediate Bulstrode circle, and in her wider network of botanical institutions. She rejected the epistolary technology of the Linnaean herbaria, however, opting instead for a production that was a collection of specimens that would act as a reference point for future generations of botanists. Delany's *hortus siccus* is Linnaean in its epistemology not through its conformity to the ideal Linnaean herbarium, but in the way that it offers a huge collection of representational visual artworks that can be referred to as definitive characters of different botanical species, operating by Linnaean binomial and collective technology, as part of a botanical endeavour that built over time.

Delany's *hortus siccus* reflects its own situation at the epicentre of the Bulstrode botanical network, both in terms of its proximity to the botanists who worked at Bulstrode, and in the connections it enabled her to forge and strengthen with other botanical institutions. Both of these groups impacted its botanical content and epistemology. Her rejection of the epistolarity of Linnaeus's ideal herbaria, despite her adherence to his representational guidelines and use of binomials, indicates the role that the collection was designed to fulfil. Delany's *hortus siccus* socially served as an original method of artistic production that drew on her impressive skills in accomplished crafts. As a production of the Bulstrode estate it represented the varieties and idiosyncrasies of the several botanical approaches conducted there under the banner of Linnaean endeavour. While it was not collaborative according to his ideal vision of botanical work, it was sociable in its construction, it was collective, and it served as a reference point for binomial specimens, and for generations of botanists into the future.

[106] Augusta Hall, in *Autobiography,* 6:95. Delany's flowers were not only referred to immediately after their creation, but botanist George C. Druce drew on her work in his publication *Buckinghamshire Flora* in 1926.

In a sense, the *hortus siccus* embodies elements of each of the Bulstrode botanists' particular practices. Delany's own approach to the treatment of botany in letters that went beyond the bounds of the Bulstrode estate, in which she concealed the messy, muddy, complicated, and labour-intensive realities of botanical practice, manifested in the polish and theatrical flourish of the form of the *hortus siccus*. The representation of the specimens in the *hortus siccus* conforms to Linnaean guidelines for the definitive 'character' of a plant, as did Ehret's, and, in doing so, Delany demonstrated the same awareness as Ehret that certain analytical processes, which did not cohere with botanical or social expectations, were best concealed from the final product. Portland's patronage is evident in the dedicatory language Delany used to describe the *hortus siccus*, and in its existence at all. Portland aimed to push the epistemological boundaries of Linnaean botany by discovering new species, and by enhancing the sensorial, experiential aspects of the process of collecting in Linnaean practice. Delany's *hortus siccus* resisted the more collaborative aspects of a Linnaean ideal, producing a work that was, like Portland's, collective, with Bulstrode as the site of collation at the centre. Like Rousseau's herbarium, the *hortus siccus* is an enduring record of the botanical practice of the Bulstrode estate. It is also a strange inversion of Rousseau's approach to epistolarity and the Linnaean herbarium. Rousseau's herbarium was epistolary in form, but he rejected the Linnaean notion of collective and sociable botany. Delany's *hortus siccus*, by contrast, encoded its sociability and the social botanical connections that underpinned its production and use, but she rejected its epistolarity. While Rousseau hoped that his herbarium would function as a personal record of his botanising, Delany's served as a long-standing botanical record of the specimens collected, and of the botanical practice, of the botanists at the Bulstrode estate.

The individuals at Bulstrode worked towards a type of knowledge production distinct from that of other individuals I consider in this thesis. The botanists at Bulstrode saw themselves as contributing to a stock of global knowledge. The production of knowledge within the estate was overlaid with the personal social connections both between the estate's practitioners, and people

and institutions outside the estate – individual correspondents, social visitors and other botanical institutions. These social connections, conducted through epistolary connections and the exchange of specimens and herbaria, had an impact on the nature of the botanical knowledge that the estate produced. In my examination of Delany's *hortus siccus* I have shifted the emphasis slightly from the perspective of previous critics, and have considered it as primarily a botanical production which used artistic methods, rather than, as previous critics have, an artistic production with botanical uses. This has revealed the ways in which the sociable circumstances of production, specifically those of Bulstrode as a site of sociability and of rigorous intellectual pursuit, inflected the botanical work that was undertaken at the estate. Productions that were epistolary in form, the letters sent beyond and within the estate, or that had some epistolary characteristics, such as sketches, notes and herbaria, were particularly susceptible to adaptation, and yielded to the creator's social or epistemological requirements. In this chapter and, in particular in the case of Delany's *hortus siccus*, I have shown how methods that were born from other epistemologies, from artistic, craft-based and collecting ways of producing knowledge, could be repurposed and adapted to produce different forms of knowledge, in this case, botanical. I now turn to examine how empirical and other sorts of artistic epistemologies – namely, literary epistemologies – interact, in the epistolarity of the works of the poet and educator, Anna Letitia Barbauld.

Chapter Four

Anna Letitia Barbauld: Empirical Detail, Epistolary Absence and Poetic Epistemology

Anna Letitia Barbauld, poet, educator and political commentator, used epistolary characteristics and intricate empirical observations to establish a particular epistemology, or system of knowledge, in her poetry. By this, I mean that Barbauld's poems use a distinct set of poetic structures that produce the knowledge that the reader gains on their encounter with the poem. Poetic patterns cohere with her representation of technological, medical and literary knowledge within the poems, and of intellectual institutions such as the Warrington Academy (1756-82). In her poetic epistemology, particular empirical details hold within them transcendental experiences, and instil in the reader an understanding of the process of knowledge production, and of the transformative, devotional potential of poetic knowledge in particular. Her epistemology relies on the epistolary characteristics of direct address and the absence of the recipient. Her Warrington poems, which I study in depth below, make reference to the sociable forms of knowledge production distinctive of Dissenting circles. They situate themselves according to the epistolary paradox of the absent presence of the recipient and, as I will show, use this construction to instil in the reader an affective, devotional way of seeing and understanding the world, and an understanding of poetic knowledge. In this chapter, I examine Barbauld's poetic epistemology in her early poetry, focusing on poems that have prominent epistolary features: 'The Invitation: To Miss B*****', 'To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she Neglected him, October 20th 1768', and 'To Mrs. P[riestley], with some Drawings of Birds and Insects'.[1] I examine moments in which epistolarity interacts with the production of technical, medical, natural philosophical, and literary knowledge. I also consider how her poetic

[1] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "The Invitation: To Miss B*****," "To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she Neglected him, October 20th 1768," and "To Mrs. P[riestley], with some Drawings of Birds and Insects," in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ormskirk: Broadview Press, 2002), 49-54, 55-58, 44-48. Hereafter abbreviated to *SPP*. Pages and line numbers of poems in this edition are given parenthetically in the text.

epistemology takes a different form in her later riddles.[2] Barbauld does not aim to describe or impart knowledge to the reader, but poetically explores the processes of its production. Her poems give the reader an experience, and encourage in them an understanding of the process of knowledge production, and a devotional way of knowing.

Barbauld's distinctive poetic epistemology attracted the attention of her contemporary readers. The intellectual and affective relationship that her poems forge with their reader is central to Mary Scott's (1751-93) praise of her in 'On Anna Laetitia Aikin' in *The Female Advocate* (1774). Barbauld's muse:

> Transported dwells on that harmonious line
> Where taste and spirit, wit and learning shine;
> Where Fancy's hand her richest colourings lends,
> And every shade in just proportion blends.
> How fair, how beauteous to our gazing eyes
> Thy vivid intellectual paintings rise!
> We feel thy feelings, glow with all thy fires,
> Adopt thy thoughts, and pant with thy desires.
> […]
> Nature's minuter works attract her eyes –
> Their laws, their pow'rs, her deep research descries.
> From sense abstracted, some with arduous flight
> Explore the realms of intellectual light.[3]

Scott's poem highlights the techniques that Barbauld employs in the creation of her poetic epistemology. Close observation of the particulars of natural objects – of 'Nature's minuter works' – and her muse's 'deep research' into their intricate features leads to 'intellectual light'. This knowledge has empirical beginnings in close observation, and is then 'abstracted' from 'sense', as these close observations are interpreted inductively to broader, abstract, truths. Scott also acknowledges the parallels that Barbauld draws between painting and poetry, in the 'richest

[2] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "Riddles," in *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 189-91. Hereafter abbreviated to *ALB*. Pages and line numbers of poems in this edition are given parenthetically in the text.
[3] Mary Scott, "On Anna Laetitia Aikin," in *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 135-36, lines 419-428, 455-458.

colourings' with 'every shade in just proportion' that Barbauld uses to produce 'vivid intellectual paintings'. Although not unusual in contemporary poetic commentary, this characteristic has particular resonance when considering Barbauld's use of empirical detail. In 'To Mrs. P[riestley]', as we shall see, Barbauld draws poetry into a productive and harmonious relationship with visual art. Scott attempts to capture the effects of Barbauld's poetic epistemology: the tension between the swooping movement of the muse '[t]ransported', and the stasis of the verb 'dwells', mirrored in the enjambment and caesura of this and the following line, is an attempt to illustrate how Barbauld holds her reader's attention, through intricate and detailed representations of observed phenomena, which then open out to expansive ideas, offering the reader a framework in which to gain knowledge or understanding. It is this technique, Scott suggests, that facilitates an emotional connection between the reader and Barbauld's verse, as 'we feel thy feelings, glow with all thy fires'. As Isobel Grundy neatly summarises, the consistent 'threads' of Barbauld's poetry are 'her pursuit of truth, both of description and sentiment; the way she connects with her reader, bestowing pleasure, provoking thought'.[4] I suggest that Barbauld does more than provoke her reader's thought, however; she employs vivid empirical, visual representations in her verse which, in combination with epistolary characteristics, lead her readers not only to new thought and affective experience, but presents them with new, poetic, ways of knowing.

Mary Scott's inclusion of Barbauld in *The Female Advocate*, a poem celebrating the achievements of distinguished historical and contemporary women, positioned her amongst the circle of female intellectuals surrounding Elizabeth Montagu.[5] At this point, Barbauld had begun to receive recognition for her first publication, *Poems* (1773). However, as a Dissenter,

[4] Isobel Grundy, "'Slip-shod Measure' and 'Language of Gods': Barbauld's Stylistic Range," in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, ed. William McCarthy and Olivia Murphy (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), 27.
[5] For Barbauld's relations with this circle, see Jon Mee, "Severe Contentions of Friendship: Barbauld, Conversation, and Dispute," in *Repossessing the Romantic Past*, ed. Heather Glen and Paul Hamilton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

brought up outside the religious establishment and, from 1758, in the intellectual environment of Warrington Academy where her father taught, Barbauld's intellectual development followed a different trajectory to her Anglican Bluestocking peers such as Montagu.[6] Barbauld's life at Warrington entailed receiving an informal but thorough education through Dissenting pedagogical models of conversation, debate and exchange, and it was at this time that she became friends with the natural philosopher Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) and his wife Mary Priestley (1742-96). She later married Rochemont Barbauld (1749-1808), and moved to Hampstead in 1787: a move that critics have identified as pivotal in putting her in closer proximity with the radical circle surrounding her publisher Joseph Johnson (1738-1809).[7] As well as writing poetry for publication and manuscript circulation, essays, and political tracts, Barbauld wrote educational works for children, *Lessons for Children* (1778-79) and *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), and she edited Samuel Richardson's *Correspondence* (1804), and the fifty-volume *The British Novelists* (1810). Much of her poetry and pedagogical writing is interested in learning and the production of knowledge, but particularly the poems she writes while at Warrington.

In these poems, Barbauld puts into practice theories of poetry and knowledge that she later addresses prosaically in her essay 'Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, and on Sects and Establishments' published in *Devotional Pieces* (1775) and, as I will return to below, in her introductory essay to the 1794 edition of Mark Akenside's (1721-70) *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744). In 'Thoughts', Barbauld outlines her view that religion is comprised of three intertwined modes of practice. It is, firstly, 'a system of opinions', with 'truth' as its sole objective, which is pursued through 'reason, exerted in the most dispassionate enquiry'.[8]

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[6] For the authoritative biography of Barbauld, see William McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
[7] Anne Janowitz, "Amiable and Radical Sociability: Anna Barbauld's 'Free Familiar Conversation'," in Russell and Tuite,*Romantic Sociability*, 62; Mee, "Severe Contentions of Friendship," 31.
[8] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, and on Sects and Establishments," in *The Works of Anna Lætitia Barbauld: With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin* (1825; repr., Routledge: Thommes Press, 1996), 232.

Religion is secondly a habit of behaviour and, finally, she argues, it may 'be considered a taste, an affair of sentiment and feeling, and in this sense it is properly called devotion', which has its seat in the imagination.[9] Her essay then continues to argue for reinstating the affective and devotional into religious practice, despite its associations with Puritan enthusiasm. Although her stance bore some consistencies with other Warringtonian views, her opinions, as Daniel E. White shows, represented an innovative approach which drew on aspects of her liberal Presbyterian upbringing, and the Puritan elements of her broader Dissenting heritage. She aimed to 'vitalize devotional experience' by blending the 'the particular, spontaneous, and affective direct appeal' of Puritanism with the 'warmth of communal or familial life in the more settled denomination'.[10] The essay provoked a heated response from Joseph Priestley which was not, White maintains, because Barbauld's mention of the 'supercilious brow of cold-hearted philosophy' that banished feeling from religious worship could be read as a reference to Priestley's natural philosophical practice.[11] White demonstrates that the essay was disconcerting to Priestley not for the aspects he disagreed with, but for its consequences for 'the definition and reformation of Dissent itself'.[12] In a way that accords with Barbauld's approach to the production of knowledge in her poems, her essay not only posits a stance on the issue of Dissenting religious practice and devotion, but it reconfigures the Dissenting way of knowing God, and poses questions about what Dissenting knowledge might be.

