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The Female Accomplice: Rape, Liberalism, and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel

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THE FEMALE ACCOMPLICE: RAPE, LIBERALISM, AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLISH NOVEL

by

Dawn Arendt Nawrot

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

THE FEMALE ACCOMPLICE: RAPE, LIBERALISM, AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL

by

Dawn Arendt Nawrot

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016
Under the Supervision of Professor Barrett Kalter

Previous scholarship on rape narratives within the emerging eighteenth-century novel focuses on a dichotomous construction of the female agent struggling against the male rapist and against a biased patriarchal society. However, my project expands this gendered model by evaluating how the presence of colluding female accomplices complicates understandings of female agency and patriarchal violence. I argue that depictions of *femes soles* as treacherous and mercenary liberal subjects, who embody the corruption of the market, play a vital part in domesticating single women of the developing middle class. I analyze the ways in which female accomplices to rape represent a sizeable population of vilified, contracted, women workers or economically independent *femes soles*, who operate independently of the marriage contract and threaten marriageable women's consensual agency in an era that began to ideologically champion women's consensual rights to sex and marriage. By extension, I argue these felonious *femes soles* violate the ideology of the moral middle-class family which is supposedly protected from the corruption of the public sphere and is reliant on the wife's dutiful subordination through the marriage contract. In each chapter, I examine the violated relationship between the victim and the felonious *feme sole* as well as the narrative's deflection of culpability for heterosexual rape onto the female accomplice(s) within particular legal, commercial, and homosocial contexts, which help to reinforce middle-class ideology of consensual marriage and the moralizing domestic

sphere. I suggest the criminalization of *femes soles* as female accomplices to rape in Daniel Defoe's *Roxana* (1724), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1749), and John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1749) reveals middle-class resistance to women's legal and economic autonomy in the public sphere as well as the cultural resistance women's homosocial relationships across class.

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Introduction:
The Female Accomplice: Rape, Liberalism, and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel

This dissertation examines the figure of the female accomplice to rape in popular eighteenth-century domestic and courtship novels. Many eighteenth-century novels represented the individual's struggle for self-determination and economic stability through narratives of women's resistance to rape and their eventual consent to marriage. Scholarship on rape narratives within the emerging eighteenth-century novel has focused on the dichotomous construction of the female agent struggling against the male rapist and against a biased patriarchal society. These critics wish to understand how rape narratives in the novel literally or metaphorically helped to shape social ideologies of gender, the family, the public and private spheres, class, and individualism. Yet, analyses of rape within domestic and courtship novels are incomplete without accounting for the figure of the colluding female accomplice. My project expands the binary model of the male aggressor / female victim by evaluating how the criminal actions of female accomplices complicate our understandings of female agency and patriarchal violence. I argue that fictional depictions of femmes soles as treacherous and mercenary liberal subjects, who embody the corruption of the market, play a vital part in domesticating single women of the developing middle class. The many female accomplices to rape in these narratives represent a sizeable population of vilified, contracted, women workers or economically independent femmes soles who function outside of the marriage contract. Their crimes threaten marriable women's agency in an era that began to ideologically champion women's consensual rights to sex and marriage. By extension, these felonious femmes soles violate the ideology of the moral middle-class family that is supposed to be protected from the corruption of the public sphere. Examining the role of female accomplices to rape in the eighteenth-century domestic

novel is critical in understanding middle-class domestic ideology, women's homosocial relationships, and the cultural resistance to women's legal and commercial agency in the public sphere.

As Anne Greenfield articulates in her introduction to *Interpreting Sexual Violence: 1660-1880*, "few subjects were as frequently and successfully inserted into the literary and artistic world of the Restoration and eighteenth century as was sexual violence" (1). The enduring rape narrative tradition in literature and drama extends into the eighteenth century, and is particularly incorporated into the genre of the novel, which developed during the eighteenth century. Early amatory fiction portrayed rape as exemplary of the nobility's promiscuous sexuality and their indulgent passions.¹ However, along with the rise of the middle class, social sensibilities about passion and sexuality shifted. Many mid- and late-eighteenth-century novelists and conduct writers championed the middle-class ideal of autonomy as well as the virtues of chastity, modesty, delicacy, and prudence against upper-class excess and vice. Despite the literary and cultural shift away from libertinism, violent rape narratives (most often heterosexual) persisted within the eighteenth-century novel. This is because the early novel promoted the voice and experience of the rational, autonomous, middle-class individual, and narratives of female characters' struggles against rape and their eventual consent to marriage often symbolically represented the individual's struggle for self-determination and economic stability.

Scholars maintain that the emerging novel heavily influenced the formation of middle-class identity and popular notions of liberalism, individualism, gender, and class. According to Ian Watt, the emerging modern realist novel was influenced by Lockean and Cartesian theories

¹ Ros Ballaster has argued that amatory fiction gives "a voyeuristic attention to the combined pleasures and ravages of seduction" (110), unlike later moralistic courtship novels including *Pamela*. Exemplary works from the three primary amatory female authors include Aphra Behn's *The Fair Jilt* (1688), Delarivier Manley's *The New Atalantis* (1709), and Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* (1720) and "Fantomina" (1725).

of the conscious individual navigating his particular physical and social environment (12, 21). In *How Novels Think*, Nancy Armstrong also contends that the developing novel genre formulated the modern individual as one capable of social mobility and of possessing physical and intellectual property (3, 11-12). The self-possessed fictional subject influenced British society as it “proved uniquely capable of reproducing itself not only in authors but also in readers, in other novels, and across British culture” (3). Deidre Shauna Lynch agrees that the new novels promoted the development of this modern notion of the individual. In addition, she argues that fictional characters were used to organize class relations, to separate public life from private property, and to divide women’s and men’s gender roles within an increasingly commercial world (5-6). Both Lynch and Armstrong explain the ways in which the novel helped fashion middle-class sensibilities. Lynch believes that characters in the novel helped demarcate various classes of readers and helped establish discourses instructing people “in how to imagine themselves as participants in a nation or in a market place or as leaders or followers of fashion” (11). She suggests that the middle class used the novel to position “themselves within an economy of prestige,” as possessors of cultural capital and an elevated literacy above “the literacies of the crowd” (6). Likewise, Armstrong claims that the novel teaches middle-class readers how to be good citizens rather than aggressive or excessive individuals. Eighteenth-century novels construct the ideal modern bourgeois individual with independent desires, but these desires are moral and “must ultimately serve the general interest” if one is to be a citizen deserving of the state’s protection (33, 35). In contrast, novels demonstrate that individuals who take free subjectivity and personal desire too far and do not “observe the limits of person and property,” “set themselves on a course that leads not to citizenship but...to criminality and social exclusion” (37). Armstrong argues that Defoe uses *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* as

exemplary “bad subjects.” Rather than remaining “docile bodies” for their patriarchal families to exchange in marriage, “they exchange themselves with men. In doing so, they identify the entrepreneurial energy of the bad subject with sexual energy” (37). Their unsanctioned and commercialized sexual behavior violates marriage alliances, which uphold a private model of self-government proposed by Locke (37-38). Their unsuppressed sexual and entrepreneurial desires are socially rejected as criminally threatening the virtuous family.

Armstrong's argument that the disciplining of bodily desires is a tactic of liberal subject formation builds on the analysis of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, in which Foucault contends that during the eighteenth century the bourgeoisie deployed a new political power beyond family alliances by establishing and enforcing norms of sexuality. The middle class developed a new “distribution of pleasures, discourses, truths, and powers” surrounding sex in order to promote its own “defense, protection” and “self-affirmation” (123). The political strength of the rising middle class in part rested on its sexual identity as healthy, hygienic, and reproductive (124). Foucault explains that the bourgeois constructed “a body to be cared for, protected, cultivated, and preserved from the many dangers and contacts, to be isolated from others so that it would retain its differential value,” and it did this “by equipping itself with—among other resources—a technology of sex” (123). Within eighteenth-century fictional rape narratives, we can read middle-class’ efforts to protect its own healthy sexuality, and thus social hegemony, from the “dangers and contacts” of working-class women, who are incriminated as sexually deviant aggressors. In addition, the discourses on (working) femmes soles within conduct literature disparage independent women as infertile and unfeminine and also portray them as a sexual threat to the reproductive health of the middle-class family.

The novel's depiction of rape against single women also worked on a literal level to encourage marriage and the virtues of family life among growing numbers of middling-class readers and particularly among the swelling numbers of women who were active participants in the development of the eighteenth-century novel as writers, readers, and subjects of the narratives. Realistic scenes of sexual assault aligned with contemporary rape trial reports and warned female readers about the dangers of sex outside of marriage through rape scenarios. Wendy Jones details that "love had traditionally been the subject of prose fiction" before the novel (8). However, the novel replaced amatory narratives of sexual promiscuity and transgressive passion "with new ideals of marriage," legitimizing the genre amongst largely middle-class readers and particularly middle-class women, "who characterized themselves as guardians of virtue, as opposed to the morally lax upper and lower classes" (8). The recurring image of the virtuous woman defending her sexual agency from the threat of rape compelled audiences to consider women's rights as consenting liberal subjects and also as representatives of middle-class morality.

A number of scholars, including Nancy Armstrong, Toni Bowers, Melissa Sanchez, and Jennifer Airey, argue that the rape narratives of early eighteenth-century novels are not exclusively advocating for women's agency. Rather, they suggest the rape narratives recast political conflict as domestic conflict. Their work explores the ways in which the traditional metaphor depicts threatened political agency as the violation of a woman's consent by a male aggressor. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Armstrong suggested that the rape plot in *Pamela* conveys political metaphors of the rising middle-class assertions of private moral authority against the upper classes' immoral indulgences. According to Armstrong, Pamela's marriage "depends on the conversion of the aristocracy and upper gentry to her domestic values, which is

actually the formation of a new ruling class” (131). Thus, the novel recasts “political resistance as the subjectivity of a woman” (132). Although Pamela’s marriage and domesticity are still a function of patriarchy, through her individual struggle against rape and her sexual contract (marriage) with Mr. B., she spreads middle-class moral values within an upper-class home. Through Pamela, Richardson wrestles power from “traditional political categories” of church and state, and repositions middle-class political authority within the individual subject (132-133). Yet, in using Pamela as a central moral authority, the narrative simultaneously teaches women their domestic roles as models of virtue and domestic order.

