SAMUEL RICHARDSON AND THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING

This fascinating study examines Samuel Richardson’s letters as important works of authorial self-fashioning. It analyses the development of his epistolary style, the links between his own letter-writing practice and that of his fictional protagonists, how his correspondence is highly conscious of the spectrum of publicity, and how he constructed his letter collections to form an epistolary archive for posterity. Looking backwards to earlier epistolary traditions, and forwards to the emergence of the lives-in-letters mode of biography, the book places Richardson’s correspondence in a historical continuum. It explores how the eighteenth century witnesses a transition, from a period in which an author would rarely preserve personal papers to a society in which the personal lives of writers become privileged as markers of authenticity in the expanded print market. It argues that Richardson’s letters are shaped by this shifting relationship between correspondence and publicity in the mid-eighteenth century.

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LOUISE CURRAN
For Joe and Mary Curran
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Prefatory note

Quotations from Samuel Richardson’s (SR) early works and *Pamela I* and *II* are taken from the relevant volumes in the new *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Samuel Richardson*, 12 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011—), cited separately in the Abbreviations list. For *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, not yet available in this edition, I cite the first editions of 1748–1749 and 1753–1754. As for the correspondence, the volumes that are already published in the Cambridge Edition are cited: Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 10 covering SR’s letters with Aaron Hill and the Hill family; George Cheyne and Thomas Edwards; Sarah Wescomb, Frances Grainger, and Laetitia Pilkington; and correspondence primarily on *Sir Charles Grandison* (1750–1754).

The remaining letters are cited from manuscripts where they exist or early printed versions where this is the only copy-text available; details of these are given in the footnotes. References to the folios of manuscript letters refer to the place from which the quotation is taken (rather than the first leaf of the letter in question). In my own transcriptions of manuscript letters, square brackets ([ ]) enclose editorial points unless specified (as SR was fond of using them), pointed brackets (< >) enclose SR’s deletions, and interlined letters and words are enclosed within diagonals (/ /). Where a reading is conjectural I have enclosed it within square brackets preceded by a question mark. All year formats have been normalised to a year beginning on 1 January, according to the reformation of the calendar and the introduction of New Style dating in 1750.

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The person who has lived with this book for the longest time is John Mullan, who supervised my PhD thesis and deserves thanks for his good humour and wise advice then and now. I am also grateful to Peter Sabor who, as one of the general editors of Richardson’s Works and Correspondence, provided me with copies and transcriptions of various letters and access to many other useful sources, and was a mine of useful information on Richardson’s correspondence and networks that enlivened my subject immeasurably. Thanks are also due to those who provided help, criticism, and information on different sections of this work at its various stages: Paul Davis, Markman Ellis, Helen Hackett, Sören Hammerschmidt, Judith Hawley, Matthew Ingleby, George Justice, Tom Keymer, Devoney Looser, Bill McCarthy, Michael McCluskey, Kate McNaughton, Claude Rawson, John Richetti, Betty Schellenberg, Dan Starza-Smith, and Henry Woudhuysen. At Oxford, I have benefitted from the scholarship and friendship of Ros Ballaster, Paddy and Rebecca Bullard, Christine Gerrard, Kantik Ghosh, Grace Egan, Stefano-Maria Evangelista, Oliver Herford, Roger Lonsdale, Jim McLaverty, Lynda Mugglestone, and, in particular, Freya Johnston and Abigail Williams. At Cambridge University Press, Linda Bree and Anna Bond have carefully and cheerfully guided me through the daunting process of publishing my first book. I am also indebted to my two anonymous readers for their encouragement and cogent criticism. The faults that remain are, of course, all my own.

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There would be no book without the various kinds of support that my parents and family have provided over the years. The dedication registers my debt. Thanks also need to be recorded for ‘The Circuit’ and ‘Fram Thread’. You know who you are.

This book has been on my mind for a long period of time. It attempts to respond to some of the questions about Richardson that I first had on encountering him in print, and have explored with students since. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Fred Parker who introduced me to eighteenth-century literature in the first place and taught me the value of a mode of scepticism that is unfailing curiosity.

My last note of appreciation is for my kindest reader in so many ways: Adam Rounce.
Abbreviations

Barbauld

The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Author of Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison; selected from the Original Manuscripts bequeathed to his Family. To which are prefixed, a Biographical Account of that Author, and Observations on his Writings, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 6 vols. (London: Richard Phillips, 1804)

Clarissa


CECSR

The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, 12 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013—)

Dictionary

Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, 2 vols. (London: W. Strahan, 1755)

Eaves and Kimpel


EW


FM

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, National Art Library, Forster Collection, MSS. xi±xvi (4E5–4E10) [Samuel Richardson’s correspondence]

OED

Oxford English Dictionary

ODNB

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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<td>SR</td>
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