To this end, Barbauld details in 'Thoughts' the relationship she sees between devotional taste and the rational pursuit of knowledge by empirical means. Isobel Armstrong and Joanna Wharton have demonstrated the centrality of conceptual empiricism, such as John Locke's theory of mind, in Dissenting educational practices, but Barbauld's discussion of knowledge in 'Thoughts' reveals another strand of her interest in the production of knowledge that is attuned

[9] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 232.
[10] Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 50, 52.
[11] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 233.
[12] White, *Religious Dissent,* 58.

to a Baconian methodological empiricism.[13] In her examination of knowledge in 'Thoughts', Kathryn J. Ready notes that Barbauld is not arguing for 'devotion over philosophy, or taste and feeling over intellect' but is 'advocating a balance' between the two.[14] I propose, slightly differently, that Barbauld sees devotion and philosophy as two mutual facets of the single process of acquiring religious knowledge. Barbauld suggests that philosophy can lead to religious understanding, it 'does indeed enlarge our conceptions of the Deity', and it 'gives us the sublimest ideas of his power and extent of dominion' but 'it raises him too high for our imagination to take hold of':

> Philosophy represents the Deity in too abstracted a manner to engage our affections […] It is also a fault of which philosophers are often guilty, that they dwell too much in generals. Accustomed to reduce every thing to the operation of general laws, they turn our attention to larger views, attempt to grasp the whole order of the universe […] They trace the great outline of nature but neglect the colouring which gives warmth and beauty to the piece. As in poetry it is not vague and general in description, but a few striking circumstances clearly related and strongly worked up […] which gives the most pleasure.[15]

The philosophical process that Barbauld considers is inductive, as philosophers move from particulars to generals by a process of abstraction. For Barbauld, philosophically gained knowledge can give an understanding of the deity, but not in the way it is currently conducted. Philosophers are too focused on the arrival at general laws, and that causes them to neglect the devotional potential of observed particular detail; philosophers move too readily from the 'colouring' of circumstantial particulars, that give 'warmth and beauty to the piece', to the general 'outline of nature', and they sacrifice a devotional way of knowing God, through the particulars of nature, in the process. White discusses the '[p]articular' and 'experimental' Puritan preaching that applied doctrine to 'particular members of the congregation', and their

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[13] Wharton, *Material Enlightenment*, 31-72; Isobel Armstrong, "Anna Letitia Barbauld: A Unitarian Poetics?," in McCarthy and Murphy, *New Perspectives*, 59.
[14] Kathryn J. Ready, "Dissenting Heads and Hearts: Joseph Priestley, Anna Barbauld, and Conflicting Attitudes towards Devotion within Rational Dissent," *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 2 (June 2010): 180.
[15] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 237, 238-39.

'concrete experiences', as an element that Barbauld incorporates into her devotional system.[16] But Barbauld's account of philosophy suggests that she is also aware of the resonances of an empirical epistemology in this religious practice. In lingering longer on the 'colouring', on 'a few striking circumstances', her analysis suggests, the movement outwards from the particular to the general might be infused with sentiment, and thus the empirical production of knowledge becomes an affective and devotional way of knowing God and his creation.

Barbauld posits poetry as a means of attaining the devotional knowledge that empirical observation, in its hasty process of induction, misses. She does not make this claim outright but, as the above quotation suggests, she returns to poetry in the argumentation of the essay, and implies that poetry charges observed particulars with devotional sentiment. At moments when she describes philosophy falling short of arriving at knowledge of God, she introduces a poetic quotation or comparison. Poetry can supply the 'striking circumstances', 'strongly worked up' that philosophy smooths over. She uses poetry to describe philosophy through an adapted quotation of James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730): 'Daughter of Heaven […] Investigating sure the form of things, / With radiant finger points to heaven again'.[17] In 'Thoughts' she also depicts the quest for religious knowledge through astronomy in terms that strongly echo her own poem 'A Summer Evening's Meditation', as she describes how 'we trace the footsteps of creative energy through regions of unmeasured space' but, when we 'still find new wonders disclosed and pressing upon the view, – we grow giddy with the prospect', and we fail to arrive at an understanding of the deity, who 'seems ever further removed from us in proportion as we enlarge the bounds of his creation'.[18] Ready reads this moment as an 'acceptance that the truth is

[16] White, *Religious Dissent*, 43.
[17] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 237. See James Thomson, *The Seasons*, 1746 ed., ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 130, lines 1548-50. This quotation is part of Thomson's poetic celebration of Francis Bacon, who 'from the Gloom / Of cloister'd Monks, and Jargon-teaching Schools, / Led forth the true Philosophy', and led forth the 'Daughter of HEAVEN' of Barbauld's quotation. Thomson, *The Seasons*, 130, lines 1547-1545, 1548.
[18] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 237-38. See Anna Letitia Barbauld, "A Summer Evening's Meditation," *ALB*, 81-84.

unattainable in this life', and a Lockean 'insistence on the limits of human knowledge'.[19] But Barbauld's weaving of such poetic moments into her essay, and the aesthetic terms in which she discusses the devotional taste – 'Its seat is in the imagination and the passions, and it has its source in that relish for the sublime, the vast, and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry and other compositions' – she suggests that poetry and imagination can raise the mind and feelings closer to the deity, in a devotional experience.[20] Poetry is the energy that lifts an observation from its immediate, particular, and earthly subject to the general, spiritual truth, and fills this journey with 'warmth and beauty'.[21] Barbauld implies, and demonstrates in her Warrington poems, that described particulars alone are insufficient to instil knowledge about God's creations. Poetic techniques and figurative language and representation, however, breathe 'a spirit through the finish'd whole' ("To Mrs. P[riestley]," *SPP*, 45, line 16) and lead the reader to an understanding of the deity and his creation which is mutually rational and empirical, and affective and devotional.

In a later poem, 'The Caterpillar' ([c.1815?], *ALB*, 172-73), poetic representation infuses empirical observation of particulars with devotional taste in the way that Barbauld articulates in 'Thoughts'.[22] Close, detailed observation of the caterpillar and the poetic tracing of its features affords the speaker, and the reader, affection for it:

> No, helpless thing, I cannot harm thee now;
> Depart in peace, thy little life is safe,
> For I have scanned thy form with curious eye,
> Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,
> The azure and the orange that divide
> Thy velvet sides; thee, houseless wanderer
> […]. (*ALB*, 172, lines 1-6)

[19] Ready, "Dissenting Heads and Hearts," 181.
[20] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 232.
[21] Barbauld, "Thoughts," 239.
[22] For the date of composition of 'The Caterpillar', see Alice G. Den Otter, "Pests, Parasites, and Positionality: Anna Letitia Barbauld and 'The Caterpillar'," *Studies in Romanticism* 43, no. 2 (Summer, 2004): 212n9.

The scanning movement of the speaker's 'curious eye' over the caterpillar's body suggests a sustained visual attention that methodically traces every aspect of the caterpillar's form; the speaker's vision seems to follow the streak of the 'silver line' down the length of the caterpillar's back. The further observed details, the 'silver', 'azure', 'orange' colours, and its velvety texture give the caterpillar a vivified, vital dimension, until the description arrives at the announcement of 'thee', punctuated to stand boldly in the middle of the line, addressing the caterpillar that by this point seems alive and fully present. The poetic tracing 'breathes a spirit through the finish'd whole' ("To Mrs. P[riestley]," *SPP*, 45, line 16). This enables the speaker, by the end of the poem, to 'feel and clearly recognise' – to understand in an affective way – the caterpillar's 'individual distance, life, / and fellowship of sense with all that breathes' (*ALB*, 173, lines 25-27). Intricate, minute observational detail gives knowledge of the caterpillar's appearance, and its poetic representation brings the caterpillar into vivified being, in a mutually empirical and devotional method that establishes the speaker's, and the reader's, affection for the caterpillar, to take forward in future encounters with all else 'that breathes'. Her poem establishes an alternative to the way in which an inductive Baconian logic manifests in empirical culture more broadly, in creating a personal, devotional connection to God.

It is not only visual observation that produces knowledge of the caterpillar. Its physical characteristics are 'noted', both in the sense of registering them in a visual and intellectual way, and in being noted right here, in writing, in the poem, in an instance of what Hofkosh recognises as the 'self-referentiality' of Barbauld's verse.[23] Recent critical perspectives that have identified the self-reflexive quality of Barbauld's poetry, and that have argued for her poetry as 'an event', are helpful in my understanding of how Barbauld's poems operated to infuse observed particulars with devotional taste, and to establish their own poetic epistemology. Sonia Hofkosh argues that Barbauld's poetic has a self-reflexive nature, as many of her poems turn on a

[23] Sonia Hofkosh, "Materiality, Affect, Event: Barbauld's Poetics of the Everyday," in McCarthy and Murphy, *New Perspectives*, 83.

particular moment or image that make the poem point back in on itself, make the reader aware that they are reading a poem and, simultaneously, open the poem to broader themes. At the close of 'An Inventory of the Furniture of Dr. Priestley's Study', for example, Barbauld envisages Priestley finding the poem: '"But what is this," I hear you cry, / "Which saucily provokes my eye?"'.[24] The poem gestures to itself, makes 'a recursive turn, a turn to the poem itself as an artefact'.[25] This self-reflexive move chimes with Anne K. Mellor's statement that 'the women critics of the Romantic era developed what we would now call a "reader-response" theory'.[26] Barbauld is aware of, and consciously manages, the reader's contact with the poem, and makes them aware of their own readerly experience.

This self-reflexivity, Hofkosh suggests, transforms the poems into 'events' that have the capacity to induce change.[27] For Hofkosh, the nature of this change is everyday and incremental; she reads the poem 'Washing-Day' as a series of repeated self-reflexive moments that bring about change through 'variation and distance'.[28] Alice G. Den Otter outlines a slightly different model of contact and change in her analysis of ethics and morality in 'The Caterpillar'. She argues that 'the basis of morality is more corporeal than love or pity. First comes a contact, a face to face meeting, a bodily interrelation. Only then is there some hope that hierarchical oppression will be unsettled.'[29] Barbauld disrupts the structural hierarchy of sympathy and pity, and her refusal to adopt a particular positionality leaves the reader to 'ponder the whole system of moral virtue'.[30] 'Barbauld does not occupy any simple position, often analysing complex situations first one way, then another and leaving ambiguities for the reader to resolve.'[31] I believe that the quality that both Hofkosh and Den Otter identify in Barbauld's poetry -

[24] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "An Inventory of the Furniture of Dr. Priestley's Study," *SPP*, 73-75, lines 55-56.
[25] Hofkosh, "Materiality, Affect, Event," 103.
[26] Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 98.
[27] Hofkosh, "Materiality, Affect, Event," 83.
[28] Hofkosh, "Materiality, Affect, Event," 83.
[29] Den Otter, "Pests, Parasites, and Positionality," 210-11.
[30] Den Otter, "Pests, Parasites, and Positionality," 211.
[31] Den Otter, "Pests, Parasites, and Positionality," 225.

moments of contact that have the potential to incite deep affective and structural change - is at the crux of Barbauld's poetic, and this is why the term 'poetic epistemology' is apt to describe it. In this chapter, I consider this quality in terms of Barbauld's treatment of the production of knowledge. I agree with Hofkosh that Barbauld's poems constitute encounters in themselves; I am more interested in the reader's encounter with the poems than I am with the representation of physical encounters within the poems, such as in 'The Caterpillar'. I take from Den Otter, however, her understanding of the type of change that such poetic encounters can bring about. I suggest that Barbauld's poetic epistemology creates a readerly encounter with her poems that in some instances offers the reader new ways of seeing and knowing that they can take forward to future poetic and natural encounters. In others she offers new understandings of the processes of knowledge production and, in others again, unresolved challenges to existing epistemological structures.

Barbauld's use of epistolarity in her poetic epistemology resonates with the use of dialogic exchange characteristic of the production of knowledge in Dissenting circles. Armstrong argues that epistolary exchange was central to, and emblematic of, the production of knowledge in Dissenting circles. She identifies how letters were a particularly important medium of exchange in Unitarian print publications such as *Monthly Magazine*, edited by Barbauld's brother John Aikin (1747-1822), and that epistolary form was representative of the dialogism, vigour and debate of Dissenting exchange.[32] Barbauld's use of epistolarity in her poems, however, as I will show below, uses other epistolary qualities – silence, anticipation and absence of the recipient – to power her poetic epistemology. Barbauld's contemporary, Hannah More (1745-1833), expresses that silence, paradoxically, could represent the acquisition of knowledge, particularly in young women. '[I]f a young lady has that discretion and modesty', she says, 'without which all knowledge is little worth, she will never make an ostentatious parade of it, because she will

[32] Armstrong, "A Unitarian Poetics?," 61.

rather be intent on acquiring more, than on displaying what she has'.[33] Despite Barbauld's difference from More on many issues, here she is in agreement. Silence can be symptomatic of the desire for knowledge and, for Barbauld, the impetus to produce it. The anticipatory silence of an absent correspondent invites productive epistolary expression: an effect that underpins Barbauld's production of her Warrington poems, and that manifests in their internal epistemology.

In the remainder of this chapter, I demonstrate how Barbauld establishes her poetic epistemology through the representation of the production of different forms of knowledge. I consider 'The Invitation' as the poem in which Barbauld most explicitly presents her poetic epistemology, in which epistolary qualities and empirical observation interact in representations of knowledge production to present a system of knowledge production that the reader experiences on encountering the poem. In 'To Dr. Aikin', I show how Barbauld foregrounds the epistolary element of the poem as a central facet of knowledge making, and she explores different kinds of knowledge – medical, poetic and emotional forms of knowledge – and contests its gendering. In 'To Mrs. P[riestley]', Barbauld explores the possibilities of poetic and artistic knowledge for inspiring an appreciation of the natural world and of God's design of it. She posits, and poetically proves, the theory that poetry 'breathes a spirit' ("To Mrs. P[riestley], *SPP*, 45, line 16) through the empirical representation of natural objects, such as birds and insects. She also, however, highlights the shortcomings of both empirical and poetic forms of representation of the natural world which, while they instil devotional appreciation, cannot compare to contemplation of the nature itself. In the final section of this chapter, I examine Barbauld's 'Riddles', written later, and I show how Barbauld throws open her theories of the production of poetic knowledge, and subverts an inductive, empirical logic. The absent recipient in her epistolary poems extends to become the riddle's absent subject, and her reader is

[33] Hannah More, "Thoughts on Conversation," in *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (London, 1777), 38, quoted in Mee, "Severe Contentions of Friendship," 25.

dependent on the internal epistemology that Barbauld constructs in the poem to an even greater degree than in her earlier work. Barbauld challenges the linearity of an inductive empirical epistemology, making the case for a poetic knowledge that instils in the reader a knowledge of affect, epistemology, devotion, and poetry itself.

I. 'The Invitation': Epistolarity and Barbauld's Poetic Epistemology

In 'The Invitation: To Miss B*****', Barbauld utilises empirical observation to establish her poetic epistemology, which combines empirical observation with epistolary form. The poem, which Barbauld wrote while resident at Warrington Academy in the 1760s, invites her close friend Elizabeth Belsham (1743-1819) to visit her and takes the opportunity to celebrate the intellectual achievements of the students at the institution. The poem's content centres around the knowledge-producing activities at the Dissenting academy. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft speculate that Barbauld originally composed the poem in letters to Belsham at various moments throughout the 1760s.[34] Their interpretation draws out the epistolary quality that arches over the poem as a whole. The poem's address 'To Miss B*****' highlights Belsham's absence, and incites the description of Warrington that follows; the epistolary address occasions the writing of the poem itself. Belsham's absence, and Barbauld's address to her, create an epistolary space, which is then filled by the representation of the production of knowledge in the poem's content.

Barbauld replicates this model of carving out space which is then filled with knowledge in the poem's imagery. She invites Belsham to sit and contemplate the nearby Duke of Bridgewater's canal, a feat of engineering technology:

> Here smooth canals, across th' extended plain,

[34] William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, headnote to Barbauld, "The Invitation: To Miss B*****," in *SPP*, 49.