More recent research on the long eighteenth century has evaluated narratives of female victims’ resistance to rape as a metaphor for citizens’ contested and constrained political agency under an absolutist monarchy or within a parliament divided by political factions. Melissa Sanchez (2013) has revealed how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century narratives of rape and other destructive heterosexual relations represent strained subjecthood under corrupt absolutism. Jennifer Airey’s exploration of rape as political metaphor picks up historically where Sanchez’ analysis ends. In her readings of Restoration drama and political tracts from 1662-1698, Airey (2012) contends that depictions of raped women and men served as political symbols of degenerate authority, social suffering, and violation during moments of major political upheaval including the Restoration of Charles II, the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars, the Exclusion Crisis, the Glorious Revolution, and the accession of William and Mary. Toni Bowers (2011) extends the analysis of literary metaphors for rape and seduction into the mid eighteenth century. Her project examines female seduction and rape narratives as complicated representations of Tory sympathizers’ “virtuous resistance to authority” under anti-royalist and Whig policies in literature stemming from late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century amatory fiction to

Richardson's mid-century domestic novels (7). As in *Pamela*, this body of research establishes that female rape narratives are used as political allegories for the violation of subjects' political agency. Although rape is used as a metaphor, the recurring figure of the resistant, but coerced, female agent also compels readers to consider women's rights as consensual subjects. However, these political readings of rape neglect the figure of female accomplice and fail to account for her allegorical significance in many popular eighteenth-century courtship novels. I wish to further expand this dichotomous political allegory by evaluating how the female accomplice's collusion complicates or alters the previous readings of rape and female agency.

Literary critics have analyzed the role of the licentious upper-class rake sexually threatening the female protagonist, who represents middle-class virtue and autonomy. However, in addition to depictions of male perpetrators of sexual violence, we also commonly find in eighteenth-century domestic novels depictions of culpable, treacherous women who either instigate the crime or help to lure and trap the intended rape victims. This is the case in *Clarissa* and *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, in which supposed female friends assist the male perpetrator in luring and/or confining the virtuous female protagonist. In *Roxana*, *Fanny Hill*, and *Tom Jones*, the treacherous women hold authority as either employers or guardians and actually instigate the sexual assault of another character. In *Pamela*, the female accomplice to attempted rape is a fellow employee. These female criminals are important participants in the rape, although they often get overlooked in literary analyses that examine either the legal contexts or political metaphors of patriarchal violence against single young women in these novels. However, fictional female accomplices to rape need to be examined. These figures provide insight on gendered divisions of labor and familial roles during the period, as well as social biases against women who exercised their rights within the justice system and commercial society.

My project is to suggest that these felonious female characters play a vital role in domesticating women of the developing middle class. Much like depictions of violent male libertines, femmes soles acting as rape accomplices are represented as threatening marriable women's agency and right to sexual consent during an era when women's rights to sex and marriage were increasingly acknowledged. Male rapists and female accessories to rape either threatened or thwarted women's ability to enter into future marriage contracts that would supposedly position middle-class women as moral authorities within the domestic sphere. In addition, the fictional felonious femmes soles often represent a considerable population of women workers in England whose sexual corruption is linked to their participation in the labor market. Their sexual crimes, like their independent labor, threaten the patriarchal structures of the private eighteenth-century family. The deflection of blame for rape onto female accomplices reinforces the middle-class ideology of consensual marriage and the moral middle-class family that is supposedly protected from the corruption of the market.

In order to promote the ideology of married women's agency within the middle- and upper-class domestic sphere rather than their autonomy as femmes soles, a number of popular eighteenth-century novels (including those listed above) particularly vilify women workers who are engaged in a market economy. Bawds, prostitutes, and servants-- women workers who continually transgress the imagined boundaries between public commerce and domestic protection-- are represented as violent, deceptive and sexually threatening to young marriagable women, who struggle against rape and assert their agency as sexual subjects. I argue that economically independent female characters who are depicted as treacherous (and often working-class), helped to demonize women in commerce and dissuaded middling-class women from entering into business or labor as independent agents. Courtship novels depicting felonious

femes soles suggest that women should seek greater freedoms as autonomous agents through marriage but not through commerce. Although conduct literature and courtship novels claim that autonomy is achieved through marriage, becoming a feme covert through marriage sexually objectified women, commodified their labor as their husband's property, and denied them further legal agency. As William Blackstone articulates in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, under coverture, "the very being and legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything" (1.15.III). Despite the restrictive legal reality of marriage for women, novels and conduct literature teach young women to choose marriage and avoid association with working women and femes soles who straddle both the public and private spheres. In various works of domestic fiction, relationships with deceptive, financially independent women lead to seduction or rape, which diminishes the female protagonist's ability to enter into a future marriage contract. Ultimately, the demonizing of autonomous female agents as criminals reflects the cultural reluctance to acknowledge women as independent liberal subjects within their patriarchal society. Rather, the domestic novel only promoted women's agency to enter into marriage contracts, which re-secured their legal and social dependence on men as femes coverts.

Rape Law and the Legal Context for the Fictional Female Accomplice

Eighteenth-century English society operated under a flawed justice system that disregarded women's legal status as autonomous liberal subjects. Women's constrained legal agency is represented in eighteenth-century court records, trial reports, and fictional accounts of female rape. These texts demonstrate that the statutory rights of femes soles, who had the legal

right to prosecute against rape and other crimes regardless of their sexual history, were often limited by the courts' biased rulings and the public censure of female victims.

While women's status as legal subjects under rape law is debated, a number of scholars increasingly argue that rape in this period was legally considered a crime against an unmarried female subject, rather than a property crime between men.² During the medieval period, the rape of a woman's body and chastity was legally considered a crime of theft, much like abduction, as the stealing or ravishing of another man's property (Durstun 143; Bashar 30). Yet, scholars have argued that by early or mid-seventeenth century, "rape had become a sexual crime," under the law, revolving around the female victim's innocence and her active refusal to consent (Durstun 143, Bashar 40). According to Blackstone, eighteenth-century law labeled rape as a crime against an independent female legal agent, or as "an offense against the female part of his majesty's subjects," and not as a property crime against the single woman's family. Blackstone briefly articulates rape as "the carnal knowledge of a woman forcibly and against her will" (4.15.III). Accordingly, Mary Block has found that "legal writings consistently described rape as a crime of violence against the body of an individual woman and not as a property crime" (26). She cites a number of legal definitions throughout the century, including Thomas Wood's definition from the *Institute of the Laws of England* (1772), as "one of the 'Private Felonies [that] may be [committed] against the *Body* of the Subject without taking away [her] life'" (26). Across legal definitions, the continual emphasis on the woman as an individual with control over her body and power over her own will and consent suggests that contemporary legal theorists no longer regarded rape as solely a property crime against the victim's male relations. As Durstun claims, "by the eighteenth century, it was clearly the complainant who was the crime's victim" (143).

² However, Anna Clark (8, 48) and Anne Greenfield (6) maintain that eighteenth-century society continued to regard female rape as a property crime.

Despite English legal statutes that defined female rape victims as legal subjects regardless of economic class, women faced incredible difficulty pursuing criminal convictions against their rapists because of gendered social biases, which refused to recognize women as credible victims and autonomous sexual agents. The victim's previously virtuous reputation was publicly attacked during trial as a defense strategy. Interrogating the victim's integrity further embarrassed women and deterred them from filing criminal charges.³ In addition, some juries refused to convict because they disagreed with the severity of the sentence for rape felonies: capital punishment.⁴ Constantine also finds that even the women raped or their families did not find rape offensive enough to pursue in court (52-53). Historians agree that rape in the eighteenth-century was severely underreported, due to the great cost of trials, the public exposure and embarrassment for the victim and their families, and the unlikelihood of a conviction.⁵ These challenges resulted in a very low prosecution rate for rape in urban courts and in provincial assizes during the 1700's. The tendency for victims of rape or attempted rape to bypass the justice system is reflected in many novels and is particularly highlighted in *Clarissa* and *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*. Clarissa and Betsy's family both refuse to prosecute in order to avoid the mortifying publicity of a trial, and Betsy's sexual assault is hidden and forgotten by her family.

³ Beattie 128; Edelstein 389; Simpson "Popular Perceptions of Rape" 33; Durston 155.

⁴ Bashar 40; Clark 7, 35, 48; Trumbach 277; Edelstein 367; Simpson "Popular Perceptions of Rape" 37; Durston 172; Constantine 37-8, 52-53.

Bashar argued that "Male judges and juries were loath to punish in any way other males for any sexual offense against females" (40). In addition, Constantine suggests that while today, we would consider many cases between servants and masters rape, "By contemporary eighteenth-century standards, what happened was, in extreme cases, rape, but most sexual encounters would have been thought of—not only by the men but also perhaps by the women—as being the result of coercion and persuasion that did not amount to rape. The men would have seen themselves as taking advantage of the power they had, and... not a crime" (37-38).

⁵ Rape as underreported: Beattie 128-129; Simpson 37; Clark "Rape or Seduction?" 25; Durston 141; Edelstein 375;

High cost of trials: Beattie 124; Durston 141, Simpson 45, Constantine 30; Edelstein 373;

Public exposure and embarrassment: Beattie 124; Simpson 59, 62; Edelstein 362, 366, 372; Clark

Women's Silence, Men's Violence 55, 63-64; Unlikely conviction: Simpson 52; Constantine 17; Clark

Women's Silence, Men's Violence 47

The rape crimes go legally ignored despite portrayals of the rapists' clear culpability, illustrating women's severely constrained voice and agency within the English justice system.

Despite court records and trial reports' depictions of gender biases against female plaintiffs, rape narratives within the novel often represent eighteenth-century women's struggle for legal agency. Scholars who have analyzed the abduction and rape in *Clarissa*, for example, claim that Richardson is criticizing the biased patriarchal justice system that undermines rape statutes protecting women.⁶ Their analyses illuminate the ambivalent legal agency granted to female victims of rape and the related crime of abduction in the eighteenth century. However, their work fails to account for differences in the legal agency and culpability the justice system and the novel placed on felonious female perpetrators.

The historical and literary research on women's experience of rape under the law largely ignores the prevalence of women charged with rape and abduction in urban courts during the century as either principals in the second degree or as accessories. Yet, it is important to examine their presence in public trial records and rape narratives, since their publicity and representation (whether accurate or exaggerated) affected the public's perception of women as dangerous legal agents. In the introduction to *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (1994), Kermode and Walker argue that "prevalent methodologies of historians of crime have restricted rather than facilitated our understanding of the nature of female criminality in the past" (4). Their critique of historians' and literary scholars' marginalization of female crime can also be applied to much of the scholarship on heterosexual rape cases prosecuted throughout the eighteenth-century in British courts and depicted in novels. Jocelyn Catty contends that many

⁶ Critics debate *Clarissa's* ability to resist an arranged marriage and then her abductor / rapist within her patriarchal society. Yet, despite the prevailing social and legal treatment of women like *Clarissa* as property, Schwartz, Zomchick, and Swan agree that Richardson uses the rape narrative "to expose a legal system which denies the majority of women an individual legal identity, reducing them to an aspect of masculine property" (Swan "Raped by the System" 127; also see Schwartz 299-300; Zomchick 101).

scholars and feminists research rape as solely “an act perpetrated by men against women, with drastic implications for the victim’s moral and social status,” and that “the act of rape is an extreme expression of the power relation between men and women” (2). Because of the scholarly emphasis on patriarchal violence in this period, female perpetrators are seldom (and then only superficially) mentioned in the body of historical and literary research on English women’s experience of rape.⁷ However, if we only focus on the male aggressor / female victim dichotomy, we fail to acknowledge the complicated position of female accomplices participating in female violence. First, we need to acknowledge women’s felonious participation in heterosexual violence during this period. Second, we need to consider how their criminal narratives and publicized testimonies may have influenced eighteenth-century novelists, particularly since the novel exaggerated the prevalence and threat of female accomplices in society.

What was the prevalence of women accomplices to rape during the eighteenth century and what was their role? Unfortunately, there is no holistic statistical data across England for female accomplices and accessories to rape during the eighteenth century. The most accessible data comes from Old Bailey trial records detailing women’s involvement in London. Assize records from other jurisdictions need to be compiled and calculated to provide a more precise picture. Working from Old Bailey records in London, I have found that female accomplices

⁷ While most historians have provided critical research about female victimization, women’s silence, or struggles within the court system, there are a few historians who have briefly acknowledged women’s participation in this crime. Anna Clark mentions female accomplices in her book, *Women’s Silence, Men’s Violence* (1987), noting that between 1770 and 1780 “five women were accused of aiding and abetting men who raped young girls” (31). She further claims these women most often sought to profit by exploiting other women through forced prostitution (31-32). In *Victims and Viragos* (2007), which is otherwise entirely about female criminals and their experience in eighteenth-century metropolis courts, Durston briefly acknowledges in his chapter on rape that female offenders were involved in rape crimes during the eighteenth century. He notes that “A total of 45 people, both men and women (prosecuted as accessories) were convicted of rape between January 1700 and the end of 1799” (142), and that women make up about 5% of defendants (144).

apparently composed a relatively small percentage of the total indicted rapists in the eighteenth century compared to male rapists acting alone. However, if we compare the numbers of male and female perpetrators who acted as accomplices to rape, the ratio is more balanced. There were a total of 17 men and 13 women tried as accomplices to rape at the Old Bailey throughout the century. It is also important to note that there was a much higher percentage of women involved in abduction crimes that involved rape. For example, all four of the early eighteenth-century Old Bailey abduction trials involved one, or usually two or more, female accomplices. Despite low conviction rates across rape trials in eighteenth-century London, four women in the Old Bailey Proceedings between 1690 and 1728 were sentenced to death along with the primary male perpetrator for either rape or kidnapping (that involved rape).⁸ After 1728, no women were convicted and sentenced to capital punishment at the Old Bailey. Yet, most of these early-century convicted female felons became memorialized as notorious criminals in the decades that followed.

As in trials of men accused of rape and murder, the news of women's violent offenses would also have been widely published and consumed by eighteenth-century readers. As Anthony Simpson reminds us, this type of sensational and criminal news "was reported, read, and widely disseminated in this period" (64). The detailed trial records and testimonies of felonious sex crimes were published and publicly circulated until 1790 when the "court responded to increasingly delicate public sensibilities by expressly forbidding the publication of all but the most basic facts about rape hearings" (Durstun 4). Until the last decade of the century when crime publication laws were changed, publishers produced anthologies of notorious male and female criminals, capitalizing on the public interest in violent crime literature and female

⁸ Alice Gray (1707), Sarah Blandford (1715), Mary Hendron & Margaret Pendergrass (1728).

crime narratives. These trial anthologies included several women convicted of rape or kidnapping in the second degree. Alice Gray's trial for aiding and assisting John Smith in the rape of Catherine Masters (1707) was anthologized as late as 1764. Also, Mary Hendron and Margaret Pendergrass' conviction for their part in the abduction (rape, and coerced marriage) of Sibble Morris (1728) was reprinted in at least four criminal trial anthologies extending into the 1780's.⁹ These and other popular trial publications detail women's varied participation in luring, imprisoning, drugging, and stripping the alleged female victims. The reprinting of these court transcripts indicates the public's continued interest in reading about female perpetrators and the disturbing details of the crimes.

Despite felonious women's limited presence in eighteenth-century courts, many domestic novels capitalize on the reading public's interest in female sex offenders, and often incorporate the figure of the female accomplice into the rape narratives. For the parameters of this research project I am most interested in the ways in which rape and abduction narratives in eighteenth-century domestic novels align with or diverge from the trial accounts of female rape accomplices. The novels support eighteenth-century statutes, which hold felonious women culpable as principal rape and abduction offenders. Meanwhile, the rape narratives work to counter biased juries who called the female victim's character into question, but seldom convicted defendants. In fictional rape narratives, the moral integrity of the victim is almost never in question, while the perpetrators are clearly depicted as guilty of assisting the principal male rapist. Like the alleged female criminals detailed in trial records, fictional female

⁹ Some of the anthologies include: *A Compleat Collection of Remarkable Tryals of the Most Notorious Malefactors, at the Sessions-House in the Old Baily, for near Fifty Years Past* (1718); *The Bloody Register: A Select and Judicious Collection of the Most Remarkable Trials, for Murder, Treason, Rape, Sodomy, Highway Robbery, Piracy, etc.* (1764); *The Old Bailey Chronicle; Containing a Circumstantial Account of the Lives, Trials and Confessions of the most Notorious Offenders* (1788); and *The Annals of Newgate* (1776).

accomplices aid in various aspects of luring, imprisoning, drugging, and stripping the virginal female protagonist.¹⁰ The rape narratives quite accurately reflect the ways in which women assisted in sexual assault crimes, and they hold the female perpetrators accountable for their felonious offenses.

However, there are three major distinctions between the documented female accomplices and their fictional counterparts. First, in many eighteenth-century domestic novels victims experience a surprising betrayal at the hands of the female accomplice(s), which is not articulated in trial testimonies. Betsy Thoughtless, Fanny Hill, and Clarissa in particular, are blindsided and appalled by the treachery of the women whom they had trusted. As Clarissa exclaims, “Thus was I tricked and deluded back by blacker hearts of my own Sex, than I thought there were in the world, who appeared to be persons of honour...” (Richardson 557). During this time, literate women were taught by conduct literature to choose their friends and female alliances carefully before risking their own reputation with disreputable or unscrupulous women (Herbert 46-48). Across class, they were instructed to critically monitor and reprove others’ inappropriate behaviors in order to combat “stereotypes that women were emotionally fickle” (48-49, 50). Reputable women were also expected to embody passivity, chastity, and virtue (Mudge, 194; Saxton 73, 84). Following the teachings of conduct manuals, the fictional female victims are shocked by the depravity, treachery, and physical violence perpetrated by women whose character they should have vetted cautiously. They are also more troubled by women’s failures of virtue than by the violent sexual intentions of the principal male perpetrator. The narratives teach women to be more wary of befriending or associating with potentially devious

¹⁰ Roxana strips her servant, Amy, and throws her in bed with her lover. Mrs. Modely lures Miss Betsy Thoughtless to the attempted rapist’s bedroom and then locks Betsy in with him. Likewise, Mrs. Brown in *Fanny Hill* and Lady Bellaston in *Tom Jones* arrange the rape and then lock away Fanny and Sophia so that they cannot escape. Finally, the multiple female accomplices to Clarissa’s rape assist in luring, imprisoning, and drugging her.

women pretending virtue and respectability than of rakes. Since in reality, the female accomplice did not pose the same criminal threat as rakes and male rapists acting alone, these rape narratives unfairly shift the blame for treachery and rape onto (working) femmes soles. As a result, the novels teach women readers with middle-class domestic sensibilities to avoid relationships with supposedly unscrupulous and untrustworthy femmes soles.

Second, the female criminals are often depicted as culpable for organizing or initiating the rape, and they are vilified for their excessive and severe treatment of the female protagonist. As a prostitute / kept woman, Roxana's confessions of culpability deflect the blame from the male rapist who was statistically most often responsible for female servant rape in middle- and upper-class English households (48). Roxana (1724) precedes other unscrupulous fictional femmes soles, who are depicted in mid to late century as criminally culpable for rape or sexual assault. Mrs. Brown in *Fanny Hill* and Lady Bellaston in *Tom Jones* plot and facilitate the rapes of Fanny Hill and Sophia Western. They find men who are willing to rape, but who are ultimately held less accountable than the female accomplices. In both *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, Mrs. Jewkes and the prostitutes who aid Lovelace are blamed for their extreme maliciousness, which exceeds the intentions of the male aggressors. The women's involvement incriminates them as sexually corrupt femmes soles while mitigating the principal male rapists' culpability.

Third, and most central to my project, are novels' consistent portrayals of femmes soles as the ruthless female accomplices. Old Bailey and other trial records I have researched pay little or no attention to the alleged offenders' occupation if it does not play a direct role in the crime. However, all of the novels I have researched represent the felonious female characters as femmes soles, corrupted by their independent wealth (in *Tom Jones*) or their involvement in the labor market. The female criminals most often support themselves as domestics or prostitutes. As the

narrator of the novel *Miss Arabella Bolton* (1770) claims, autonomous employed women are driven by financial need, and thus, are capable of unthinkable mercenary sexual offenses (10-11).¹¹ While fictional women workers are often disparaged and othered in conduct literature and the domestic novel as drunken, ugly, aging, and licentious, the texts emphasize to female readers that through association *femes soles* can also become ruthless and treacherous violators of reputable women's bodies and agency.¹² As the narrator of *Miss Arabella Bolton* declares:

After the many dreadful instances of seduction, and heinous crimes of this nature, conducted, contrived, and perpetrated by those infernal wretches, it is astonishing that any woman will venture herself within the confidence, influence, or advice of those venerable reptiles, whose station in life, or what they call necessity or temptation, every day induces them to prostitute even their own children... it would be much easier to get a hundred old women reprobates of this stamp, who will without scruple, undertake the sacrifice and prostitution of the virtue and innocence of their own sex, than to find ten men so depraved and abandoned. (10-11)

Here, the author directly warns women readers not to associate with *femes soles* who are corrupted by their need to work and their pursuit of money. Moreover, the author articulates what is often illustrated in other domestic novels: the threat of devious working women ensnaring a young woman in sexual violence far surpasses the threat of a male rake. Narratives of unscrupulous female accomplices to rape encourage women to avoid financial and legal autonomy outside of marriage, embodied by these dangerous and depraved female workers. The

¹¹ *The Memoirs of Miss Arabella Bolton* was an anonymous novel published in London in 1770 allegedly recounting the politician Colonel Henry Lawes Luttrell's rape and subsequent neglect of a young woman, Arabella Bolton, years earlier in order to further disparage his reputation in the wake of his unfavorable election by Parliament.