> Stretch their long arms, to join the distant main:
> The sons of toil with many a weary stroke
> Scoop the hard bosom of the solid rock;
> Resistless thro' the still opposing clay
> With steady patience work their gradual way;
> Compel the genius of th' unwilling flood
> Thro' the brown horrors of the aged wood;
> 'Cross the lone waste the silver urn they pour,
> And chear the barren heath or sullen moor. (*SPP*, 51-52, lines 57-66)

The labourers scoop out space in the land, creating an emptied hollow – they remove the 'solid rock' and 'opposing clay' – creating a space which the 'unwilling flood' comes in to fill. The creation of the canal represents a coming to fruition of technological knowledge, implicitly and intellectually through the genius of the design, and physically, through the 'toil', the 'steady patience', and 'resistless' hard manual work of the labourers. The whole is a technological achievement in which the natural 'genius' of the water flow cooperates with the manufactured 'alter'd landscape' (*SPP*, line 69), flowing into the space that is created for it. The labour of the workers scooping out a hollow space in the earth, which will become the bed of the canal, and the water flowing into it, physicalises the epistemology of the poem as a whole, in which textual space is created and then filled with the representation of the production of knowledge in the students' activities and in the image of the canal itself.

In the metaphorical relationship that Barbauld establishes between knowledge and the water of the canal, knowledge expands to fill the space that is provided for it. Barbauld foregrounds the geographical reach of the canals; they spread over 'th' extended plain', '[s]tretching their long arms' over vast distances (*SPP*, 51, lines 57-58), and they 'pour' across wasted moor and heath lands (*SPP*, 52, line 65). The outward pouring motion is echoed in the representation of Warrington's students:

> Thro' the long perspective of distant years,
> When this, this little group their country calls
> From academic shades and learned halls,
> To fix her laws, her spirit to sustain,
> And light up glory thro' her wide domain! (*SPP*, 54, lines 134-138)

Like the expansive flow of water, the enlightened students disperse outwards from Warrington, taking their knowledge into the 'wide domain' of the world. Through the imagery of light and shade, Barbauld represents the harmonious blending of different forms of knowledge. Students cultivate their intellect in the secluded leafy shades of Warrington, before bursting forth into the world. The absence of light, through the shady environs of Warrington, characterises the students' acquisition of knowledge, in the same way as the absence of the recipient of the poem is the occasion of the poem. When the students leave the academy, '[t]heir various tastes in different arts display'd / Like temper'd harmony of light and shade, / With friendly union in one mass shall blend' (*SPP*, 54, lines 139-41). At Warrington, different forms of knowledge, the variety of the students' 'tastes' and approaches to 'different arts' dapple like shade and sunlight, but they ultimately all blend in apparent harmony.

Anne Janowitz suggests that this moment is an idealised, possibly naïve, forward projection of 'a future in which the Test and Corporation Acts have been repealed, and the students of Warrington [are] fully integrated into civil society'.[35] She suggests that this poem served as 'an advertisement of the institute, describing its pedagogic aims', in which a particular Warrington model of sociability was 'condensed into the notion of "friendship"'.[36] In particular, she argues, it advertised a mode of Warrington sociability that, in its ideal incarnation, drew 'women and men together within the circle', and called attention away from the gendered exclusions and 'troubles of a small community'.[37] But Barbauld does seem to pay heed to the problematic gendering of knowledge at Warrington, as part of the poem's broader consideration of the production and interaction of different kinds of knowledge. Towards the close of the poem, she speaks of the students' empirical researches, in which a probing, empirical method of inquiry has undertones of damage and danger:

[35] Janowitz, "'Free Familiar Conversation'," 68.
[36] Janowitz, "'Free Familiar Conversation'," 68, 67.
[37] Janowitz, "'Free Familiar Conversation'," 67, 69.

> Some pensive creep along the shelly shore;
> Unfold the silky texture of a flower;
> With sharpen'd eyes inspect an hornet's sting,
> And all the wonders of an insect's wing.
> Some trace with curious search the hidden cause
> Of nature's changes, and her various laws;
> Untwist her beauteous web, disrobe her charms,
> And hunt her to her elemental forms. (*SPP*, 54, lines 155-162)

The 'creep' of the conchologist suggests that his presence is potentially intrusive or unwanted, and carries with it the fear he may crush the delicate shells of the shore underfoot. The adjective 'sharpen'd', while technically denoting the observer's use of a microscope, carries its meaning over the course of the line to apply to the sharp and potentially painful sting of the hornet. It also implies dissection by a sharpened scalpel. This potentially damaging intrusion into nature is gendered. Nature is female, the natural philosophers search into a 'beauteaous web' that is twisted like a woman's hair, and 'disrobe her charms' in a 'hunt' for the elements of which she is comprised.

The sense of threat that hangs over these lines is one of masculine intrusion, yet Barbauld's adoption of the widely used gendered semantics of female nature and male natural philosophical observer is not entirely conventional, as the tension between the philosopher and his subject eventually resolves. There is a feminised sense of delicacy and yielding in the images of the 'silky' flower and the insect's wing, but there is also a poetic materiality and a sense of movement in these lines, which allow the objects of enquiry to assert their subjectivity. The flower, while it suffers to be unfolded, then becomes the agent of its own motion as, over the course of the line, the natural philosopher disappears from view as the flower unfurls its silky texture. Similarly, the 'wonder' of the insect's wing transcends its immediate status as an object of natural philosophical study. There is also movement and transition as nature 'changes' through 'various laws'. We have been made aware earlier in the poem that nature is charged with its own knowledge, through the 'genius' (*SPP*, 52, line 63) of the water as it moves, redirected, into the canal. Here, the objects of natural philosophical enquiry assert themselves as

material entities, with texture, movement and a degree of autonomy. There is a tussle between the interrogative, empirical knowledge of the natural philosopher's search, and a knowledge of a higher, perhaps divine, order that moves and powers the natural objects of his inquiry. As Den Otter argues of 'The Caterpillar', Barbauld does not critique the gendering of empirical knowledge, but she opens the possibility of a reconfiguration of an intrusive masculine empirical study into the feminised secrets of nature.

The close positions the poem itself as participating in the system of knowledge production based on absence and fulfilment that Barbauld has constructed in the poem's content.

> While others, consecrate to higher aims.
> Whose hallow'd bosoms glow with purer flames,
> […]
> Draw the dread veil that wraps th' eternal throne,
> And launch our souls into the bright unknown.
> Here cease my song. Such arduous themes require
> A master's pencil, and a poet's fire:
> Unequal far such bright designs to paint,
> Too weak her colours, and her lines too faint,
> My drooping Muse folds up her fluttering wing,
> And hides her head in the green lap of spring. (*SPP*, 55, lines 177-88)

The abrupt shift from the epic scale of the souls that 'launch' 'into the bright unknown' to a gentle immediacy appears to be a refusal to address such subjects as the 'dread veil that wraps the eternal throne'. Barbauld pulls back from addressing such themes in the manner that Ready reads as an identification of the limits of human knowledge. However, given that absence – of light, and of recipient – has come to be a productive force in the poem, the space that Barbauld leaves at the close of the poem does not seem to signify a retreat, or a belief that her verse is not the masterful work that '[s]uch arduous themes require'. Her pulling back from developing these themes leaves a vacant space for the reader, or another poet, to pursue them further. 'The Invitation' of the poem is not only to Belsham, but is also an invitation to the reader, and to other poets and painters, to step in and fill in the absent space that she has created at the poem's close. In her retreating lines, she enacts an integral part of the process of the production of

knowledge; she provides a space, and leaves lingering questions, for another party to enter and fulfil, in a cooperative, harmonious process of knowledge production as it is presented in her poetic epistemology.

II. 'To Dr. Aikin': Natural, Poetic and Empirical Knowledge

Barbauld more comprehensively explores the relationship between different kinds of knowledge and how they might be gendered in 'To Dr. Aikin'. This poem also constructs an epistemology using epistolary and empirical elements, but its epistolarity and the absence of the recipient are more prominent than in 'The Invitation'. As the full title 'To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she Neglected him, October 20th 1768' suggests, Barbauld wrote this poem to her brother in lieu of a letter that she owed him while she was living at Warrington, and he was studying surgery in Manchester. The genesis of the poem is explicitly epistolary, and becomes the subject of the first few lines, as she asks for forgiveness for not writing to him: 'idly busy as the moments flew, / I thought, and only thought alas! of you' (*SPP*, 56, lines 5-6). Her invitation to Belsham occasioned the writing of 'The Invitation', and here epistolary indebtedness is Barbauld's creative impetus. This is significant for the poem's epistemology as her indebtedness to him creates a textual gap that demands filling, and prompts her poetic meditation on their mutual friendship and love as children, and their respective knowledge-producing work as adults. His medical knowledge and her poetic knowledge are the subject of the poem, and these types of knowledge, in the form of observed particular details, are circulated amongst family and friends. This circulation presents the character of Aikin and his work, his relationship with Barbauld, and Barbauld's own work, to an immediate, familial audience. This epistolary poem does not cohere with Armstrong's model of vigorous, knowledge-producing debate in epistolary form, nor does it aim to produce knowledge itself, but it circulates Barbauld's reflections on different types of knowledge.

'To Dr. Aikin' celebrates Aikin's medical observational practices and the way that this work makes partial bodies whole. Aikin revives half-alive objects and bodies to full health: half-alive 'drooping roses bloom anew' (*SPP*, 57, line 65); he makes 'the half-clos'd eye its fire resume' (*SPP*, 57, line 66); Aikin closes a soldier's open wound to make his body whole again (*SPP*, 58, line 70); and the 'wan cheek' of the 'languid maid' (*SPP*, 58, line 73) is restored to its proper fullness, as a site where 'love once more his rosy banners wave (*SPP*, 58, line 74). This representation of Aikin's medical knowledge operates in tandem with the poem's epistemological process. Similar to 'The Invitation', the letter-writer and absent recipient implied by the title's epistolary address creates a half-presence, which the representation of Aikin textually fills, mirroring the way Aikin brings half-alive eyes, bodies and cheeks to healthy fullness. These two processes also parallel Barbauld's treatment of friendship and sentiment in the poem. Barbauld describes her and her brother as 'like two scions on one stem' (*SPP*, 56, line 27), a partnership of siblings and friends in which each is a half that completes the whole. 'The Invitation' addressed the production of knowledge through its poetic epistemology; this poem uses its epistemology to explore emotional, rather than solely intellectual, knowledge.

Barbauld's friendship with her brother recurs throughout the poem as Barbauld describes her and Aikin's early love and shared sympathy, and how their friendship continued as their occupations led them down different paths of knowledge. Deirdre Coleman sensitively observes that 'Barbauld mobilizes various modalities of "friendship"' throughout the poem's trajectory': it breaks 'free from familiar ties' to become an 'all-inclusive social friendship'.[38] Coleman argues that the overlapping 'familial and public meanings of "friendship"' over the course of the poem 'licenses [Barbauld's] poetic voice to participate in the public and social realm'.[39] However, the interaction of empirical representation, emotional knowledge and epistolary

[38] Deirdre Coleman, "Firebrands, Letters and Flowers: Mrs Barbauld and the Priestleys," in Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 83-84.
[39] Coleman, "Barbauld and the Priestleys," 84.

structure suggest that it is not so much that Barbauld uses the poem to assert herself in a masculine world of knowledge and letters, but that she uses epistolarity to establish and exist within a form of poetic knowledge that works in complementary ways with her brother's medical knowledge. Coleman rightly identifies the poem's gendering of Aikin's medical knowledge and Barbauld's own poetic knowledge:[40]

> Those hours are now no more which smiling flew
> And the same studies saw us both pursue;
> Our path divides – to thee fair fate assigned
> The nobler labours of a manly mind:
> While mine, more humble works, and lower cares,
> Less shining toils, and meaner praises shares. (*SPP*, 57, lines 50-53)

Despite associating the 'nobler labours' of a 'manly mind' with Aikin's medical practice, Barbauld does not present a binary that pits medical/empirical/masculine/public against poetic/emotional/feminine/private. Barbauld goes on to identify both the sympathetic strain central to Aikin's work, and the empirical observation that informs her poetic. Aikin's work is not 'confin'd' to 'skilful care' (*SPP*, 58, line 76), but he joins 'to the sage advice, the tender sigh; / And to the healing hand the pitying eye' (*SPP*, 58, lines 78-79). She tells him that '[b]eyond thy art thy friendship shall prevail / And cordial looks shall cure, when drugs would fail' (*SPP*, 58, lines 80-81). As well as observing the physical work that he does, she observes its emotional dimension, and the impact that it has. Aikin's sympathy for his patients is part of a medical epistemology; his emotional expressions towards the patient act remedially and form part of the 'cure' and Barbauld's close observation of them proffer the reader insight into Aikin's character and work.

Emotional knowledge is part of Aikin's medical practice; empirical observation forms part of Barbauld's poetic epistemology. Through observation of his actions – the 'tender sigh', 'pitying eye' and 'cordial looks' she examines the role of sentiment in his practices. She also subjects

[40] Coleman, "Barbauld and the Priestleys," 83-84.

her own epistemologically productive poetic labour to the same observational scrutiny. Amidst her apologies for neglecting to write to him, which carries conventional sentiments of a dutiful sister, she confesses that

> She half enjoy'd the anxious care,
> And almost triumph'd in the jealous fear,
> Those fond misgivings, which thy bosom prove
> As much alive to friendship as to love. (*SPP*, 56, lines 11-14)

While she is sorry for not writing to him, she gains secret pleasure that he has noticed her neglect, and is almost pleased to hear his complaints as they prove his love for her. She offers acute, intimate and honest observations of the progress of her feelings and, in doing so, admits to sentiments which do not wholly accord with those expected of her. This honest tracing of her feelings tempers her comments that her feminised, poetic work is lesser than her brother's masculine, medical work. Of the two forms of knowledge in which they work, she states 'Yet sure in different moulds they were not cast / Nor stampt with separate sentiments and taste' (*SPP*, 57, lines 54-55). Barbauld scrutinises her emotions using the same process of observation that Aikin uses to examine his patients. This brings with it a glimmer of contestation against the status quo of their respectively gendered epistemological pursuits. By observing both Aikin's and her own emotional movements, in the same way as she observes his physical ones, she reveals the representation of emotions to be an empirical observational process. She does not quite challenge the gendered hierarchy of different forms of intellectual labour, but draws them into question, and shows that empirical observation produces sentimental knowledge as it occurs in both poetic and medical practices.