¹² See the parallel descriptions of Mrs. Jewkes in *Pamela*, Mrs. Brown in *Fanny Hill*, Mrs. Moreton in *Miss Arabella Bolton*, and *The London Bawd*.

novels express a patriarchal culture that disparaged and discouraged women's social and economic autonomy by criminalizing their independence as sexually threatening. In contrast, domestic and courtship literature advises young women to wisely consent to marriage contracts, maintain the protection of patriarchal families, and pursue their position as moral authority within the family.

Liberal Subjectivity and Domesticity: Fictional Contradictions of Women's Agency

Domestic novelists promoted women's limited status as subjects in marriage, building upon the tenets of classic liberalism and the writings of John Locke in particular. Locke asserted that every rational individual possesses free will and an inherent right to own his "Property, that is his Life, Liberty, and Estate" (324, 341). Yet, to best protect his personal property and liberties from the threat of others, theoretically, individuals consent to join a political society through an original social contract. This compact establishes a governing body that collectively regulates and protects the members of the civil society (342). Locke's theory that civil society originates in a collective contract among equally consenting individuals influenced middle-class beliefs that consensual relationships, including marriage, could be "based on consent rather than force" (Jones 4). Although women were not allowed to participate in civil politics, courtship novels often depict women as autonomous agents refusing sexual coercion, resisting rape, and consenting to marriage contracts. The work of these novels therefore can be viewed as translating liberalism into the idiom of domesticity, showing how these ideas might apply to private as well as civil life.

However, the courtship novel's promotion of women's consent to marry and its simultaneous condemnation of women's consent to commercial contracts reinforce the contradictory nature of contract theory for women in early modern English society. Feminist

theorists have criticized John Locke, the most influential English contract theorist, for his equivocal discourses on women as both possessive individuals (to use C.B. Macpherson's term) and natural subordinates to their husbands through the marriage contract. As Wendy Jones suggests, since Locke cites only children and the cognitively disabled as incapable of possessing the rational capacity to act as autonomous agents, readers could assume that Locke considers adult women as rational, independent agents, who, (like men) could consent to social contracts (Locke 324, 326). Accordingly, a woman should also have the "Liberty to dispose, and order" her "Persons, Actions, Possessions, and his (her) whole Property," as well as the freedom "from restraint and violence from others" (324). Yet, as Pateman, Jones, and others have argued, in *The First Treatise* he paradoxically cites women as being naturally subordinate to their husbands under their conjugal, or sexual, contract. According to Locke, conjugal society, which precedes civil society, establishes:

No other Subjection than what every wife owes to her Husband...It can be only a Conjugal Power, not Political, the Power that every Husband hath to order things of private Concernment in his Family, as Proprietor of the Goods and Land there, and to have his Will take place before that of his wife in all things of their common Concernment. (192)

Carol Pateman influentially censured Locke's contradictory treatment of women as contractual agents. He insisted that women are capable of entering into contracts, "namely the marriage contract"; however, he also deems women "naturally subordinate to men," and thus, they are not regarded as equal, consenting individuals (Pateman 54-55). Women's constrained subjecthood is evidenced through coverture laws in the eighteenth century that eliminated wives' legal ability to maintain their status as individuals who owned their body and labor and who

could negotiate contracts (55). As Peter Earle argued, British wives endured the harshest financial status of any of their married female contemporaries in Europe (158). Married women's wages and property, even their clothes and jewelry, were owned by their husbands (unless the wife had legally filed for a separate estate).¹³ Furthermore, wives without "separate estate" status could not sue, be sued, or enter into a legal contract because they had no legal subjecthood independent of their husbands (159).

Yet, despite married women's subordinated positions under patriarchal coverture laws, women's consent to the marital contract was promoted as a legitimate expression of individual autonomy. Even though women's legal and social autonomy was limited, Wendy Jones contends in *Consensual Fictions* that courtship narratives depicting women's marital consent in the eighteenth-century "implied...a 'contractual subjectivity' for women that was seen by many...as ultimately incompatible with women's subjection" (5). Women's freedom to choose a husband expressed their "intellectual capacity" to enter into contracts as "autonomous agents" (39). Despite fictional representations of female agency in the form of marital consent or refusal, domestic and courtship novels' influence ultimately did not improve married women's legal rights during the eighteenth century. Rather, the middling classes adopted Locke's inconsistent claims about women's status as liberal subjects. As many domestic novels suggest, women should only exercise their capacity to consent to a legally incapacitating marriage contract.

Many domestic or courtship novels championed women's agency to resist rape or abduction and to consent to marriage contracts as far as these choices once again resubordinated women securely within a patriarchal familial structure. As in *Pamela*, a young woman's

¹³ Even under this law, Wendy Jones argues that "the increase in separate property for wives in the early modern period was designed to protect the property of families rather than to grant women independence" (13), and courts increasingly interpreted the law in order to "prevent married women's access to 'their' separate property" (37).

marriage might produce an advantageous economic alliance with another middle- or upper-class family (Jones 34), while disseminating middle-class ideologies of social contract and family virtue. However, Pamela's hard-fought consensual marriage only re-inscribes her subservience to her husband, Mr. B. As McKeon argues, "The negative freedom of the private family was consecrated by a contractual model of marriage that, promising individual autonomy, also recreated the subordination of private to public authority in the unequal relationship of husband to wife and children" (111).

While married women of the middling classes were subjected in the private sphere through the marriage contract, they were encouraged to take on a new role as moral authorities in the home, which further separated them and their families from the public sphere and commercial labor.¹⁴ Conduct literature and domestic novels including *Pamela* promoted women as domestic moral agents of modesty, virtue, and benevolence in order to inculcate their families with these middle-class social values (Harrington 33, 41-42; Okin 65). Accordingly, the wife who managed the private household was set in virtuous opposition to excessive public consumption and unscrupulous commerce. Margaret Hunt cites examples of the middling family presenting itself to be an "intimate, tightly organized, and highly moral family order, notably precise for the ways in which it differed from the pretentious, superficial, extravagant, and badly governed families allegedly characteristic of political elites" (149). McKeon also explains that affluent middle-class families discouraged wives from engaging in modes of domestic labor in order to differentiate the character of the private family from the market. As McKeon argues, "at the higher social levels the differential process of class formation led women and men who aspired to a proto-'bourgeois' gentility to value female idleness, in the strict sense of eschewing

¹⁴ Nancy Armstrong cites the middling class woman's new domestic authority as over the household, leisure time, courtship procedures, and kinship relations," and family members' basic identity formation (3).

all modes of production for the market” (177; Earle 163). Rather than engaging in household labor, middle-class wives were circumscribed within the home as moral authorities and household managers. Thus, while middling classes’ ideological construction of women’s roles as moralizing agents within the domestic sphere appeared to grant women power within the home, they were removed from modes of public (and even private) labor and commerce. By the end of the century, although women “were deemed ‘unfit’ to participate in the ‘science of legislation’ and ‘commercial enterprise,’ their newly designated positions as ‘moral agents’ in the domestic realm provided an ethical foundation enabling middle-class men to pursue trade and commerce unabated by earlier arguments against the accumulation of wealth” (Harrington 43).

Although middling-class ideology taught women to consent to married life guarded within the domestic sphere, their merchant husbands and other workers in the commercial sphere profited from capitalist enterprises, exercising the logic of possessive individualism and contract theory in their business relations. Pocock explains that “property moved from being the object of ownership and right” among landed classes “to being the subject of production and exchange” among merchants and business people (119). Within the rising market economy of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, laborers also regarded their own labor as movable, marketable property that could be contracted for the best wages and working conditions.¹⁵ Both male and female servants, for example, increasingly acted as contractual agents, and they resisted exploitative, paternalist relationships of subordination with their employers (Hill *Servants* 5;

¹⁵ Christine Eisenberg attributes the market growth in early modern England to tremendous population growth (42), urbanization (42), and the related growth of urban markets (43), a sharp increase in agricultural production (44-55), bituminous coal mining that led to infrastructure building (49-50), and an expansion in exports (59) that created capital for upper- and middle-classes’ financial investments (60).

Thompson 37). Yet, their mobility, and at times, non-compliance vexed genteel employers, who expected their obedience.

During this commercial era of increasingly contracted labor, large numbers of women, particularly young women of the lower classes, entered labor markets as *femes soles*. Representative of labor trends, servants, prostitutes, dress makers, landladies, and innkeepers often circulate in eighteenth-century domestic novels. These characters reflect the many women workers involved in public or semi-public labor. The largest number of female workers was employed as domestics. Tadmor relates that throughout the 1700's, two-thirds of British teens had lived with a family as a domestic servant or apprentice, and scholars agree that the large majority of domestics, at least seventy-five percent, were women (Straub 4; Hill 41; Steedman 13; McKeon 181; Earle 218). Many eighteenth-century urban women also turned to prostitution for subsistence or to supplement their incomes. Social commentators determined that from mid-century onward 1 in 5 London women participated in some aspect of the sex industry, and the profits from their labor were integral to the city's financial growth (Cruikshank xi).¹⁶ In addition to the large populations of working-class women, Margaret Hunt's research reveals middling-class women's involvement in trade. While she doesn't provide statistics, she disagrees with the assumption that "middling women dropped out of gainful employment" during the eighteenth century (125-126). Rather, she claims that "there is much evidence that large numbers of women continued to work, both in their husbands' shops and in their own trades, through the end of the century and beyond" as landladies, pawn brokers, clothes makers, retailers of household goods, and boarding school teachers (126,146). Working- and middle-class women were involved in a variety of domestic and public positions, and the rising domestic novel

¹⁶ Dan Cruikshank finds that the large profits from prostitution income and taxes "financed the development of whole sections" of London (x).

illustrates their interaction with women in the private sphere. However, domestic conduct novels often vilify one or more female laborers in the narrative as unscrupulous and conniving because of their involvement in the labor market. Femmes soles are depicted as criminals who deceive and violently threaten the consensual agency of virginal young women, who uphold and represent middle-class values of chastity and family. By extension, the texts teach domesticated middle-class women to disassociate from the populations of autonomous women workers and other femmes soles circulating in English society.

Women's Homosocial Relationships, Friendships, and their Violation

Portrayals of violated female friendship and other broken homosocial relationships through rape are central to the ideological project of constructing middle-class women's domestic identity, while creating boundaries between married gentlewomen and femmes soles.

Although women are finally recognized in eighteenth-century discourse and society as capable of friendship and positive homosocial relations, contemporary courtship and domestic novels often continue to deny various groups of femmes soles the capacity for positive female alliances and virtuous friendship. Classical discourses on friendship extending from Aristotle and Cicero to Montaigne in the sixteenth century usually excluded women or denied their capacities for virtuous friendship (Herbert 24; Lanser 180; Yalom 3, 6). In classical models of friendship, participants needed to be equal in virtue, intellect, and social standing. And, according to Aristotle, friends were to protect and care for one another out of pure beneficence rather than mutual self-interest (64-65). Early modern philosophers like Montaigne continued to deny women's intellectual and spiritual capacity for ideal friendship on the grounds that a woman's soul does not "seem firm enough to endure the strain of so tight and durable a knot" (Herbert 24). However, by the mid-seventeenth century women's capacity for friendship with men and

other women began to be publicly acknowledged (Lanser 181). For example, Jeremy Taylor admits in *The Measures and Offices of Friendship* (1657) that both “brave men and women are capable” in “friendships” of “the measures and sufferings, the most exemplar faithfulness, and the severest truth, the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of minds” (5-6). Yet, afterward, he partially retracts his claims that women possess equal capacities for friendship, declaring, “I cannot say that Women are capable of all those excellencies by which men can oblige the world; and...in some cases (she) is not so good a counselor as a wise man, cannot so well defend my honour; nor dispose of reliefs and assistances” (101). Amanda Herbert cites a number of late seventeenth-century female authors who continue to argue for women’s capacity for friendship by using the Neoclassical frameworks of equality and mutual esteem or by extending the traditional Christian virtues of friendship to women including “humility, modesty, and even servility” (24-26). In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1695), Mary Astell adopts these models of friendship, calling women to a secluded “religious retirement” of “virtuous and disinterested friendship,” where they will share knowledge with one another and perform “offices of beneficence and charity” (64, 65, 69). Throughout the eighteenth century (and particularly in mid to late century) some middle- and upper-class women also claimed greater inherent emotional sensibility and sympathy than their supposedly rational male counterparts, which elevated their capacity for affective friendship (Yalom and Brown 144-145; Herbert 33). As dialogues on women’s positive relationships continued into the eighteenth century, English society acknowledged the validity and value of women’s friendships and other mutual homosocial relations.

Eighteenth-century conduct writing also represents women’s friendships as informal social models of liberal choice, contract, and alliance. As Allan Silver asserts, although

friendship is considered to be a private relationship, “not constituted by public roles and obligations,” friendship during the period is still deemed a relationship of “will and choice,” and “an ideal arena for the highly individualized conception of personal agency that is central to modern notions of personal freedom” (1476). Like public and private male relationships, prescriptive texts and private correspondences apply liberal concepts to female relationships, and particularly friendships, describing them as contracted and carefully chosen (Herbert 46-49). Matthew Audley professed in a sermon that “when contracted,” friends must “perform all of the duties belonging to them” (10). In Jeremy Taylor’s popular treatise (which Richardson cites in *Clarissa*), he too describes friendship as a consensual contract of merit, pleasure, and usefulness (6, 32, 47). Conduct texts on female friendship advised that women select friends rationally and cautiously. As Herbert explains, “Literate women were expected to ponder, carefully, privately, and thoroughly, the individual merits of potential female companions before they trusted them with friendship” (46). Thus, middle-class women were advised to treat friendships as serious private forms of rational contracted relationships.

Herbert also finds that women applied the term “alliance” interchangeably with “friendship” during the eighteenth century “to denote their positive social relationships” (15). The term alliance was used during the eighteenth century to denote both “people united by kinship or friendship” and unrelated individuals “united for a common purpose or for mutual benefit, esp. (the union) of nations or states” as in a “confederation, partnership” (OED). In name and practice, the alliance built among women in private relationships appears, in part, to echo the public relationships built between men through social and political contracts. Like their male counterparts, women used female alliances, or “friendships,” for their mutual benefit and empowerment (Herbert 13). Beyond strictly familial or domestic relations, women assisted one

another through “the exchanging of gifts and services, traveling together, providing health care,” completing collective domestic labor, or among the elite, in forming intellectual salons (Herbert 13; Lanser 181; Yalom and Brown 96-79).

As we can see from the list above, women’s friendships, like men’s, might include a range of mutually beneficial commitments that extend beyond the intimacy of the private sphere. Naomi Tadmor also points out that “in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England friendship encompassed a broad and extremely important spectrum of relationships” including familial, social, occupational, and political or patron relations (167). Thus, familial, work, or other close social relationships of trust and support would likely share the title of friendship along with private, freely chosen, and affectionate relationships of confidence that were also championed as ideal friendship. Early novel readers would consider the trusted, confidential relationships between fellow female domestics (like Pamela and Mrs. Jervis) or between a female employer and her servant (Roxana and Amy) to be forms of friendship within this spectrum of positive social relationships. My dissertation examines women’s fictional homosocial relations, which often can be plotted along this broad spectrum of “friendship,” and their violation through rape. Eighteenth-century domestic and courtship novels depict criminal betrayals of trust between gentlewomen and working femmes soles (*Clarissa*), mistresses and servants (*Roxana and Fanny Hill*), and between female employees (*Pamela*).

The first chapter investigates the hostile, rather than trusting and positive relationship between the maid, Pamela, and an unscrupulous housekeeper, Mrs. Jewkes. While Pamela and Mrs. Jewkes’ antagonistic relations are highlighted in Richardson’s novel, there is very little historical research on servants’ lived homosocial relationships. Rather, historians including Meldrum, Hill, and Straub focus on master-servant relationships. This is largely due to the fact

there are so few surviving servant authored texts in comparison to the various diaries and conduct publications produced by middle- and upper-class employers. While there were servant hierarchies separating domestic workers in larger households, we can suspect that servant women working together on a daily basis and even sharing sleeping quarters would have had the opportunity to build cooperative and friendly relationships. As Meldrum finds, “the size of the household and the gradient of the servant hierarchy, or degree of specialization...governed to some extent the chances for friendship or enmity among fellow servants” (126). However, as evidence reveals, “Most domestic servants...were engaged in too much interaction with others who lived in the households...for them to be aloof or withdrawn. For some of the time, that interaction was deeply satisfying as they struck up friendships and more with fellow servants, employers, and neighbors” (124). Historical research affirming positive servant relationships conflicts with representations of dangerous servant relations in servant conduct texts and other writing on the servant problem. In *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business* (1725), Defoe complains of corruptive networking among women servants, claiming, “thus have these wenches by their continual plotting and caballs, united themselves into a formidable body, and got the whip hand of their betters” (4). His charges suggest that female servants' relations are entirely negative, unrestrained, and detrimental to the family. There is no mention of positive collaboration in order to complete tasks, overcome personal difficulties, or improve the household. In *Pamela*, Richardson presents a range of servant relations, from loyal, helpful, and affectionate to treacherous and injurious. However, Mrs. Jewkes particularly emphasizes a negative representation of detrimental servant relations. Although the housekeeper does not threaten her master, she corrupts the household through her vulgar language, deception, and her participation in Pamela's rape. There is an apparent discrepancy between Richardson's and

Defoe's depictions of pernicious servant relations and female servants' real potential for positive relations. Conduct authors' discouragement or misrepresentation of constructive servant relations could suggest their efforts to avoid collective labor power among servants who might otherwise unite against excessive employer demands or lobby for higher wages.¹⁷

I also consider mistress-servant relations in this project because they are often discussed in women's conduct literature and are particularly highlighted in *Roxana*. *Roxana* reinforces eighteenth-century tracts on master-servant conduct and the servant problem, which discourage mistress-servant friendships. However, despite attempts to promote detached, hierarchical work relations, recent historians of female friendship find there were many cases of friendly bonds built between employers and their servants. Daniel Defoe and Zinzano advise against servant-master relationships of intimacy and confidence that serve to weaken masters' authority. Defoe argues that masters and mistresses make their servants "familiar, arrogant, proud, impertinent, and impudent" when they "level themselves to them in their Intimacies" (*The Great Law of Subordination* 138, 258). Similarly, Zinzano advises that servants and hired companions shun masters' invitations of friendship or merrymaking, as this "importunity" "draws the over-good natur'd beyond Rules and out of Bounds" (57). Although servant conduct texts criticize the formation of equalizing and intimate occupational friendships, some gentlewomen apparently formed mutually beneficial alliances or relationships with female servants and lower-class neighbors. In *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-century England* (2001), Natalie Tadmor explains the term "friend" commonly was used to refer to "un-related employers, guarantors, guardians" (167, 169). Moreover, Amanda Herbert, who studied the nature of women's relationships in *Female Alliances* (2014), argues that despite class and other social differences mistresses of the

¹⁷ See Defoe's *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*, 1.

house and other elite women “were not estranged from the lower-status individuals who surrounded and served them” (8). While “higher-status women were at times dismissive of and hostile toward servants and poor women,” she also discovered that diverse “alliances were formed between elite women and their lower-class servants, friends, and neighbors...in kitchens, bedchambers, and gardens” where they communicated and worked collaboratively together (78). Tim Meldrum’s study of servants’ court depositions also reveals that elite and lower-middle-class employers shared positive intimate relationships with their employees (88). Finally, Hill provides examples of the many relatives that employers hired as servants and housekeepers, which likely altered the formal dynamic between masters and servants (*Servants* 120-125). In effect, Herbert, Tadmor, Hill, and Meldrum provide pictures of mistresses and servants’ positive and even friendly relations that stand in sharp contrast to those of contemporary conduct writers who advocated a strict relational hierarchy between female employers and employees.

Although conduct literature for female servants discouraged or ignored domestics’ “friendships” with mistresses or other female employees, conduct literature heavily emphasized the benefits and guidelines for middle-class women’s friendships. As mentioned above, women were taught to wisely and rationally enter into homosocial relations and intimate friendships. Once relationships were formed, women were advised to practice scrutiny over their friends’ behaviors, but they were also advised to practice “strict fidelity” in the friendship (48, 50). Such cautiously formed and carefully cultivated bonds were to create virtuous community between gentlewomen, often in the private sphere. As Astell articulates, “nothing is more likely to improve us in virtue and advance us to the very highest pitch of goodness than unfeigned friendship” (90).

While novels including *Clarissa* and *Miss Betsy Thoughtless* promote positive friendships among domestic middling-class women, they discourage female readers from forming friendships with economically independent, working females who are associated with the corrupt and deceptive qualities of the market. Literary depictions of protagonists' poor judgment in trusting working women (or otherwise economically independent women) provide female readers with cautionary tales of broken friendship, betrayal, and injury. As Janet Todd asserts, in eighteenth-century fictional representations of female friendship, wealthy women are capable of maintaining friendships while less fortunate women are not (407). Although in reality, Herbert finds that "female alliances" in early modern society, "were not the sole privilege of wealthy women and their equally affluent female friends and relatives" (116). However, positive "alliances" between women are only depicted in the early domestic novel if female servants or acquaintances share the class values of the middling household. For example, in *Pamela*, Mrs. Jervis can remain a dear friend, aid, and confidante because she was raised as a wealthy woman of genteel morals. Meanwhile, Mrs. Jewkes, who previously worked as an innkeeper's housekeeper and talks like "a London Prostitute" cannot (108, 180). Thus, depictions of ideal virtuous friendship among "middle-class" women help to build class identity while the narratives of the felonious female accomplice to rape help police transgressive class boundaries between women. These novels encourage middle-class women to embrace the ideology of domestic sphere through consensual marriage *and* to pursue positive female friendships with women of their own status. In contrast, narratives of women's betrayal through rape were used to represent the danger of interclass friendship, which resulted in a profound violation of women's virtuous subjecthood and their ruined reputation.