At the close of the poem, Barbauld implicates the reader directly into the sentimental dimension of the poem's epistemology. She draws a final comparison between Aikin's work and her own poetic productions:

> For both our breasts at once the Muses fir'd,
> With equal love, but not alike inspir'd.
> To thee, the flute and sounding lyre decreed,
> Mine, the low murmurs of the tuneful reed;
> Yet when fair friendship shall unloose my tongue,
> My trembling voice shall ne'er refuse the song;
> Yet will I smile to see thy partial praise,
> With lovely error crown my worthless lays. (*SPP*, 58, lines 90-97)

In 'The Invitation', she invited the reader's poetic or textual response, by making space for discussing themes that she would not fulfil. Here, she invites the reader to judge whether Aikin's praise is in fact a 'lovely error', and her verse 'worthless'. She explicitly demands a readerly response – she invites the reader to cast their eyes back over her poem, to observe, assess and critique it. The response that she requests is an observational process with the subject of the observation being the poem itself. The effect is similar to that which Hofkosh identifies of the close of 'Washing-Day', whereby the image of the Montgolfier balloon draws attention to the poem's own materiality.[41] At the close of 'To Dr. Aikin', Barbauld also draws attention to the poem itself but, rather than characterising it as an 'artefact', as Hofkosh suggests, Barbauld more explicitly brings into focus its textual, poetic qualities, and positions the reader as critic of her work.[42] In 'Washing-Day', Barbauld draws attention to her own process of writing the poem; in 'To Dr. Aikin', Barbauld draws attention to the reader's interpretive process. She points them to where she wants them to settle their attention, back on the lines of the poem, to consider its artistic merit. Barbauld directs the reader's observation as though they are spectators, and positions the poem as the subject of their observation. The reader becomes part of the poem's epistemology of observation and interpretation.

[41] Hofkosh, "Materiality, Affect, Event," 103.
[42] Hofkosh, "Materiality, Affect, Event," 103.

III. ‘To Mrs. P[riestley]’: Minute Empirical Detail and Devotion

In ‘To Mrs. P[riestley]’, the theories of the relationship between empirical knowledge and poetry that Barbauld later explores in her introductory essay to Akenside’s *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744, 1794 edition) appear in early practical form. Transcendental experiences are contained within, and are accessed through, close, poetic, empirical observation. Barbauld’s poem responds to the encouragement by Thomas Pennant (1726-98) in his *British Zoology* (1768-70), published a year prior, for painters and poets to take up the subjects of British flora and fauna in their work.[43] Pennant suggests that ‘[d]escriptive poetry’ is ‘indebted to natural knowledge’.[44] It operates, he suggests by metaphor and allusion but also requires ‘descriptions from the face of nature’, which is ‘the only fund of great ideas’.[45] In her later introduction to Akenside’s *Pleasures of Imagination*, Barbauld articulates some of the challenges that such an invitation poses. Technical language, she suggests, is incompatible with poetic purpose, and she sees problems with presenting new subjects to the reader through poetry. When ‘Poetry came to be cultivated for its own sake’, when it was no longer the means of teaching agricultural and economical practical technique, it was ‘natural to esteem the Didactic […] as a species of inferior merit compared with those which are more peculiarly the work of the imagination’.[46] She states that ‘when Poetry was become an art, and the more obvious sources of description and adventure were in some measure exhausted, the Didactic was resorted to’ to afford novelty, but:

> Poetry cannot descend to teach the elements of any art or science, or confine itself to that regular arrangement and clear brevity which suits the communication of unknown truths […] [The Poet’s] office is rather to throw a lustre on such prominent parts of his system as are most susceptible of

[43] William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, headnote to “To Mrs. P[riestley], with some Drawings of Birds and Insects,” in *SPP*, 44.
[44] Thomas Pennant, preface to *British Zoology* (London, 1768), 1:vii.
[45] Pennant, preface to *British Zoology,* 1:vii.
[46] Anna Letitia Barbauld, “A Critical Essay on the Poem,” in Mark Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, 1794 ed. (London, 1794), 1-2.

> poetical ornament, and to kindle the enthusiasm of those feelings which the truths he is conversant with are fitted to inspire.[47]

In 'To Mrs. P[riestley]', Barbauld adapts the 'regular arrangement' and 'clear brevity' that characterises the empirical natural descriptions in publications such as Pennant's in a poetic exploration of her later critical theory. Barbauld chooses birds and insects as 'parts of [her] system most susceptible of poetical ornament' and, in the opening lines, sets out her aim to 'kindle' enthusiasm for the truths of nature she is going to reveal:

> Amanda bid; at her command again
> I seize the pencil, or resume the pen;
> No other call my willing hand requires,
> And friendship, better than a Muse inspires.
> Painting and poetry are near allied;
> The kindred arts two sister Muses guide;
> This charms the eye, that steals upon the ear;
> There sounds are tun'd; and colours blended here:
> This with a silent touch enchants our eyes,
> And bids a gayer brighter world arise:
> That, less allied to sense, with deeper art
> Can pierce the close recesses of the heart;
> By well set syllables, and potent sound,
> Can rouse, can chill the breast, can sooth, can wound;
> To life adds motion, and to beauty soul.
> And breathes a spirit through the finish'd whole:
> Each perfects each, in friendly union join'd;
> This gives Amanda's form, and that her mind.
> But humbler themes my artless hand requires,
> Nor higher than the feather'd tribe aspires. (*SPP*, 45, lines 1-20)

The poem is self-referential from the outset, and her friendship with Mary Priestley (Amanda) is the driving force behind Barbauld's poetic expression. The poem cites its recipient as the occasion for writing, and, at the same time, its discussion of visual and verbal forms of artistic expression alerts the reader to the poem itself as an artistic act. Barbauld's turn to 'humbler themes', as she begins to represent the 'feather'd tribe' of birds, comes with a characteristic flash of irony: she denies that the poem is about the construction of poetry and its emotive and intellectual possibilities but, through the poem's opening, she has already established it as an

[47] Barbauld, "Critical Essay," 2-3.

exploration of these topics. Her turn to represent the birds, as advised by Pennant, reads almost as a playful embarkation on a poetic challenge. In the context of the brief overview of the development of poetry that she supplies in her 1794 essay on Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination*, in which the didactic is no longer relevant, and in which 'obvious sources of description and adventure were in some measure exhausted', she seems to propose here another kind of poetry, that takes 'obvious', immediately observable 'sources of description', such as birds, and breathes life into them as potential subjects that might 'kindle' the reader's response.[48]

Barbauld also explores the relationship between painting and poetry, to throw light on the specific qualities of the latter. She draws on the traditional aesthetic notion of their 'kindred' relationship, but poetically represents them as interlinked. In the line '[t]his charms the eye, that steals upon the ear', 'this' refers to painting, and 'that' to poetry, but this order is reversed in the following line: 'There sounds are tun'd; and colours blended here'. There is a fleeting moment of ambiguity when the 'silent touch' of the next line seems to refer to poetry, before the image resolves into a painting that 'enchants our eyes'. In these twists and turns, Barbauld demands interpretive shifts and perceptual readjustments from the reader, creating an almost intermedial reading experience, from reading to observing a painting and back again. Painting and poetry may be kindred but poetry, unlike painting, is a 'deeper art', that can 'pierce the close recesses of the heart'. Barbauld demonstrates poetically how this works, in a heightened attention to the poetic devices of repetition, sibilance and internal rhyme: 'By well set syllables, and potent sound, / Can rouse, can chill the breast, can sooth, can wound'. She poetically enacts that poetry is not 'allied to sense' in a linear, inductive fashion, but rather shows that perceptual interpretations are subject to shifts and changes over the course of a poetic line, and that feeling is inspired through the sounds and patterns of words, as well as what they visually represent. Barbauld moves away from the notion that the process of reading is one of 'virtual witnessing',

[48] Barbauld, "Critical Essay," 2-3.

in which reading empirical representations summons an experience and knowledge of the object in the same way as observing it first-hand. Instead, knowledge and experience comes from the interpretation of visual and, particularly, poetic forms of expression. Barbauld's poetic movements posit a theoretical stance that deliberately undercuts a linear interpretive connection from visual observation to knowledge of an object.

Although Barbauld seems to disregard an inductive empirical epistemology, she enlists empirical observation and representation to her poetic cause. She uses minute representations of insects to hold in place expansive feelings of friendship and wonder at the natural world in moments of poetic particularity and precision. The 'Insect race' are

> Ordain'd to keep
> The lazy sabbath of a half-year's sleep.
> Entomb'd beneath the filmy web they lie,
> And wait the influence of a kinder sky;
> When vernal sun-beams pierce their dark retreat,
> And heaving tomb distends with vital heat;
> The full-form'd brood impatient of their cell
> Start from their trance, and burst their silken shell;
> Trembling a-while they stand, and scarcely dare
> To launch at once upon the untried air. (*SPP*, 47, lines 73-82)

Barbauld repurposes the empirical detail in Pennant's empirical natural representations in a poem that 'breathes a spirit through' ("To Mrs. P[riestley]," *SPP*, 45, line 16) its entomological subjects. The speaker is at such close proximity that they see the 'filmy web' of the cocoon in microscopic detail – at such close range that the object is almost distorted. But Barbauld's poem accesses 'close recesses' (*SPP*, 45, line 12) of insect life that Pennant's text does not. The embryonic insects, once they emerge, are incredibly delicate. Their tiny life-forms are contained behind a 'filmy web', they need to be touched carefully and gently by a 'kinder sky', and when they are born they stand 'trembling', in fear that even the air may cause them harm. Underpinning the delicate particularity of the cocoons, the surrounding imagery gives them a sense of energy, vitality and fullness: 'vernal sun-beams' enter, their eggs are 'heaving' with

'vital heat', and they emerge 'full-form'd'. Their minute forms are charged with, it seems, an epic and divine creative energy, as they 'burst their silken shell'. Jane Stabler suggests that this moment signals an unpredictable movement away from a familiar form of poetic meditation, and that the image of the cocoon 'bursting' represents an 'oscillation between precise facts and abstruse musings which signals the development of a new sort of verse'.[49] The relationship between the minute and the expansive in this moment does not appear so much an oscillation, but the suspended containment of the force of natural creation within the precise and delicate bounds of empirical description. Fine and intricate empirical description, like the web it so deftly and beautifully conjures, contains and holds within it the plosive, bursting and vital energy of divine creation. Barbauld reconfigures the empirical epistemology upon which Pennant's representations in *British Zoology* are predicated. Her close empirical observations are not evidence of a broader principle, as in an inductive empirical epistemology, but rather empirical details hold in place depths of devotional knowledge. This 'new sort of verse', to use Stabler's terms, or 'novelty', to use Barbauld's in her essay on Akenside, holds Godly creative spirit in the intricate, detailed, empirical representation of immediate, observable subjects.[50]

Yet, Barbauld recognises the limits of the transcendental experience of the natural world that can be gained through poetry, by comparison with an actual experiential encounter with nature. She implies that her poetry is an inadequate representation of the intricate detail of the natural world and, implicitly, of God's creation:

> What atom forms of insect life appear!
> And who can follow nature's pencil here?
> Their wings with azure, green, and purple gloss'd,
> Studded with colour'd eyes, with gems emboss'd
> Inlaid with pearl, and mark'd with various stains
> Of lively crimson thro' their dusky veins. (*SPP*, 48, lines 103-108)

[49] Jane Stabler, *Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 127.
[50] Stabler, *Burke to Byron*, 127; Barbauld, "Critical Essay," 2.

These lines pull in two directions: she does 'follow nature's pencil here', to the minute details of the insect world, but the way in which she does draws back from representing the beauty of nature in its own terms. In tracing the line and colours of the bodies of the insects, the reader becomes closely acquainted with their spectacular colours and forms, as a product of God's creation, but they are represented in man-made and commercial terms. They are embedded with pearls, their bodies are 'emboss'd' with gems, and they are decorated and embellished with man-made substances, 'gloss'd' and 'mark'd with various stains'. She draws attention to the process of representation, and highlights the necessarily artificial nature of any form of representation of the natural world, including her own poetry. Recognising the inadequacy of artistic, or artificial, representation, the creative energy that underlies the earlier empirical representation of the insects gains further significance. It equips the reader with a knowledge of how to interpret natural objects when they do encounter them – with reverence of the expansive energy behind their creation. Barbauld does not didactically teach what is there, but presents the reader a devotional interpretive framework for future encounters with nature.

IV. Challenging Empiricism: Deductive Epistemology and Devotional Knowledge

In 'The Invitation' and 'To Dr. Aikin', Barbauld establishes a poetic epistemology which depended on the absence of her epistolary recipient and on creating a textual space which empirical representation in her poem then serves to fill. In 'To Mrs. P[riestley]', she presented the devotional potential of poetic empirical representations. Barbauld's later poems include sets of riddles which turn this epistemological process on its head. The process of knowledge acquisition is a central characteristic of her riddle poems, and the absence of the central image, or key, is the core mechanism upon which they operate, and is what sets the epistemology of the poem in motion. 'Riddle I ("I often murmur")' (*ALB*, 189), for example, demonstrates the key characteristics of the epistemology of her riddles:

> I often murmur, yet I never weep;
> I always lie in bed, yet never sleep;
> My mouth is wide, and larger than my head,
> And much disgorges though it ne'er is fed;
> I have no legs or feet, yet swiftly run,
> And the more falls I get, move faster on. (*ALB*, 189, lines 1-5)

The formal qualities which determine the epistemology of the verse are the poem's self-announcement as a riddle, through the title, and the absence of the object that it describes, which in this case, is a river. The absence of the subject of the riddle maintains the reader's curiosity, which Barbauld manages, line by line, providing clues just sufficient to retain it, but withholding enough information to not give away the answer. The reader's curiosity – their thirst for the knowledge of what the riddle is about – is the driving force of the verse, as they move forward to the next line, to see if, by the next clue, they have accumulated sufficient information to ascertain the riddle's key. The riddle is not only about the object that it describes, but it is also about the quest for knowledge and its acquisition.

Barbauld's riddles are in the first person, from the perspective of the object that is the answer to the riddle. Taking away direct address changes the structure of knowledge production in the poem. Lucy Newlyn suggests that the riddle form 'presupposes a relationship of collaboration and complicity between author and reader'.[51] The reader-writer relationship in the riddle form seems to me less consensual, and more intensely interdependent, than Newlyn's terms 'collaboration' and 'complicity' imply. The reader's knowledge gain from the poem is at the behest of the information the writer gives; the reader has to entirely submit themselves to the writer's authority. But without the reader supplying the name of the absent object, the riddle becomes redundant. This represents a shift in Barbauld's poetic epistemology. In 'The Invitation', 'To Dr. Aikin' and 'To Mrs. P[riestley]', the reader was an active observer: a respondent, a critic, and a participant in a poetic encounter. In her riddles, the reader is a core

[51] Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 152.

component of the poem's epistemology: both the text and the reader depend on the other for the knowledge contained within the poem to come to fruition.

Unlike 'The Invitation', 'To Dr. Aikin' and 'To Mrs. P[riestley]', 'Riddle I' is deductive, rather than inductive, and uses figurative, rather than representational language. Barbauld does not provide her reader with empirical specifics and work outwards to broader truths. Rather, she offers broad ideas from which the reader may deduce the specific object, creating figurative associations between concepts and the object in the process. The information that Barbauld withholds in order to maintain the reader's curiosity, other than the name of the object itself, is the empirical, descriptive information – the appearance and circumstantial qualities – that would assist the reader in identifying the river. As Newlyn suggests, the medium of the riddle gave Barbauld 'the possibility of speaking from within the identity of another, while observing the other's characteristics from the outside'.[52] However, it does not appear, as Newlyn argues, to be a form that lies 'somewhere between dramatic monologue and objective description', but is one that relies, even turns, on the use of figurative language.[53] Barbauld's representation of the river in 'Riddle I' depends entirely on embedded metaphors: the river is pieced together through its 'bed', its 'mouth', its 'head', and the 'run' and 'falls' of its motion (*ALB*, 189, lines 2, 3, 5, 6). On first reading, the words appear to be literal, and the reader imagines a person's head and mouth, and a bed as a piece of furniture. It is when the reader realises that these words fit together with metaphorical reference to a river that the answer to the riddle falls into place. Barbauld's use of figurative expressions which lead the reader to the conclusion of 'river' both highlights the figurative nature of the embedded metaphors of 'bed', 'mouth', 'head' and 'run' when they apply to a river, and poses a figurative form of knowledge making that is an alternative to empirical observation and interpretation.

[52] Newlyn, *Anxiety of Reception*, 152.
[53] Newlyn, *The Anxiety of Reception*, 152.

This dovetails, in a playful way, with the epistemological processes that Barbauld employs in her educational literature for children. As work by Joanna Wharton and Emma Major has shown, a Lockean empiricism was central to Barbauld's pedagogical texts and practices. Wharton argues that through Lockean association, and 'literary-scientific education as a path to material Enlightenment', Barbauld leads the child reader's attention from the 'particular' towards 'the ultimate recognition of the God of nature'.[54] Associative connections between the particular and the devotional instil in children reverence of God's creation. According to Locke, a child learning about a new object requires the particular, either the object itself or a pictorial representation of it, '[f]or such visible Objects Children hear talked of in vain and without any satisfaction, whilst they have no Ideas of them; those ideas being not to be had from Sounds, but either the things themselves, or their Pictures'.[55] The riddle, by contrast, conveys the object without the word, nor a description of the object's appearance, and presents images that are metaphorically associated with the central object. This use of a deductive logic appears at odds with the Lockean associative pedagogy of her work for children. But Wharton shows how Barbauld creates a poetic, metaphorical knowledge amongst her young readers. The 'associative structure' of *Lessons* and *Hymns*, Wharton suggests, takes the form of a 'model of mental development' in which 'information is received through the senses' which add to an 'increasingly complex network' that consists of sensorial information and 'concomitant ideas'.[56] This network ultimately supplies the developing mind with a sufficient set of associative connections for the child to engage in 'metaphorical thinking'.[57] Wharton shows how the metaphor of, for example, the '[p]retty soft green carpet' – the grass – operates across *Lessons* and *Hymns* as a 'figurative devotional idea' that is 'ready to be assimilated into the child's spreading network of cognitive associations', as an image that gives the object 'an increased vitality' and makes 'communication more powerful'.[58] Barbauld's riddles, set apart from her

[54] Wharton, *Material Enlightenment*, 33. See also Major, *Madam Britannia*, 223.
[55] Locke, *Thoughts*, 212. See also Wharton, *Material Enlightenment*, 39-42.
[56] Wharton, *Material Enlightenment*, 45.
[57] Wharton, *Material Enlightenment*, 45.
[58] Wharton, *Material Enlightenment*, 46.

publications for children, seem to leap straight in at this point. They assume the reader has the sufficient experience to make the metaphorical connection between 'head', 'fall', 'bed' and the river and, by the reader supplying this knowledge, the associative connection between the river and its metaphorical, poetic representation is cemented. Like in *Lessons* and *Hymns*, the effect is that the associations garnered through the text might be carried over into the reader's experience, and future encounters with rivers.

The figurative representation of the riddle's key is significant in terms of how Barbauld manages the reader's emotional experience of the poem. The metaphorical element of the clues, and their visual dissimilarity from the object they represent puzzle the reader and maintain their curiosity in a way that an empirical description, giving away the riddle's key too early, would not. Figurative language establishes and maintains the reader's emotional involvement in the poem, and their intellectual engagement with it. We saw how in 'The Caterpillar', the tracing of the caterpillar's form, 'the silver line that streaks thy back' (*ALB*, 172, line 4), garnered the speaker's affection for the subject of the observation, and how in 'To Dr. Aikin' the reader gained insight into Aikin's character through Barbauld's emotional poetic representation of him. In her riddles, Barbauld reconfigures the sentimental relationship between the reader, as observing subject, and the key to the riddle, as observed object. Gaining knowledge of the intricacies of the object through figuration, the reader acquires a different kind of emotional understanding of that object, and Barbauld challenges her own uses of empirical observation and poetic representation in her other poems. Newlyn argues that Barbauld's poetry, more broadly, manifested 'a precarious balancing-act between sympathy and critique, in which she established herself as an amused but resisting reader of many aspects of contemporary culture', and that she employed 'what one might term a mixed hermeneutic, in which differentiation is complemented by sympathetic identification'.[59] This assessment might perfectly sum up the intricate observations and sympathetic connection of 'The Caterpillar', and the intimate but

[59] Newlyn, *Anxiety of Reception*, 169.

critical eye of the reader in 'To Dr. Aikin'. In 'Riddle I', Barbauld is an 'amused but resisting' reader of contemporary epistemological structures.[60] She uses figuration to subvert the linearity of a Baconian empirical epistemology based on observation, representation and interpretation. Barbauld's riddles exemplify how her poetry deploys mixed interpretive models and epistemological frameworks, that challenge, question, and turn inside out an empirical way of knowing, and her own poetic epistemology. Such subversion equips the reader of her poems with figurative and metaphorical associations which might transform their future experiences beyond that which is immediately observable, into experiences that might be transcendental, or even devotional.

In this chapter, I have shown how Barbauld establishes a poetic epistemology that instils in the reader affective and poetic knowledges on their encounter with the poem, and that might beneficially impact their future experiences. Her poetry addresses technological, medical, literary, and devotional forms of knowledge, the gendering of different types of knowledge, and the processes of their production. Barbauld draws on the same conventions that produce knowledge by inductive empirical means – circumstantial detail and precise description of observed natural phenomena – and epistolary characteristics, but she treats these forms of representation poetically, highlights the absent correspondent, and presents not only observations, but the processes that produce knowledge themselves. She uses epistolarity to form a way of knowing in her poetry, carving out an absence, and allowing poetic knowledge in to fill it. Her poems constitute experiences in themselves, and she carefully manages, and shifts, the reader's relationship with her poems, and implicates them directly in the poetic process. In 'The Invitation', Barbauld invites the reader's direct textual or intellectual response; in 'To Dr. Aikin', the reader turns critic; in 'To Mrs P[riestley]' Barbauld takes the reader through an experience of how devotional knowledge might be found through poetry; in her riddles the reader has an epistemological role in fulfilling the purpose of the poem. Her poetry equips the

[60] Newlyn, *Anxiety of Reception*, 169.

reader with a set of associations and a framework that enable their future encounters with the intricacies of nature to be devotional ones, and she shows how poetic knowledge can lead to affective, emotional and devotional truths. The reader gains not only an understanding of the events and circumstances described within her poems, but of how poetry itself works, how it can enhance devotion and an appreciation of the creation. But Barbauld also, having established a poetic epistemology, and exposing its workings then, elsewhere, dismantles it. Barbauld's poetry imparts an understanding of observational and poetic knowledge, of poetry as an experience, and the devotional impact that it can have, but then folds in alternative epistemological frameworks in ways that might prompt shifts in the reader's way of knowing.

Chapter Five

Joanna Baillie: Literary Experimentation, Communication and Materiality

Joanna Baillie used her poetry and plays as forms of literary experiment. She produced a theatrical morality, in which dramatic writing could enliven the reader or viewer's capacity for a sympathetic understanding, or emotional connection, between themselves and others. Like Anna Letitia Barbauld, Baillie establishes an epistemology in her literary writing; that is to say that Baillie's poetry and plays facilitate the reader or audience's own production of moral knowledge, rather than constituting didactic texts that aimed to instil particular behavioural and social morals. Barbauld utilised one particular moment of the empirical method – intricate empirical observation – in combination with epistolarity, to create her poetic epistemology. Baillie's use of the relationship between empiricism, epistolarity and literary productivity was more troubled. Baillie interpreted the dual characteristic of letters as simultaneously communicative and material as problematic: materiality was a not a vehicle of communication, but a hindrance to the instantaneous and accurate transmission of emotion to which her writing aspired. Baillie interrogated the epistolary concept of the relationship between materiality and emotional communication in series of literary experiments, in which she deployed epistolary and dramatic formal devices in pursuit of a moral theatrical epistemology. Catherine Burroughs demonstrates how Baillie's treatment of writing and embodiment in dramatic works were central to her experimental theatrical project of reconfiguring closet drama, and the site of the closet, as a site of women's cultural, intellectual and moral productivity.[1] Building on these findings, I examine how embodiment and materiality vexed emotional communication, but also posed unique possibilities in theatrical writing. The stakes of Baillie's literary experimentation were high: moral philosophers such as Henry Home, Lord Kames, posited the theatre as the form of cultural production most suited to the teaching of morals, but emotional, sympathetic

[1] Catherine Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

communication amongst an audience could have more subversive effects. In this chapter, I examine Baillie's early poems and her *Plays on the Passions* (1798), as forms of literary experiment. Her *Plays* comprised an ambitious and long-term series that explored the thirteen principal passions, with a comedy and a tragedy on each. Baillie outlined her moral intentions for the *Plays* in a comprehensive theoretical 'Introductory Discourse'. For Baillie, theatrical representation can enhance the development of our 'sympathetick curiosity' – our natural propensity for observing the movements of the passions in others – which, when developed and deployed properly, can equip us with a greater and more compassionate knowledge of mankind.[2] She wrote and published her *Poems* (1790) and conceived of the idea for her *Plays* written she was living with her brother, Matthew Baillie, at Great Windmill Street, London, between 1784 and 1791.[3] In her writing, she draws on the empirical, experimental practices of her brother, and her uncles – leading physicians, collectors, and surgeons – in literary ways to understand, represent, and instil the capacity for emotional communication in a way that diminished or reconfigured the hindering effects of textual materiality.

For Baillie, the material characteristics of the letter form hindered its communicative function. Unfortunately, the letters written while she was writing her early *Poems* and while she conceived and developed her ideas for the *Plays on the Passions* were burned, but her frustration at the embodied act of writing, at the inconvenience of paper of the wrong size, and of the particularities of postal exchange, are consistent features of her later correspondence. Baillie was, as Elizabeth Eger has shown of correspondents surrounding and including Elizabeth Montagu, aware of the 'materiality of the letter as a form', that could 'either frustrate or console', and was characterised by a 'potential fragility'.[4] Baillie's letters frequently contain

[2] Joanna Baillie, "Introductory Discourse," in Joanna Baillie, *Plays on the Passions*, ed. Peter Duthie (Peterborough, ON: Broadview), 69. All further references to the 'Introductory Discourse' are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.
[3] Judith Bailey Slagle, "Evolution of a Writer: Joanna Baillie's Life in Letters," in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist*, ed. Thomas C. Crochunis (London: Routledge, 2004), 11-12.
[4] Elizabeth Eger, "Paper Trails," 126.

notes that apologise for the incorrect folding of paper, or writing in the wrong place. Writing to her friend Mary Berry in (1763-1852), she gives up on a letter that 'will not fold prettily all that I can do', and ends up posting it with a cover; she leaves a postscript to William Beattie (1793-1875) that reads '[p]ray forgive my awkwardness in turning the pages of my paper wrong'; and, in a letter to Anne Millar she implores that her correspondent does not judge her for 'sending you two half sheets of paper', claiming, 'I had a very good reason for so doing tho' I have no room to explain'.[5] She also expresses impatience with the physical act of writing either letters or creative works. She comments on a letter to Walter Scott (1771-1832) that 'for me this is a very long letter', and on another occasion writing seems a chore:

> My pen is not like yours: the very mechanical part of writing, with this vile-looking, slovenly hand of mine, goes as slowly on with me as if it were painting out a message card for a hand-screen, so that when I write any thing that requires to have a fair copy taken from it afterwards, I am a dreary while about it.[6]

Writing is 'mechanical', it goes 'slowly', inhibiting and dragging on the message that she is trying to communicate. Rather than seeing the material qualities of the letters as a charming idiosyncrasy of this particular form of expression, as do letter writers such as Montagu, for Baillie the materiality of the letter a hindrance to the letter's primary function as a mode of communication.

In another letter to Scott, Baillie opens with a lengthy explanation of why she has taken so long to reply in a manner that goes beyond commonplace apologies for a tardy delay:

> My dear Sir,

[5] Baillie to Berry, Hampstead, 17 August [1806], in *The Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. Judith Bailey Slagle (London: Associated University Press, 1999), 1:163; Baillie to Beattie, Hampstead, 11 February [1835/6], in *Collected Letters*, 2:1012; Baillie to Millar, Hampstead, 8 August 1801, in *Collected Letters*, 2:1104.
[6] Baillie to Walter Scott, 22 October 1808, in *Collected Letters*, 1:242; Baillie to Scott, Hampstead, 20 March [1810], in *Collected Letters*, 1:257-58.

> I have been wandering to & fro upon the face of the earth for these 3 months past, and did not receive either of your friendly & very kind letters one dated the 15th of August the other the 13th of Oct[r], till last night when I found them both lying on my table on my return to Hampstead. On going from home, my Sister & I desired the servants to forward to us to Devonshire only the general post letters, and as your first had some how or other come by the 3d post, it was treated with no respect, but allowed to lie amongst the other London letters of no consequence, for which I am very sorry, and truly crave your pardon.[7]

Baillie's account highlights the contrast between the mundanity of the reason for the delay in the letters, and the sincere and productive conversations that the letters contain, as though the material dimension of the letters is concealing and hindering the emergence of what is contained within them. But the moment that she describes is one of vivid creativity. The image of her 'wandering' and broadly traversing the 'face of the earth' rapidly closes in to the daily paraphernalia of the 'general post letters', the '3d post' and the 'London letters of no consequence'. The sentiment that she communicates to Scott also turns on this transition, as she is brought from her ignorant freedom on the face of the earth to awareness that she has been missing Scott's letters. This turn, in the context of their epistolary exchange, is an expression of friendship, as she flatters with her frustration at having missed communications from him. For Baillie, the materiality of the letter, and processes of writing, sending and receiving, are cumbersome, and impede rather than enable its primary communicative function. But this moment of letter writing demonstrates the way that Baillie transforms the ungainly material qualities of the letter into an opportunity for a sentiment that transcends the material page, and points to how she approaches the fraught, but fertile, relationship between materiality and communication elsewhere in her writing.