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The following chapters analyze popular novels that engage in exemplary ways with eighteenth-century discourses framing women's legal, economic, and homosocial roles through depictions of heterosexual rape involving a female accomplice. The first chapter on Richardson's *Pamela* contextualizes rape within changes in the labor market and the private sphere. The rape narrative promotes women's consent to marriage contracts over their participation in labor contracts as *femes soles*. Next, the abduction and rape involving female accomplices in Richardson's second novel, *Clarissa*, is used to debate women's agency as victims and perpetrators under the contemporary justice system. Propertied middle-class women appear deserving of legal protection while women engaged in the sex industry are depicted as culpable accomplices. Finally, Defoe's *Roxana* and Cleland's *Fanny Hill* position servant rape within discourses over the servant problem and female wage labor. The blame for female servant promiscuity initiated by rape is deflected onto *femes soles* incriminated for their engagement in prostitution. In each chapter, I examine the violated relationship between the victim and the felonious *feme sole*, as well as the narrative's deflection of culpability for heterosexual rape onto the female accomplice(s) within particular legal, commercial, and homosocial contexts, which help to reinforce middle-class ideology of consensual marriage and the moralizing domestic sphere.

Pamela's struggles against the predatory rake Mr. B have been read as a political allegory for middle-class ideology fighting to assert and maintain her individual agency against a rake, representative of aristocratic authority and vice. However, in chapter one, I also consider Richardson's *Pamela* as a primary example of the middling classes' ideological promotion of women's limited liberal agency through marital consent. As Carol Pateman, Wendy Brown, Nancy Hirschmann and other feminists articulate, classical liberalism upholds patriarchy by

subordinating women in marriage and the domestic sphere while men control the private family as well as politics and commerce in the public sphere. This chapter establishes the ways in which Richardson grants his female protagonist liberal capacities, including her assertion of free will against rape and her exercise of consent through marriage. However, her expression of agency only serves to reposition her in the home as a *feme covert* who is denied access to the public sphere of contractual commerce and wage labor. I argue that Pamela's upward mobility from domestic servant to gentlewoman and the simultaneous vilification of the housekeeper illustrate the novel's promotion of women's consent to sexual, or marital, contracts over commercial contracts. In reality, both types of contracts subordinate women, although the autonomous female worker retains relatively greater legal freedoms than the married *feme covert*. Nonetheless, the novel champions Pamela's consensual marriage contract and her agency as a middle-class domestic moral influence. Meanwhile, the unscrupulous working-class *feme sole* and malicious accomplice to attempted rape is incapable of virtuous friendship or integration into the respectable middle-class household.

I argue in chapter two that the female rape accomplices in *Clarissa* enrich our understanding of women's legal agency within the eighteenth-century justice system. I examine the ways in which Richardson uses legal discourse in the domestic novel to apply, critique, and also revise juridical definitions of a woman's consent and culpability. The novel reinforces legal statutes that protect Clarissa as a consensual agent victimized by rape and abduction. The narrative also aligns with existing statutes that hold the many female accomplices accountable for aiding in abduction and rape, unlike contemporary courts that seldom convicted male or female sex offenders. However, unlike eighteenth-century laws, Richardson ties the women's criminal culpability to their status as contracted sex workers. Because the female perpetrators

are depicted as unscrupulously involved in the sex industry, they are also vilified as capable of great treachery, and collude with Lovelace (the principal abductor/rapist) to lure, imprison, and rape Clarissa. At times, their malicious intent to harm Clarissa exceeds the principal male abductor's criminal intentions and is also amplified beyond what is evidenced in eighteenth-century trials. Richardson presents female criminals as culpable legal agents who threaten gentlemen's agency and endanger their position within the patriarchal family.

The final chapter examines conduct literature on the servant problem as a means of re-interpreting rape narratives in the domestic novel. I read Defoe's *Roxana* and Cleland's *Fanny Hill* as corresponding with contemporary conduct literature on strained servant-master relations during an era of increasingly contracted servant labor, mobility, and independence. The rape narratives express overlapping anxieties found in conduct literature over both corrupt commerce infiltrating the domestic sphere and employers' distrust of servants' virtue and obedient subordination. In addition, *Roxana* and *Fanny Hill* specifically reflect conduct writers' gendered complaints over women laborers' sexual promiscuity. Yet, the rape narratives also exemplify the high occurrence of rape among female domestic workers. I argue that these novels deflect the blame from male perpetrators in the household, who (according to trial statistics) were most commonly charged for raping domestics, onto women in the prostitution industry, a typically disparaged working population. By extension, the social culpability for servant rape is largely removed from a genteel readership / employer class invested in the ideology of the moralizing domestic sphere.

Studying fictional female accomplices to rape in the eighteenth-century domestic novel improves our understanding of the cultural resistance to women's legal and commercial subjecthood in the public sphere. The three chapters illustrate that the eighteenth-century

domestic novel often transfers the image of the unprincipled and thus, morally threatening market onto the image of the working-class female servant, business woman, prostitute, or otherwise economically independent female. Female characters who embody the supposed corruption of public commerce become othered and criminalized as sexual aggressors. They serve as dangerous antagonists to the young protagonist of middling class values, who is seeking to become the ideal domestic wife and mother through consensual marriage. Women's felonious participation in rape, by extension, also harms the ideological security and virtue of the middle-class patriarchal family, which relies on the wife's dutiful subordination through the marriage contract. Finally, the criminalization of the female sole deters female readers with middling sensibilities or aspirations from contemplating economic agency outside of marriage or forming homosocial relationships beyond the domestic sphere. Though often a marginal character in the domestic plot, the female accomplice is central to the early novel's project of circumscribing single women of the developing middle class within the private sphere of the patriarchal family.

Chapter 1: The Evils of Women's Contracted Labor in *Pamela*

Richardson's *Pamela*, like a number of eighteenth-century domestic novels depicting heterosexual rape and marriage, can be read as metaphorically representing the middle-class individual's struggle for self-determination, upward social mobility, and greater political power. These novels also provided literal depictions of women's increased agency through marriage as moralizing influences within the patriarchal family. While early domestic novels championed women's participation in marital contracts, they castigated unmarried women who supported themselves through labor contracts. In many domestic and courtship novels, financially independent single women are often set in opposition to virtuous young women seeking marriage. Femes soles (increasingly labeled spinsters during the eighteenth century) are often characterized by Richardson and his fellow eighteenth-century novelists as corrupt, unfeminine, and dangerous to young single women with middling-class sensibilities. The narratives usually further vilified femes soles as sexually deviant, unscrupulous, criminal accomplices to rape or attempted rape. Yet, in reality, femes soles who chose not to marry struggled to support themselves against constraining hierarchical employment contracts in a labor market that hired men more often than women and did not pay women an independent living wage.

In *Pamela*, Mrs. Jewkes, the working-class housekeeper, takes on the role of the unconscionable, vulgar, and mercenary feme sole who attacks and sexually threatens the virtuous and marriagable female protagonist. Meanwhile, Pamela's progression from a domestic servant to a married gentlewoman encourages women's participation in marital contracts and their position as wives within the patriarchal family. This chapter will argue that *Pamela* promotes liberal ideals for young women through their pursuit of companionate marriage, while it

simultaneously castigates unmarried, and economically independent, *femes soles* as a threat to middle-class feminine subjectivity. The chapter is divided into two sections. First, I examine the novel's engagement with the tenets of Lockean liberalism and contemporary conduct literature as it champions Pamela's consensual marriage contract and her agency as a middle-class domestic moral influence. Despite coverture laws that in reality denied married women legal agency and property rights, I contend that Pamela's progression from a domestic servant to a married gentlewoman works to convince readers that women best achieve liberal ideals by surrendering legal and economic agency in marriage. The second section establishes Richardson's adoption of the socially disparaged *feme sole* from contemporary conduct literature, represented by the housekeeper, Mrs. Jewkes. Her vilification as a morally bankrupt rape accomplice is linked to her status as an economically independent female laborer. As an antagonist to Pamela, she is characterized as crude, unfeminine, and thus incapable of virtuous friendship or integration into the respectable middle-class household. I suggest that the unmarried, working-class Mrs. Jewkes, who abuses and sexually threatens Pamela, presents *femes soles* in general as an enemy of conjugal marriage, middle-class domesticity, and liberal subjectivity.

Promoting Women's Consent within Marriage under Lockean Contract Theory

Eighteenth-century law, conduct writing, and the novel build on Locke's conflicting notions of female agency as outlined in *Two Treatises of Government*. There is debate among feminists whether Locke intends to include women in his conception of the liberal subject. Locke asserts in *Two Treatises of Government* that every rational individual has an inherent "Liberty to dispose, and order, as he lists, his Person, Actions, Possessions, and his whole Property" under the law, without subjection "to the arbitrary Will of another" (324). Although he uses masculine pronouns, some scholars interpret his theory of liberty as open to all rational adults. In addition,

Locke also argues against patriarchalism, a theory of government articulated by Robert Filmer that the king ruled over the people as a father ruled over his family. To refute patriarchalism, Locke grants men and women a shared “limited Power” over the family, one that “a Mistress of a Family may have as well” (341). Locke also promotes women as consenting participants in the marriage contract and grants them contractual freedoms within marriage, including the liberty to divorce (339). He describes a marriage compact as similar to a civil contract, as a “voluntary Compact” between a freely consenting man and woman built on “mutual Support, and Assistance, and a Communion of Interest” (337). Women’s inclusion as contractual agents in this “first society” points to their capacity as consensual subjects (337). However, in the same treatise, Locke naturalizes wives submission to their husbands in marriage (192, 341). He claims that “every Husband hath” a “Conjugal Power” “to have his Will take place before that of his Wife in all things of their common Concernment,” and this is a subjection that “every Wife owes her Husband” (192). Locke’s treatment of women as mutually consenting agents in marriage contracts and also as naturally subordinate to their husbands is clearly contradictory. As Carol Pateman has influentially argued, Locke regards marriage as a compact that exists prior to, and outside of, civil society, which denies women political agency in the public sphere and relegates women to naturalized subjection in the private sphere (Locke 337, Pateman 6, 11). Wendy Brown contends that women’s positions as wives in the domestic sphere associate them with the family, as well as with “need, dependence, inequality, the body, and relationality,” while the qualities of “autonomy, formal equality, rationality, and individuality” are enjoyed by men who engage in the social contracts of public politics (*Regulating Aversion* 194). Pateman’s and Brown’s criticisms of women’s subordination within the marriage contract highlights the eighteenth century as a pivotal moment in the history of gender. This period establishes domestic

roles for women as wives, mothers, and caretakers, excluding them from exercising political rights in the public sphere.¹⁸