Baillie's exploration of the relationship between communication – specifically, emotional communication – and materiality in her *Poems* and *Plays* took the form of literary formal experimentation. In *Poems*, as I show below, she drew on empirical, inductive forms of

[7] Baillie to Scott, Hampstead, 21 October 1809, in *Collected Letters*, 1:245.

representation, and listed the emotions of her poetic speakers in a way that resembles the tabulation and categorisation of Baconian empiricism, as we saw in the introduction. Karen Dwyer has identified the ways in which Baillie's *Plays on the Passions* drew on, and built on, the work of her uncles, the anatomist and physician William Hunter, and his brother, the surgeon John Hunter. Baillie's approach to the passions, Dwyer argues, 'is at once clinical, involved in anatomising the mind and body, and also natural-historical […] involved in discovering the broader patterns if not invariable laws descriptive of human nature.[8] Dwyer examines the way in which Baillie draws on the physiological approach to the body championed by John Hunter, his collection methodology, and the spectacle of dissection in William Hunter's lectures, in order to put on display an anatomised, categorised account of the development of pathological passions in each of her plays.[9] Burroughs's argument that Baillie's work comprised closet drama, which took account of the closet as 'a small experimental theatre in which dramas and gendered identities were conceived and rehearsed', opens an alternative avenue for understanding Baillie's experimental practices.[10] Burroughs's study demonstrates that it is not necessarily the passions that were the subject of Baillie's experimentation, as Dwyer suggests, but the formal and literary qualities of theatrical writing itself. This approach invites deeper consideration of the empirical and experimental methods of her uncle John Hunter, with whom she had a close relationship and visited frequently during her time living in London.[11] John Hunter's contribution to modern-day science is considered to be his introduction of empirical and experimental method into surgical study. His biographer and editor of his collected works foregrounds his experimental, empirical method, which was not 'to unravel the mysteries of nature by taking up some principle *à priori*' but 'he followed, in the strictest manner, the

[8] Karen Dwyer, "Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions* and the Spectacle of Medical Science," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 29 (2000): 23.
[9] Dwyer, "Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions*," 26, 28-29, 34.
[10] Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, 11.
[11] Judith Bailey Slagle, "John Hunter and Joanna Baillie: Veterinary Science, Animal Rights, and the Pathology of Cruelty," *European Romantic Review* 22, no. 5 (October 2011): 627-28.

inductive method laid down by the great father of modern philosophy'.[12] Hunter followed a comprehensive and systematic study of observation, recording and categorisation, from nature, as described in Bacon's *New Organon* (1620). I do not argue here for influence, as in her writing Baillie drew on and interrogated a range of the epistemological practices that surrounded her. But, I do place emphasis on Baillie's experimentation as Baconian and empirical, rather than clinical, anatomical, or natural historical, to draw forth her formal and literary innovations and the way she negotiated the relationship between emotional communication and materiality in her literary exploration of the passions and in the creation of her moral theatrical epistemology.

Baillie's moral theatrical epistemology aimed to cultivate the natural sympathetic curiosity of her readers and viewers into moral behaviour. Sympathetic curiosity, a propensity to observe the emotions of others, when trained and practiced proficiently, has the potential to be 'our best and most powerful instructor': 'From it we are taught the properties and decencies of ordinary life, and are prepared for distressing and difficult situations' (74). It is, she argues, 'in examining others we know ourselves', and when this disposition is exercised, we become 'more just, more merciful, more compassionate' (74). The most suitable environment in which to develop sympathetic curiosity, Baillie goes on to show, is through the theatre. Drama, as opposed to historical or poetic writing, best allows for the development of sympathetic curiosity:

> The impressions made by [drama] are communicated, at the same instant of time, to a greater number of individuals, than those made by any other species of writing; and they are strengthened in every spectator, by observing their effects upon those who surround him […] The theatre is a school in which much good or evil may be learned. (104)

[12] Drewry Ottley, "The Life of John Hunter, F.R.S," in *The Works of John Hunter, F. R. S*, ed. James F. Palmer (London, 1835), 1:31-32. See also Jane Oppenheimer, "John and William Hunter and Some Contemporaries," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 23 (1949): 35.

Baillie's theatre theory draws on both moral philosophy, and discourses of sympathy. Baillie's uncle John Hunter explains the commonplace conceptualisation of sympathy as both a social and physiological phenomenon, which is 'applied to the mind' and also, 'by medical men […] applied to the body':

> In the mind its reference is external: it depends upon the state of others, and one of its chief uses is to excite an active interest in favour of the distressed, the mind of the spectators taking on nearly the same action with that of the sufferers, and disposing them to give relief or consolation; it is therefore one of the first of the social feelings, and by many useful operations inclines mankind to union.[13]

Hunter's explanation suggests that it is sympathetic connection between the distressed individual and the spectator that propels the observer to moral action. Sympathy 'excites' an interest in the distressed and galvanises observation to active compassion. This use of sympathy, and the value of theatre to incite such sympathy, was common with moral philosophies such as Kames's. Kames identifies a feeling that he calls 'the *sympathetic emotion of virtue*', in which, when we observe a virtuous action, our propensity to then perform such actions ourselves is enlivened.[14] Fiction has the power to inspire such feelings, but theatrical representation is the most powerful: 'words independent of action have the same power in a less degree […] a good tragedy will extort tears in private, though not so forcibly as upon the stage'.[15] The 'Introductory Discourse' is concerned with the cultivation of sympathetic curiosity through live theatre but discusses techniques that might also transcend the material bounds of the printed page in read, rather than performed, dramatic works.

For the direct communication of emotions required to achieve such sympathetic communication, dramatic writing poses both difficulties and possibilities. Mary Fairclough has

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[13] John Hunter, "A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation, and Gunshot Wounds," in *The Works of John Hunter*, 3:6.
[14] Kames, *Elements*, 1:50-51.
[15] Kames, *Elements*, 1:66, 71.

demonstrated that the rhetoric of sympathy was deployed in different ways according to the type of text in which it appeared; in the case of the early-nineteenth-century periodical press, the manifestation of sympathy varied according to the publication and audience it was appealing to, not by the author's political philosophy or persuasion.[16] This implies a relationship between the operation of sympathy and the textual form in which it appears: a relationship that Baillie seemed attentive to. In her 'Introductory Discourse', Baillie comments that for poets or novelists to move their readers, the characters' 'every circumstance' can be 'carefully described', 'how they looked, how they moved, how they sighed […] how the very light and shadow fell upon them' (82). Baillie assesses the literary capacity for description pertinent to poetry and prose as both advantageous for the cultivation of a sympathetic connection, but also somehow limiting. '[W]ith all this assistance', she declares, it 'must be very unnatural indeed if we refuse to sympathize with them. But the characters of the drama must speak directly for themselves […] He who made us hath placed within our breast a judge that judges instantaneously of every thing they say' (82). While the description of poetry and prose facilitates a sympathetic communication between reader and character with greater ease, Baillie hints that it might also clutter an instantaneous connection and moral judgement. Her discussion of the device of soliloquy reinforces this suggestion:

> Soliloquy, or those overflowings of the perturbed soul, in which it unburthens itself of those thoughts which it cannot communicate to others, and which in certain situations is the only mode a Dramatist can employ to open to us the mind he would display, must necessarily be often, and to considerable length, introduced. (82)

Baillie's approach to soliloquy as the unburdening 'of thoughts which it cannot communicate to others' supports Burroughs's analysis of Baillie's 'interest in representing the traditionally unseen and unheard by peering into the closet'.[17] For Baillie, soliloquy, and the direct speech

[16] Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 125.
[17] Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, 89.

entailed in theatrical representation, offer formal devices that enable the playwright to connect with a wide, numerous public audience, but also in a way that is instantaneous and provocative of a sympathetic connection and subsequent action. There is, I suggest, an epistolary dimension to Baillie's approach to sympathetic connection, and her recognition of the limitations and potential of formal literary devices for establishing her moral theatrical epistemology. Burroughs demonstrates Baillie's desire to have her *Plays* performed on public stages, and her attentiveness to theatre mechanics, such as the size of the stage, less exaggerated acting style and lighting design, in order to best represent the progress of the emotions and psychological state of her characters.[18] I suggest that in addition, given that her early *Plays* were published first in print rather than performance, Baillie had a heightened attention to the way that the material and textual form, and the epistolary relationship between materiality and targeted communication, could facilitate or hinder the development of sympathetic curiosity.

I. Baconian Induction and Literary Experimentation in *Poems* (1790)

In her 1790 collection, *Poems*, Baillie experiments with a poetic representation of the passions, and trials formal qualities to establish various connections between character, reader, and author, and between the poems themselves, that later emerge in more comprehensive theatrical form in her 'Introductory Discourse' and *Plays*. The collection itself is structured by groups of interconnected poems that comprise the complete whole. It opens with two parallel poems describing provincial life on 'A Winter Day' and 'A Summer Day'.[19] The collection later offers three consecutive poems of comparable lengths that describe different emotional states, and that invite comparison between them: 'A Reverie' (56-61), 'A Disappointment' (62-66), and 'A Lamentation' (67-72). Towards the close of the collection there are another series of poems that each make 'An Address to the Night', from the perspectives of 'A Fearful Mind' (122-24), 'A

[18] Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, 87.
[19] Joanna Baillie, *Poems: 1790* (London: Woodstock Books, 1994), 1-16, 17-33. All further references to Baillie's poems are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

Discontented Mind' (125-28), 'A Sorrowful Mind' (129-132) and 'A Joyful Mind' (133-38). That Baillie had in mind such an experimental comparison between poems within these sets is supported in the explicitly investigative nature of one such set of poems that represents the plight of a lover rejected. A series of four poems each present a 'Lover's Farewell to his Mistress'. The lover depicted in each is of a different disposition – 'Melancholy', 'Cheerful Tempered', 'Proud' and 'Sound-Hearted' – and Baillie presents the emotional state of each as they respond to romantic rejection. Baillie enlists poetic devices as a literary technology to investigate the workings of each individual, in a way that foreshadows the concept of her *Plays*, but the poems are more specifically attuned to the procedures of Baconian empirical induction and representation. Each of the four poems follows the same structural arc: each lover bids farewell, anticipates his upcoming voyage, reflects on his sadness, and then bids his former lover another final farewell. Within this overall structure there are numerous small instances which are common across each poem, and to which each lover responds differently. Towards the opening of each poem, each implores his mistress not to frown. The melancholy lover states:

> Then do not hang thy low'ring brow,
> But let me bless thee ere I go. (82, lines 5-6)

The cheerful lover asks:

> Ne'er send me from thee with a frown;
> But let me kindly take thy hand; (86, lines 8-9)

And, from the proud lover:

> Upon thy brow no longer wear
> That sombre look of cold disdain. (90, lines 2-3).

The cheerful and proud lovers reflect on the memories they each have with their mistress (87, lines 13-16; 90-91, lines 9-16). The melancholy lover, appropriately, does not think back on his

time with her, but focusses on his own depression instead, as 'Dark o'er my spirit hangs the gloom, / and thy disdain has fix'd my doom' (82-82, lines 13-14).[20] The melancholy, cheerful and proud lover, each according to his temperament, reflects on the experience that they will have on foreign shores and the contact they will have with the people there: they will be buried by them, will keep an open door to them, and will reject them respectively (83, lines 22-26; 87, lines 21-24; 91, lines 27-30).[21] As these examples show, the poems are intricately constructed, with the same sentiment expressed through different temperaments at around the same lines in each poem. They invite comparisons, and visually lend themselves to easily shift between each one, to find the parallel moments. The formulaic structure, enabling the reader to observe cross-comparisons operates almost as tabulation, as in the Baconian inductive method.

Furthermore, Baillie turns her reader's attention to this poetic empirical method by an endnote:

> It may be objected that all these lovers are equally sad, though one is a cheerful, the other a melancholy lover. It is true they are all equally sad, for they are all equally in love, and in despair, when it is impossible for them to be otherwise; but if I have pictured their farewell complaints in such a way as to give you an idea that one lover is naturally of a melancholy, one of a cheerful, and one of a proud temper, I have done all that is intended.[22]

This authorial intervention by Baillie alerts the reader to her poetic method and encourages them to turn back to the poems, considering them as the productions of a particular poetic method, rather than an immersive fictional or sentimental experience. Although Barbauld's poetry had a self-referential element, the means and effects of Baillie's are very different; rather than inspiring a devotional or sentimental connection, Baillie exposes the workings of her own, Baconian, empirical method. In his editorial note to this volume, Jonathan Wordsworth appears irked by the authorial presence in the collection, which is signalled by the long instructive title that advises that these poems are designed to '*point out, in some instances, the different*

[20] Baillie, *Poems*, 83.
[21] Baillie, *Poems*, 83, 87, and 91.
[22] Baillie, *Poems*, 95-96.

influence which the same circumstances produce on different characters'. Wordsworth suggests that as readers we are 'being buttonholed – told how to read and what to look for'.[23] Dorothy McMillan's reading of the poems draws out their novelty that Wordsworth misses; she suggests that 'Baillie positions herself on the title page of her work' so that the reader 'enters the book with a teacher to clarify its experimental method'.[24] Baillie's stepping into the collection through the title and the endnote lifts the reader from the poetic experience, and makes them situate their reading in their real-life context, and alerts the reader to the poems' methods. While Barbauld's poems pointed to themselves as poems, and invited the reader to act as a participant in some way Baillie directly instructs the reader as to their purpose and interpretation.

Given the Baconian near-tabulation of the poems, Baillie's use of an intervening authorial note resonates with Dahlia Porter's analysis of 'composite forms' in Romantic-era writing. As discussed in the introduction, Porter argues that while mixed forms were commonplace throughout the era, by the end of the century, in response to an emergent focus on synthesis in the production of knowledge, and the strain that this put on the problem of induction, formal composites 'began to self-consciously resist their status as composites, and authors routinely called attention to mixture while also manifesting discomfort with it'.[25] In particular, Baillie's note brings to mind the use of explanatory footnotes in Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of Plants* (1789), published just one year prior to Baillie's poems. Porter argues of these that Darwin's composite text 'both materialised compositional process' in its inductive textual method, 'and exposed its gaps and fissures'.[26] Baillie's authorial guidance does not, however, have the same sense of rupture or 'fissure' that Porter assesses in Darwin's work, but the author positioning in

[23] Jonathan Wordsworth, introduction to Baillie, *Poems*, np.
[24] Dorothy McMillan, "'Dr' Baillie," in *1798: The Year of the Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Richard Cronin (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 74.
[25] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 19.
[26] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 106.

an endnote and the title minimises a sense of intrusion, and appears more as forming a supportive connection or friendly reaching out, rather than a manifestation of anxiety or fissure.