Popular conduct manuals and novels, including Richardson's *Pamela*, follow Locke's contradictory discussion of gendered liberalism for women by championing women's rights to marital consent while also promoting their domestic roles removed from the civil sphere. Popular conduct authors promote women's choice of a spouse, or consent to a marriage proposal, as an empowering form of female agency. For example, Mary Astell (1700) warns her readers at length about the frequency of ill-chosen and financially uneven marriages that produce unhappy relationships. However, she also advocates that women should enter into virtuous marriages of relative equality in order to "continue mankind," to best support the "education of children, and to promote the "good of society" (61, 62). She advises that women accept marriage offers by men who prove to have "a good understanding, a virtuous mind," and she suggests that "in all other respects let there be as much equality as may be" (79). She argues for relative financial equality between engaged persons, as well as a strong friendship, similar Christian values, and mutual love, honor, worship, and obedience between the man and wife (61, 80-81). Her advice to women consenting to marriage echoes Lockean theories of civil contract. She too suggests that marriages should be contracted by relatively equal, rational, and virtuous partners in order to promote the good of society. Despite her grievances over uneven marriages, her description of ideal marriages promotes women's social agency through their rational consent to marriage contracts.

Throughout the eighteenth century, conduct authors promote companionate marriage for young people (Stone 219-220). Published sixty years after Astell's book, John Gregory's famous conduct text for young women (that was republished in many editions and translations), entitled

¹⁸ Also see Earle 199-202; Harrington 45; and McKeon 111.

Father's Legacy to his Daughters (1761), continues to encourage young women's careful inspection of suitors and their informed choice when considering marriage. He reminds his daughters, "consider well," or you will not find "sense, delicacy, tenderness, a lover, a friend, an equal companion, in a husband," and "the world will therefore look on you as unreasonable women...that did not deserve to be happy" (116, 117). His advice implies that, much like political contracts between men, women have the capacity for disinterested rationality and judgment in order to enter independently into marriage contracts. In addition, his reference to husbands as "equal companions" also illustrates his promotion of marriage as a contract between equal individuals, rather than between husbands and their naturally or legally subordinated wives.¹⁹ Yet, while he grants women the intellectual capacity and agency to enter into companionate marriages, he also warns his daughters and his female readers about their difficult future after entering into a hasty marriage. He reminds that women's "choice of a husband" is "one of the greatest consequence to your happiness" (119). While he does not mention explicitly women's hardships under coverture laws, he advises, "The principal security you can have for this will depend on your marrying a good-natured, generous man, who despises money, and who will let you live where you can best enjoy that pleasure...for which you married him" (118). Thus, he suggests women's informed and rational choice in consenting to a companionate marriage is critical in ensuring their fair treatment as wives under coverture laws.

Conduct literature encouraged single women to marry wisely and then become virtuous moral influences as wives and mothers in the home. These texts taught readers that wives and mothers, removed from the corruptive public spheres of politics and commerce, could instill

¹⁹ Also see Lawrence Stone's chapter, "The Companionate Marriage," in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, in which he documents its social rise in the eighteenth century and cites a number of primary authors who promote emotional attachment, friendship, and domestic happiness within companionate marriage (217-224).

family values of affection, sympathy, and benevolence into their children and positively influence their husbands. As one conduct manual for women advises in 1707, you should be an early “Example of Piety, in your own Life and Conversation: And in the Decorum of your Family... And in matters of the Virtuous Education of your Children, you are not only Accountable to your Self, but God” (75-76). Dana Harrington observes that “By positioning women as moralizing agents of society, middle-class intellectuals...were able to provide an ethical grounding to keep in check the unbridled pursuit of the selfish passions with which trade and commerce were linked” (42). Women were considered to be the force of virtue protecting the family from the external corruption of commerce.

However, promoting women’s choice, marital consent, and moralizing influence within the private family distracted society from confronting women’s lack of political agency. For example, Hannah More, a popular conduct author, naturalizes the gendered divisions of labor between the public and private sphere, claiming women’s education should produce “good wives, good daughters, good mistresses, good members of society, and good Christians” who can practice “domestic virtue” (53, 54). Meanwhile, men are “intended by Providence for the bustling scenes of life—to appear terrible in arms, useful in commerce, shining in counsel” (7). The ideological promotion of women’s domestic agency diverted women’s attention from gendered political, social, and legal disparities. As Pateman has argued, the notion of a contractual marriage, or an “agreement between two equal parties who negotiate until they arrive at terms that are to their mutual advantage,” is appealing to women seeking consensual agency (154-155). However, women were unlikely to enter equally into marriage agreements due to family and financial pressures. Then, according to William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, except in some special criminal and civil cases, “the very being or legal

existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything (1.15.III). Once she is married, a woman lacks a “civil existence” and can no longer negotiate contracts or assert legal agency under her husband (Pateman 156). Brown further argues that “liberalism ‘misdcribes’ or ideologically obscures the extent to which its subjects are shaped and positioned by a sexual division of labor and a sex difference that liberal discourse presumes to transcend” (“Liberalism’s Family Values” 143). Accordingly, the eighteenth-century ideology promoting women’s pseudo-liberal agency through marital contracts helped to obscure their sexual and political subordination. Harrington suggests that the hypocritical liberalism Brown describes was at work during the period. She asserts that the fact “that few women in the eighteenth-century challenged (or even recognized) the inherent contradictions in liberalism attests to the ideological strength and to the power of the social practices that helped instantiate this ideology” (45). The popular consumption of conduct novels and manuals, which promoted modes of women’s suppression under liberalism, attests to the power of these influential ideologies.

Like popular conduct writing, domestic novels helped to propagate women’s subordination through marriage while using the liberal language of free will, agency, and consent. However, Nancy Armstrong reconciles the contradictory depictions of women’s agency through sexual and marital consent and their subsequent subordination through marriage in the domestic novel as a political metaphor. She views eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction’s depictions of women’s consent to marriage as ultimately promoting middle-class ideologies of social agency in general, rather than granting women greater legal or social agency through marital consent. She claims that novels depicted female characters’ self-assertion through sexual

contracts to create a myth of middle-class “emergence” and social authority while deflecting the texts’ overt political aims (51). She believes “social competition” between middle- and upper-classes was “sexualized and therefore suppressed even while it was being experienced” (51). Armstrong uses *Pamela* as a primary example. She asserts that although Pamela “claims to deal only with the sexual contract, doing so...also revises the way in which political relationships are imagined” (112). Narratives displayed women’s assertion of free will through marital consent and their domestic moral authority. Yet, she argues the novels actually promoted class agency rather than the explicit agency of the young woman, who becomes a dutiful housewife through marriage (49). Thus, “competing class interests are therefore represented as a struggle that can be completely resolved in terms of the sexual contract” (49).

Though Armstrong argues courtship novels ultimately promoted the middle class rather than women’s agency, Wendy Jones contends that eighteenth-century domestic novels did promote liberal rights (liberty, contract, and consent) for women through courtship narratives. However, she believes the courtship novel expressed the conflict between both a new progressive notion of women’s consent and “a traditional, patriarchal view of marriage in which women were subordinate” (7). She contends, “following from the premise that civil society originated in social contract,” a variety of social relationships including marriage became regarded as consensual in eighteenth-century society (4). She insists, “It is no accident that the rise of married love and the cultural hegemony of liberal theory coincide, or that consensual married love, with its emphasis on the individual’s significance, identity, and right to self-fulfillment, articulates the very characteristics that liberal theory grants to its citizen-subjects” (5). The early domestic novel advocates for this model of consensual marriage for women, which is based on the liberal principles of free will and leads to women’s self-fulfillment in the home. Despite the

legal realities of female coverture, many works of domestic conduct fiction represented marriage as a private, or sexual, version of liberal contracts that women were allowed to participate in. Jones finds that early novels, like conduct writing for young women, represent this contradiction, attempting “to reconcile both versions of marriage (consensual and patriarchal) by representing marriage as a loving friendship between spouses where the husband is nevertheless lord and master” (7). Even though courtship narratives promote Lockean assertions that women could exercise their autonomy through marital consent, as Armstrong contends, by the end of most narratives, the novels happily rescinded women’s autonomy through patriarchal marriages that subordinated women under coverture laws.

While I agree with Jones that the eighteenth-century domestic novel ambivalently promotes both women’s agency and subjection through their consent to patriarchal marriage, I believe that literary narratives condemning rape and championing consensual marriage are further complicated by the recurring intervention of criminalized *femes soles*. It is necessary to revisit the rape and courtship narrative in *Pamela* in order to examine how the figure of the laboring *feme sole* is maligned in order to promote the moral agency of middle-class housewives. In *Pamela*, Mrs. Jewkes reinforces Pamela’s transition from a domestic servant to a gentleman’s wife. The narrative of the vulgar housekeeper whose labor history vilifies her as a sexually deviant rape accomplice demonstrates Richardson’s censure of independent women’s participation in contractual labor outside of marriage. The criminalization of Mrs. Jewkes deters female readers with middling sensibilities like Pamela from establishing homosocial relationships with other potentially unscrupulous independent women and from seeking supposedly corruptive economic agency outside of marriage and the domestic sphere. Thus, the vilified housekeeper reaffirms Pamela’s decision to marry and become a celebrated domestic

moral agent. The ideological project of disparaging females within courtship narratives in fact works to limit women's liberal agency in the public sphere while circumscribing their subordinate conjugal position within the patriarchal private sphere.

Before we examine Mrs. Jewkes as a threat to Pamela's and married women's domestic agency, we should examine the conflicting ways in which Pamela's narrative provides an exemplary model for women's marital consent and moral authority. Like other female protagonists, Pamela resists Mr. B's attempts to seduce and rape her. During multiple scenes of resistance, Pamela defends her autonomy on the grounds of her status as a consensual liberal subject. When trapped at Lincolnshire, she wishes only "to have my own Liberty, and not to be confined by such unlawful restraint" (201). She claims her rights to freedom over her body and will. Yet, through her imprisonment Pamela feels overpowered by "the superior Arts" of her "barbarous Master" (165). When her inherent rights are denied, she describes her coerced imprisonment and the threat of rape as slavery. As Pamela writes to Mr. B, "let my Assent be that of a free Person, mean as I am, and not of a sordid Slave, who is to be threatened and frightened into Compliance" (139). Pamela refuses Mr. B's contract to provide for her as a kept mistress on the grounds of her individual rights to control her sexual and marital consent. Although she acknowledges his patriarchal authority as her master, she defends her consensual sexual liberties, claiming, "I dread your Will to ruin me is as great as your Power: Yet, Sir, will I dare to tell you, that I will make no Freewill Offering of my Virtue" (191). Pamela asserts that her subjecthood is tied to sexual consent. As Flint suggests, she believes "her inviolable self" is "inextricably linked to her premarital chastity" (498).