The epistolary address of the poems, the farewell 'to his mistress' rather than bridging the connection between sender and recipient, enhances their distance, and poem anticipates how this distance will become even more pronounced when the speaker goes away to sea. Baillie uses direct address in these poems as a device to expose the inner workings of the passions of the lovers of different dispositions. In a similar way to Barbauld, the address occasions the poetic production. In a set of poems about separation, however, epistolarity serves to enhance the distance between the speaker and addressee. The titles announce the poems as a direct address, 'A Melancholy Lover's Farewell to his Mistress'. This leans towards epistolarity but does not embody it completely. The titles of Barbauld's poems, for example, announced their epistolarity: 'To Dr. Aikin on his Complaining that she Neglected him, October 20th 1768', and 'To Mrs. P[riestley], with some Drawings of Birds and Insects'. These poems, however, are titular address, but do not make that address openly; the address 'to his Mistress' is overwhelmed and overshadowed by the 'Melancholy Lover's Farewell'. The effect is to exclude the reader from the epistolary exchange. Sarah Scott's epistolary fiction, and Barbauld's poems that opened with direct address allow the reader a moment of believing that the address is to them, engaging them as participants in their fiction and poetic epistemology respectively. The title 'A Melancholy Lover's Farewell' closes inwards, into the content of the poem, rather than opening outwards with a 'to' as a readerly invitation. The sense of closing off and exclusion hints towards the comments that Baillie will later make to Walter Scott about his letter buried under the material piles of others; the letter folds in its own contents. The effect of this is to position the reader as an observer, rather than a participant in the poem's contents: an effect that is compounded by the authorial intervention of the endnote. But Baillie's positioning of the reader as an observer to the four separate poems enacts an early manifestation of the positionality that she later expounds in her 'Introductory Discourse'. Closing the reader off from

a more immersive sentimental engagement, using an inward-looking epistolarity, and encouraging them to bring the poems into comparison, Baillie, as she later states in the 'Introductory Discourse', 'lays open before them, in a more enlarged and connected view, than their individual observations are capable of supplying, the varieties of the human mind' (76).

Using epistolarity as a mechanism that closes the reader to a sentimental connection with poems does not, however, achieve Baillie's later aim of forming connections between individuals. They encourage the reader to learn variety, but not connectivity. The poem in the collection that follows the Lovers poems is, I suggest, an alternative exploration of emotional connection, that dispenses with the inhibiting formal qualities of epistolarity, and seeks alternative ways to establish a connection between people. 'The Storm-Beat Maid' is again concerned with romantic love, and follows the journey of a young woman through a storm to her former lover's abode on the morning of his wedding day to another. The poem does seem to, as Jonathan Wordsworth comments, prefigure the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Jonathan Wordsworth suggests that 'Baillie has written in 1790 what is by any standards a lyrical ballad […] everything in the *Storm-beat maid* depends on states of mind'.[27] But considering this poem in a moral, empirical and epistolary context reveals Baillie's attempts to dismantle material barriers to the representation of the movements of the passions, and to facilitate emotional connection between individuals. The maid in the poem is barely corporeal, the association between her state of passion as she traverses the storm towards her loved one, and the rugged natural world around her has the effect of rendering her almost transparent:

> All shrouded in the winter snow,
> The maiden held her way;
> Nor chilly winds that roughly blow,
> Nor dark night could her stay.
> […]
> No watch-light from the distant spire,
> To cheer the gloom so deep,
> Nor twinkling star, nor cottage fire

[27] Wordsworth, introduction to Baillie, *Poems*, np.

Did thro' the darkness peep. (97-98, lines 1-4, 13-16)

The representation of absence contrasts dramatically with the comparatively material absence and empirical observation of the effects of absence on the passions of the previous poems. The maiden is barely present in these lines, the state of her passions entirely mirrored by the storm and darkness of the natural environment that she becomes the reflective illusion of the landscape, rather than the landscape of her. The 'chilly winds' and darkness of the night seem to pass straight through her, she is 'Like ghost that thro' the gloom to stray' (98, line 19). The representation of the lights, although offered in the negative, has the effect of conjuring the image of the light, which seems to shine through her, before denying her it and subjecting her ethereal form to the gloom and darkness.

The poem's close, however, turns the poem from being an expression of the identification between the mind and the natural world in a way that seems to transcend material matter, to one of a connection between people. On seeing her arrive at the wedding, her former lover recognises he has been led astray from her, and promises to stay with her and care for her in terms that continue the immateriality that has characterised her journey to him:

"Night shall not hang cold o'er thy head,
"And I securely lie;
"Nor drizly clouds upon thee shed
"And I covert dry.

"I'll share the cold blast on the heath,
"I'll share thy wants and pain:
"Nor friend nor for, nor life nor death,
"Shall ever make us twain." (107, lines 157-64)

In connecting to her, he commits to a similar denial of material form; he is united with her in her formal definition by the climate and the landscape. The cold blast, rain and pain cuts through him in a determined sympathy for her. He seems to also absolve from material form and merge into the forces of nature, where he is able to connect with her. The poem, in a dramatic

rejection of material form, leads the maid, and the reader, through both the maid's intense connection to her varied landscape surroundings, and the connection with another person. In 'The Storm-Beat Maid', Baillie experiments in contrast with the Lover poems, for an alternative form of connectivity, that seems to transcend the material. In her plays, Baillie utilises the image of the letter to further experiment with forging various connections both between individuals, and between the reader or viewer, and the author.

II. *Count Basil*: Letters, Materiality and Soliloquy

In *Count Basil*, Baillie explores the creative potential of the letter form to reconfigure connections between characters, the audience and an authorial presence. *Count Basil* is a tragedy focussed on love; it traces the development of love of the protagonist, Basil, an esteemed general in the service of Charles V (1500-1558), for the daughter of the Duke of Mantua, Victoria, around the events of the Battle of Pavia, a decisive battle between the troops of Charles V, and the King of France, Francis I (1494-1547). Unbeknownst to Victoria and Basil, Victoria is being used as a pawn in a political plot by her ambitious father, who is colluding with the enemy. She distracts and ensnares Basil who, at the climactic moment of the play, does not accompany his troops into battle at Pavia. They are successful, but at great loss of life and, ashamed at his behaviour, he commits suicide. Baillie uses letters in a comedic moment to materially manifest the concerns about obsessive love that play out in the plot of the drama. Basil's friend, Count Rosinberg attends a masquerade dressed as a lovesick poet, '*fantastically dressed*', the stage directions suggest, '*with a willow upon his head, and scraps of sonnets, and torn letters fluttering round his neck*'.[28] He claims to be 'a right true servant of the fair' and points out that his 'tear-blotted sonnets would denote, / A poor abandon'd lover out of place'.[29] He then proceeds to jest with the women at the party, offering his service to sigh deeply, carve

[28] Joanna Baillie, *Count Basil: A Tragedy*, in Baillie, *Plays on the Passions*, 162.
[29] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 162.

their names on trees, scale the walls of convents, and even to 'defend / Against each hideous fly, whose dreadful buz-' before he is cut off.[30] Through the comedy and light-heartedness of this moment, Baillie offers serious commentary on both love as a passion and on epistolary forms of communication. Rosinberg's costume of a lovesick poet mocks a man who has been consumed by love, and is unable to perform any useful service or employ any talents of any value – exactly the fate that will befall Basil at the close of the play. The torn letters of Rosinberg's costume are the prop of the hapless lover, and become shorthand for inexperienced, empty, and insipid emotional expression of a lovesick poet. But they also suggest the inadequacy of letters for the representation of serious passion; they are presented as something too material, too likely to break, tear or go missing, that flutter about out of reach, and that are suitable only for expressing love that is superficial, albeit consuming.

We saw in Baillie's letters how she reconfigured the tension between the mundanity of letters and their communicative function and content into a productive expression of friendship. In *Count Basil*, Baillie also puts this quality to productive use: she utilises the textual qualities of epistolary writing, harnessing its potential to incorporate emotional expression into the everyday and the mundane. In line with this, in her early characterisation of Basil, his ability to transcend the everyday and the mundane is one of his most admirable qualities. Rosinberg speaks to Frederick, one of Basil's officers, praising Basil's talents, acknowledging that his own talents are more 'for the daily intercourse of life, / And his for higher things'.[31] Beyond bravery, enthusiasm, and being undaunted in battle, Basil is 'form'd for great occasions' and Frederick, by comparison, only 'for small'.[32] Basil is presented as having a quality which transcends the mundane and the everyday and, through him, Baillie presents a man 'in the closet as well as the field', something 'novel' and 'marvellous', according to the aims she set out in the

[30] Baillie, *Count Basil,* 162-163.
[31] Baillie, *Count Basil,* 123.
[32] Baillie, *Count Basil,* 124.

'Introductory Discourse'.[33] Basil's first monologue, in which he expresses his love for Victoria, therefore reads as a celebration of the great passions that can be born from, and yet transcend, the material moment of their initial circumstances:

> "Farewell, my lord," – O! what delightful sweetness
> The musick of that voice dwells on the ear!
> "Farewell, me lord!" – Ay, and then look'd she so –
> The slightest glance of her bewitching eye,
> Those dark blue eyes, command the inmost soul.
> Well, there is yet one day of life before me,
> And whatso'er betides I will enjoy it.
> Tho' but a partial sunshine in my lot
> I will converse with her, gaze on her still,
> If all behind were pain and misery.
> Pain! Were it not the easing of all pain,
> E'en in the dismal tomb of after years,
> Such dear rememb'rance on the mind to wear?
> Like silv'ry moon-beams on the 'nighted deep,
> When heav'n's blest sun is gone![34]

Basil's first words in the play are in discussion with Rosinberg, who describes the whiteness of Victoria's hand. Although Basil did not see it, it is the object of her hand that stirs his passion and inspires him to speak for the first time, '*in a quick voice*'.[35] Similarly, in his monologue, Basil's response is empirical, and his emotions are born from what he sees, and what he hears in her musical voice and the glancing of her eye. His deep passion then grows slowly over the course of the following lines; he first considers the following day, their last remaining day in Mantua and therefore the last in her company; he reflects on the pain that will lie beneath with his impending parting; and, finally, his reflections expand in scope and scale to consider how for the remainder of his life, the memory of her will ease his pain like a glimmer of moonbeams. The imagery, as well as the scale of his thoughts, is also expansive, moving, not unusually, from the intimate, particular objects of her eyes, to the 'dismal tomb' of the rest of his life, 'the silv'ry moon-beams' and 'heav'n's blest sun'. What is more unusual, however, is the interplay

[33] Baillie, "Introductory Discourse," 78-79.
[34] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 137.
[35] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 125.

between the particular and the more expansive imagery, in the gradual growth over the course of the lines, and in the context of Basil's increasing passion. With Barbauld, we saw how expansive, transcendental and devotional notions were contained within the delicate particularity of the natural objects of her observation. Here, the order of his response is inductive – beginning with the particular of Victoria's eyes and voice, and leading to the broader concepts of pain, life, memory and relief, expressed in astronomical imagery. The movement from the particular to the greater, grander sense of his emotions is in keeping with Basil's character as has been presented thus far – his talents for 'higher things' and 'great occasions'.

The monologue establishes a harmonious balance between Basil's love and the empirical, immediate circumstances and details which give rise to it, in a manner reminiscent of Barbauld's balancing of minute particular detail and transcendental, devotional emotion, as we saw in the previous chapter. But, even with the communicative opportunities that the epistolarity of the monologue affords, Basil's expression is stilted and interrupted by this passion. On his first encountering Victoria at close quarters, in one of the state rooms of the Duke of Mantua, in the moments just preceding this monologue, he loses command of his speech and concentration completely. He '*changes countenance upon seeing them*', and when the Duke asks about uniting the troops with the Marquis of Pescara (1489-1525), Basil replies to the wrong question, and stutters – 'Yes, I believe – I think – I know not well – / Yes, please your grace, we march by break of day' – a hindrance to his communication that continues for the remainder of their exchange.[36] On the opening of the monologue, when he is alone onstage, it appears that his solitude frees him to express his passion, but even in this form, he struggles:

> Can she have lov'd? why shrink I at the thought?
> Why should she not? No, no it cannot be –
> No man on earth is worthy of her love.
> Ah! If she could, how blest a man were he!

[36] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 132.

Where rove my giddy thoughts?

His expression of his thoughts stumbles through questions, repetitions, exclamations and pauses. The intensity of his passions has a destructive force on his command of expression, and of the decisions that he makes that take effect in the 'daily intercourse' of military life. The distraction caused by his passion prevents him from making the order to leave Mantua and to continue with their military campaign, in preference for remaining close to Victoria, which ultimately leads to his troops going to battle without him, and his downfall. The process of his decline that Baillie outlines is that he falls from being a man of greatness, whose talents are for 'higher things', for 'great occasions', like war and military glory. While there is the glimmer of possibility that he might successfully marry the immediate, empirical, everyday detail of Victoria's eyes, hand and voice with awe-striking transcendental emotion, eventually this becomes overpowering and distracts him until firstly he is no longer able to express himself sufficiently, and becomes unable to apply his talent to great decisions, or to small, close-at-hand exchanges.

Behind Basil's dialogue, in which he is unable to express his passion, Baillie provides the audience with enough information that they can detect the passions or events that are in motion beneath the surface. After his first sight of Victoria, Basil and Rosinberg praise her, but the effusive nature of Basil's admiration of her prevents the audience from being completely convinced of his assurances to Rosinberg that war is his only mistress, and his claims that lover's joys 'are not made for me - / The hasty flashes of contending steel / Must serve instead of glances from my love'.[37] Baillie leaves passions unexpressed when it is not fitting with the character to express them, either in terms of their characterisation, or as a plot device. This tension between the present passions and their ostensible absence from what is expressed recurs throughout the play. For example, The Duke of Mantua's ambition and deceptive behaviour

[37] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 127.

underscores an exchange between Rosinberg and Frederick when rumour spreads that enemy troops had arrived from Milan, seemingly without warning. The audience has previously witnessed the Duke's plotting, so Rosinberg's claims that 'The Duke is of our side, an ally sworn, / And had such messenger to Mantua come, / He would have been appriz'd upon the instant', are underpinned by the dramatic irony of the Duke's ruthless ambition.[38] For Baillie, this unresolved , 'concealed' tension beneath the surface of dialogue is troubling, like, as she states in her 'Introductory Discourse', a 'secret and fearful thing', and has only damaging or dangerous consequences.[39] Baillie suggests that this tension has a particularly epistolary quality, in an instance when the tension between characters' surface expressions in the dialogue and the passions that are passing beneath the surface reaches a climax. Basil faces his soldiers who, at the manipulations of the Duke and his supporters, are staging a mutiny. He delivers a speech, persuading the soldiers back to his support. Once he has regained their attention, order and support, he presents a letter, within which is contained evidence that he never wavered from his dedication to them:

> Here is a letter from my gracious master.
> With offer of preferment in the north,
> Most high preferment, which I did refuse,
> For that I would not leave my gallant troops.
> (Takes out a letter, and throws it amongst them.)[40]

The letter is a manifestation or physicalisation of dramatic irony: it brings to the surface in the form of a material object the audience's knowledge that, at this point, Basil had been a trustworthy general, and that the revolt against him had been part of a conspiracy. The tension between the expressed and unexpressed emotions and knowledge is embodied in the letter. It is both the site where the alternative emotions reside, and the vehicle which brings them to the surface. This motion parallels the course of emotions and their exposition embodied in Basil's

[38] Baillie, *Count Basil,* 157.
[39] Baillie, "Introductory Discourse," 73.
[40] Baillie, *Count Basil,* 180-181.

developing passion for Victoria: his passion runs beneath the surface throughout dialogue and where necessary, through monologue, it emerges, and releases the tension of concurrent layers of detectable, but unexpressed, emotion.

In this context, asides and monologues give Baillie the opportunity to bring passions to surface-level expression. This does not only occur with Basil's emotions. Gauriecio, the Duke's minister, after the plotting with the Duke, delivers a monologue that exposes his raw ambition, his 'mind aspiring to be great', and, as the audience suspected from the preceding dialogue, is willing to take whatever 'steps which lead to it'.[41] A monologue by the Countess of Albini, Victoria's governess and friend, following an exchange with Victoria as she prepares to go hunting, confirms the concern that Albini expressed during their interaction for the vapid and fleeting form of Victoria's affections:

> O! I could hate her for that poor ambition
> Which silly adoration only claims,
> But that I well remember, in my youth
> I felt the like – I did not feel it long;
> I tore it soon, indignant from my breast,
> As that which did degrade a noble mind.[42]

This monologue expands on the comments that Albini has made to Victoria in the preceding dialogue, and confirms Albini as a wiser, experienced, and good-hearted woman. The emotional expression in these moments confirm to the audience that the undercurrent of emotion they had detected in the previous scene is accurate. Baillie's use of the devices of the aside and monologue, which operate in an epistolary way in their exposition of emotions, is a communicative technique. There is a moment of communication not only between the character and the audience, as they expose their passion, but also between the writer and the audience, in that there is an implicit assurance of their detection of a certain emotion. It is in these moments,

[41] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 145.
[42] Baillie, *Count Basil*, 194.

in the epistolary exposition of the passions in the form of asides and monologues, that Baillie makes explicit the process of sympathetic curiosity. The assurance that Baillie gives her readers, confirming their correct detection of underlying passion, highlights to the reader that they have the ability to observe, interpret and understand the emotions of another person. Through establishing implicit connections between the author and the audience, in which Baillie almost emerges to guide the audience how to interpret what they are observing positions the play both in a context that connects it to the moral, social world beyond the book or theatre, and positions them as part of a connected system of moral learning.

In this chapter, I have shown how Baillie repurposes the observational and representational empirical methods characteristic of Matthew Baillie's work on morbid organs in the poems that she writes at around the same time. In her *Poems*, Baillie presents series of connected poems exploring different aspects of human emotion and experience, in a poetic application of the empirical methods that her brother used. In her 'Introductory Discourse', the concept of connectivity resembled elements of Kames's ideas about theatre and morality, as she aimed to create a system in which character, audience or reader, and writer, operated as a body connected by sympathetic interest and moral feeling. She used epistolary direct address as a literary technology in her poetic experiment examining the emotions of four different men rejected by their lovers. In a very different poem in the collection, 'A Storm-Beat Maid', Baillie dispensed with formal epistolary qualities, seeing them as hindering the ultimate aim of establishing a connection between human emotion, nature, and other people. Although 'The Storm-Beat Maid' and 'Introductory Discourse' do not use epistolary form, they are informed by Baillie's interest in the potential for connectivity of epistolarity. Baillie explored this, and her concern for the hindering effects of epistolary materiality on sympathetic connection, in her representation of letters and her use of soliloquy in her tragedy on love, *Count Basil*. She attempted to find means of sympathetic connection that did not depend on material form, using soliloquy as an embodied, direct communication of thought and sentiment, that connected with the audience.

Baillie's concept of moral spectatorship differs from the fiction of earlier writers such as Samuel Richardson and Sarah Scott discussed in chapter two as it does not present exemplary characters for the reader to emulate, or encourage a particular type of behaviour, but it demonstrates the developments of a character's passions and creates a 'sympathetic connection' between the audience and the character which, in a manner more comparable to Barbauld's poetic epistemology, instils the reader with the understanding of their own passions, which may inform their moral behaviour after their experience of the play. Baillie's 'sympathetic curiosity', rather than a didactic tool employed by a particular text, comprises an epistemology that operates across her works.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that there was a formal and epistemological relationship between an empirical way of knowing and epistolary form in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Female writers utilised this relationship in creative ways in their literary, visual and material productions to produce knowledge of different kinds. In closing, I want to briefly sketch some changes to the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity into the early nineteenth century – changes that Baillie's use of epistolarity points towards – which brought the epistemological opportunities of the relationship between the two to a close. Finally, I will offer some reflections on where the findings of this thesis fit into the study of literature and science in the eighteenth century more broadly. In the introduction I indicated how my thesis contributes specifically to scholarship on studies of the letter and epistolarity, and to eighteenth-century cultural and scientific history. In closing, I consider the critical trends in the wider field of literature and science which have informed the direction of this work, and which I see my thesis participating in more broadly.

Baillie's approach to the materiality of the letter, in the explicit inconvenience it caused to her notion of sympathetic communication between people, was distinct from that of the other writers in this thesis. For Baillie, the materiality of the letter made it seem closed off from other forms of interaction and written representation, as was evident in the way that she described Sir Walter Scott's letter to her, as closed on her table awaiting her notice. This is in contrast to each of the other writers in this thesis, who saw the characteristics of the letter as migratory, and employed them freely across novelistic prose, poetry, and even material objects and herbaria. Their use of epistolarity accords with the movement of formal qualities identified in women's writing by Ingrid Horrocks, who examines 'a kind of mobile form' that 'moves across genres'.[1] Baillie's difference in approach was partly, as I argued in chapter five, a formal expression of

[1] Horrocks, *Women Wanderers*, 30.

the moral system she created in her theatrical work, but her different approach to epistolarity and its relationship with empiricism also points to changes to both of these concepts in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The changing relationship between branches of knowledge and in the practices of knowledge production affected the suitability of epistolarity as a form to interrogate and employ aspects of empiricism. Al Coppola identifies that the relationship between the theatre and an empirical epistemology as it was practiced in natural philosophical demonstrations was mutually formative before the two were 'purified and redisciplined into sites of mutually exclusive practices'.[2] These changes are complemented by the shifts that Dahlia Porter traces in the significance of induction in the mid-eighteenth century, and again at the turn of the nineteenth. She argues that while the process of inference in a Baconian form of induction did not trouble Bacon himself, its application to moral philosophy around the mid-century raised new moral and social questions, which Sarah Scott, for example, engaged with.[3] Porter argues that later in the century, the 'turn across fields from collecting and arrangement […] to synthesis' made the issue of an unstable path from particular observation to general truth more pressing.[4] By the early nineteenth century, these concerns had 'consolidated into paradigms', and demanded new forms of textual engagement to manage.[5] These anxieties, Porter demonstrates, manifested themselves textually in the 'splicing, grafting and mixing bits of other written materials', and materially, on the printed page, in 'poetic extracts set off from the body of a prose narrative' or prose notes at the foot of a printed poem.[6] The formal fluidity of the epistolary devices of malleable prose, experiential representation, and communication became less relevant to

[2] Coppola, *Theater of Experiment*, 21.
[3] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 20.
[4] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 20.
[5] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 20.
[6] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 5, 8.

knowledge-producing practices more concerned with the synthesis and management of large amounts of collected data.

The creative uses of epistolarity were also subject to forces of change into the nineteenth century. Rachael Scarborough King argues that the movement away from epistolarity in fiction was a question of genre rather than the potential effects of formal qualities; she argues that novelists moved away from epistolarity in an attempt to distance themselves from 'non-literary' forms of entertainment media, such as newspapers, travelogues and political pamphlets.[7] But Joe Bray has suggested that conventions of the epistolary novel had creative potential as they formed the basis, he argues, of Jane Austen's free indirect discourse. He suggests that in epistolary fiction, the 'first-person narrator can dramatize their own consciousness when recalling their own past thoughts', as we saw in chapter two when the protagonist of Scott's *Test of Filial Duty* retrospectively commented on her experiences in her letters.[8] This creates the effect of 'temporally conflicting selves' that developed into Austen's free indirect style.[9] Mary Favret argues for another application of epistolarity at the end of the eighteenth century. She demonstrates that the 'public voice' of the letter changed with the French Revolution and developments in the postal system into the nineteenth century.[10] Favret's discussion of Helen Maria Williams's *Letters from France* (1790-96) reveals their use of epistolarity as a powerful, female-authored, political combination of empiricism and epistolarity. Favret shows how 'the characteristic "looseness" and instability of epistolary narrative' was 'well suited to present the rapidly changing nature of the events in France'.[11] Williams emphasises her status as 'witness' to events of Revolutionary Paris, which she recalls vividly in epistolary prose. As Favret shows, for Williams, the letter form 'provides an open stage, and the Revolution a dizzying spectacle',

[7] Rachael Scarborough King, "The Pleasures of 'the World': Rewriting Epistolarity in Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 29, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 68-9.
[8] Joe Bray, "The Source of Dramatized Consciousness": Richardson, Austen, and Stylistic Influence," *Style* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 2001): 21.
[9] Bray, "Dramatized Consciousness," 22.
[10] Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 13.
[11] Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 59.

and Williams's *Letters* enact a politically charged combination of empirical observational principles, spectacle and epistolary writing. The application of the relationship between empiricism and epistolary in free direct discourse, as Bray describes, and in the Revolutionary context that Favret identifies, sharpens the focus on latent potential in the epistolary form that events earlier in the century did not draw out: its potential to trace internal thoughts, and convey dramatic political scenes. Importantly, these two uses turn away from the relationship between empiricism and epistolarity as a form of knowledge production, signalling alternative possibilities for its application in the changing political, literary and social contexts of the 1790s onwards. The changes in the relationship between different branches of knowledge and the modes of communication best situated to express them mark the close of an era in which epistolary qualities overlapped with empirical knowledge producing practices, and in which they were best positioned to address questions of the production of knowledge.

The relationship that I have examined between empiricism and epistolarity and its knowledge-producing effects participates in exciting recent developments in scholarship in eighteenth-century literature and science. James Chandler's 'Edgeworth and the Lunar Enlightenment' (2011) illustrates how the melding of scientific and literary ideas in 'predisciplinary' eighteenth-century knowledge production could result in creative fiction that had its own epistemology and comprised a distinct form of knowledge.[12] He illustrates this process by showing how Maria Edgeworth's novel *Belinda* (1801) not only drew on the practices of the Lunar Society – a group of Enlightenment thinkers and innovators including Edgeworth's father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817), James Watt (1736-1819) and Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) – but how the novel formally and structurally replicated practices of experiment and observation.[13] Enacting these processes in fiction produces, he finds, not 'a moral sentence', but 'a kind of

[12] James Chandler, "Edgeworth and the Lunar Enlightenment," in "The Disorder of Things," ed. Luisa Calè and Adriana Craciun, special issue, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 87-104.
[13] Chandler, "Edgeworth and the Lunar Enlightenment," 94.

knowledge that is rich and strange and fit for life'.[14] The knowledge that such literary practices produce as they draw on a range of experimental and conversational epistemological activities may not even, this conclusion suggests, be definable, but this does not detract from their value. In this thesis, my aim has been to pursue a similar impulse. My approach has been to reconfigure our understandings of the relationships between different forms of knowledge as part of a predisciplinary intellectual culture. The attention that this shows to the lively, rich and varied ways that knowledge was produced by conversational, sociable and textual means in the eighteenth century can offer a more complex and inclusive picture of who was contributing to the production of knowledge and by what means. Epistolarity was a useful analytical tool to this end: as Chandler's study suggests, a formal approach helps us cut through eighteenth-century practices of writing and knowledge production that do not map neatly onto our own disciplinary and literary structures.

A formalist approach to the relationship between science and literature in the eighteenth century also chimes with recent research that has directed attention to the relationship between specific literary devices and scientific method. Devin Griffiths argues that the poetic and natural philosophical use of analogy in eighteenth-century writing informed an approach to history, which operated by the principle of forming 'analogies between the past and the present'.[15] Current research projects by Gregory Tate and Rosalind Powell promise to develop further our understanding of analogy as a widely deployed mechanism across a range of knowledge-producing practices. Tate in particular considers how re-examining the formal relationships between writings for natural philosophical and literary purposes impacts our understanding of the Romantic imagination.[16] This line of inquiry is particularly pertinent when considering the problem of induction: Mary Fairclough has shown how in some cases, imagination could offer

[14] Chandler, "Edgeworth and the Lunar Enlightenment," 102.
[15] Devin Griffiths, *The Age of Analogy: Science and Literature Between the Darwins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 4.
[16] Tate, "Problem of Analogy," 142-23. See also Tita Chico, *The Experimental Imagination: Literary Knowledge and Science in the British Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

the link between observed particular and general principle.[17] Fairclough has also shown how scientific metaphor can slip between forms of writing for literary, natural philosophical and political purposes; she shows how electricity, as an unstable and unknown concept, shaped thought across a variety of different contexts in metaphorical form.[18] Porter's study points towards the emergence of another aspect of the relationship between literary form and knowledge-producing activities: the role of physical and material textual form in the production of knowledge.[19] Gillian Russell's *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century* proposes new ways of conceiving of the relationship between textual material form and knowledge, redressing the hierarchical relations between ephemera and the book. Russell argues that the idea of the 'scholar' as 'disinterestedly open to the preservation and transmission of our cultural inheritance' has its roots in an eighteenth-century 'science of ephemerology' that, although not formalised, enlisted the practices of 'collecting, preservation and systematisation', forming a mode of knowledge from which emerged 'philology, bibliography, and ultimately literary history'.[20]

My thesis has contributed to this body of work by showing how writers mobilised the characteristics of the letter to pursue a range of forms of knowledge, and to participate in debates about knowledge production, its textual and sociable dimensions, and its public and moral importance. The knowledge-producing potential of the letter, defined by a set of rhetorical devices and its material structure, draws together analyses of literary and figurative devices and material characteristics in the production of knowledge. My use of the concept of 'epistolarity' as a critical tool, in contact with another mobile concept – empiricism – has offered a new understanding of the dynamic and innovative ways in which eighteenth-century

[17] Fairclough, "Politics of the Imagination."
[18] Mary Fairclough, *Literature, Electricity and Politics, 1740-1840: Electrick Communication Every Where* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
[19] Porter, *Problem of Induction*, 13-16.
[20] Gillian Russell, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability, and the Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press), 38-39.

women writers engaged with a range of knowledge-producing practices, for their own moral, literary, religious and creative ends.

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