After the final rape attempt, Mr. B ultimately acknowledges "her integrity and right to choose" as an independent woman in command of her own body (Hilliard 201). Pamela's

perseverance in defending her individual right to sexual and marital consent, which upholds her feminine virtue, is championed in the novel as a treasured wifely quality. She sets an example for female audiences only accepting Mr. B's marriage proposal when it is based on love and esteem. Like wives in contemporary conduct manuals, Pamela then becomes the model of domestic virtue. Mr. B chooses to make Pamela his wife because he values her "Beauty, Virtue, Prudence, and Generosity too," which help to reform his household (423). Mr. B. declares what "is infinitely more valuable" than a wife's fortune is "an experience'd Truth," and "a well-try'd Virtue" (337). The text champions her unshakable resistance and her judicious consent. Yet, as Wendy Brown reminds us, "choice can become a critical instrument of domination in liberal capitalist societies; insofar as the fiction of the sovereign subject blinds us to powers producing that subject, choice both cloaks and potentially eroticizes the powers it engages" (197). From this perspective, we see Pamela's consensual agency as diminished rather than enacted in her decision to marry Mr. B. The struggle for power over Pamela is highly eroticized through the rape and courtship scenes and is resolved happily through their sexual contract. While she resists disreputable alternatives to the sexual / conjugal contract for women, specifically rape and prostitution, she agrees to dutiful subordination as Mr. B's wife. Thus, Pamela reaffirms patriarchal control over women through marriage.

Critics agree that Pamela's hard-fought autonomy is quickly lost through her subordinating marriage to Mr. B. As Hilliard critiques, "If the first half of *Pamela* embodies a movement toward self-reliance and autonomy, and...an ideal relationship, the second half... disappoints modern readers because it displays the complex, defiant Pamela becoming a conduct book stereotype," who humbly serves and obeys her husband (210). As Mr. B. adopts the appropriate, protective, patriarchal role over the household, and Pamela becomes the ideal dutiful

wife, the novel restores familial and social order. In a number of passages that are rather irritating to modern feminist readers, Pamela reaffirms her happy submission to, and reliance on, her husband as master. In one example, she professes, “I can have no Will but yours...weigh’d down with the Sense of your Obligations on one side, and my own Unworthiness,...I will not scruple to obey you” (272). Whereas she previously defended her agency, her language in this passage directly demonstrates that she gladly gives up her will, or autonomous choice, in order to obey her new spouse and take up her new domestic position as mistress.

Despite Pamela’s elevation in class status and her esteemed reputation as an exemplary wife and mistress of the house, she continues to share a subservient position similar to other servants under Mr. B. As Beasley articulates, *Pamela* promotes “the traditional ideals of male authority, and that the...narrative leaves the woman in a subordinate position...” (37). Although Pamela’s class status and her position in the household are elevated after becoming Mr. B’s wife, Pamela’s dutiful subordination does not change through her transition from servant to mistress. As a wife, Pamela continues to call her husband master in the manner of a servant, insisting to Mrs. Jewkes, “He shall always be my Master; and I shall think myself more and more his servant” (303). He maintains the title as a symbol of her duty and obligation as wife, but her continued use of “master” binds her to her former servant status. Moreover, as Kristina Booker contends, “It is only once Mr. B and God have granted her permission to perform the role of noble wife, to emulate her late mistress, that Pamela will do so, because...her acts...are acts of obedience” (49). As her position remains submissive and compliant, she eagerly agrees to adopt the list of wifely rules he provides her, including his order that “she must not show Reluctance, Uneasiness, or Doubt to oblige him; and that too at half a Word; and must not be bid twice to do one thing” (450). Thus, she is willing to jump at his demands without question as a paid servant

would. Pateman argues that workers and wives are both contractually subjected under patriarchal institutions. She contends that “Capitalists can exploit workers and husbands can exploit wives because workers and wives are constituted as subordinates through the employment contract and the marriage contract” (8). Pateman’s argument is clearly illustrated in *Pamela*. Despite Pamela’s rise in social status to a gentleman’s wife and mistress of the house, the text reinforces wives and domestics similar subordination under the master of the house.

The novel illustrates that both contracted servants and wives perform a submissive role in the patriarchal household. However, *Pamela* promotes the supposedly natural subordination of wife to her husband over the ideologically unnatural subordination of working women (who ought to marry) under their masters. Pamela’s dutiful role as wife reflects eighteenth-century middle-class ideologies that encourage and celebrate women’s work within the private family, rather than outside the home. Changing middle-class ideologies were based in part on shifts in domestic labor and production within a developing capitalist and market society. Various types of household production left the home as markets grew and industrialization increased (Brown “Liberalism’s Family Values” 144; McKeon 110; Rosenthal 252). McKeon notes that the home, “deprived of its (private) economic function, increasingly assumed the (private) status of the modern family,” and “Although the intimate role materially depended on the market role, family intimacy was experienced in diametrical opposition to its economic ground” (111). Middle-class women appear at the center of the private family wishing to ideologically separate itself from the market. Women’s work is then “increasingly privatized and confined to the household, while men’s is increasingly socialized and removed from the home” (Brown 144). Accordingly, conduct manuals for young women promoted their privatized labor, solely discussing female work in the context of wifely, domestic labor. Middle-class and genteel authors make it seem as

if there are no alternative forms of labor outside the home for middle-class women. An anonymous author early in the century claims, “the Managing of Household Affairs” is “the most proper Feminine Business from which neither Wealth nor Greatness can totally absolve you” (35). As this passage suggests, women’s work encompassed caring for the family and supervising the household. Evidently, the author regards household management as the only proper work for gentlewomen because he or she mentions no other viable types of work or ‘business’ for women of that class. Likewise, in William Kenrick’s 1753 conduct manual for gentlewomen, under the section labeled, “Employment,” he only provides a job description for the mistress of the house. She is temperate, virtuous, and industrious, “Her house is elegant, her handmaids are the daughters of neatness, and plenty smileth at her table” (38). There is an assumption within conduct literature addressed to both single and married middle-class women that domestic management of the home and family is the only form of acceptable work.

Like conduct literature for young women, the novel clearly champions women’s domestic roles as virtuous wives over women’s economic independence outside of marriage. As Heidi Giles claims, “*Pamela* and succeeding courtship novels...continue to encourage young women to (properly) give up their singularity and marry” (78). Pamela’s pre-existing virtues and refinements, including her industriousness, her self-denial, her honesty, and her wit are acclaimed among their genteel neighbors and visitors (8, 28, 46, 76). As Richardson concludes “From the *Oeconomy* she purposes to observe in her Elevation, let even *Ladies of Condition* learn, that there are Family Employments in which they may, and ought to make themselves useful, and give good examples to their inferiors, as well as Equals” (502). Across class, Pamela becomes the domestic model of “female employment” described in conduct literature. She performs her “Duty to God, Charity to the Poor and Sick, and the different Branches of

Household Management” that encompass women’s proper domestic labor within the family (502). She is praised (excessively) in the novel because she exemplifies the ideal moralizing, hard-working, and dutiful, middle-class wife. As one parishioner compliments, “You are...an Ornament to your Sex, an Honour to your Spouse, and a Credit to Religion!” (489).

The narrative moves Pamela toward an ideal marriage and domestic moral agency while it distances her from other forms of female labor newly deemed inappropriate for women of middle-class sensibilities. Pamela’s intentions to return to her parents and pursue physical labor are always averted in the novel. Laura J. Rosenthal observes that while the novel “constantly raises the specter,” or threat, of prostitution through Mr. B’s intentions to keep Pamela as a mistress, the novel “largely avoids confronting” Pamela’s potential to engage in other forms of physical, contracted labor and her “fall into the laboring class” (249). Rosenthal further suggests that “here and in much eighteenth-century fiction it is not prostitution that is unrepresentable for polite readers, but rather the other forms of labor to which Pamela never quite manages to return” (249). Pamela defends her eroticized body from sexual advances, adamantly refuses prostitution, and establishes her moral value as a future middle-class housewife. In these ways, she serves as a model of sexual virtue and agency for other middle-class women to emulate. In addition, Pamela’s abduction and transportation to Lincolnshire removes her title as servant and “in her daily activities, she comes to resemble, in a sense other ladies of leisure” (247). She writes letters and takes walks in the garden rather than completing her former tasks as a domestic servant. Rosenthal argues that Pamela’s progression from maidservant to domestic leisure and then to wifehood implies that “the rewards of domestic and economic comfort will present themselves to women who retain their sexual virtue” (251). However, while Pamela can resist seduction and assault, she would not be able to transition back into a refined gentleman’s wife

after pursuing other forms of base or arduous labor outside the genteel household (as we witness through Mrs. Jewkes). While she discusses returning to her parents' home and again becoming a milkmaid or finding work as a cook or dish washer, the narrative protects Richardson's protagonist of middle-class sensibilities from being subjected to physically demanding and supposedly vulgar paid labor (Richardson 45, 76). Instead, Pamela maintains her sexual virtue, reputation, and ability to marry while she also maintains her delicate physical features and refined skill sets that she acquired as a lady's maid. This elevated servant position provides her a relatively smooth transition into motherhood and domestic management as a wife.

Booker argues that Pamela provides a model of self-improvement for middle-class female readers through her "safe" emulation of genteel skills and values, which leads to her marriage and her class elevation. Yet, her transition from servant to submissive wife is carefully orchestrated in order to avoid arousing class anxieties among genteel eighteenth-century readers (42). In addition, we eventually find that her social elevation from a middle-class to upper-class family through marriage does not actually cross improper class lines. Booker suggests that "Richardson constructs his young heroine as a master-class ideal...through a piously contented servant maid" whose "marriage to Mr. B is (pointedly) the direct result of her refusal to attempt to transcend her station" and her "'virtuous' contentment with her place" (42). Thus, Pamela is able to model chastity, modesty, and wifely duty for other young gentlewomen to emulate without directly promoting working-class women's emulation of her rise in class status through uneven marriages. Unlike the youthful Pamela, Mrs. Jewkes is represented as unable to or unwilling to emulate her new mistress' virtue and social manners. Hardened by her extra-domestic labor history as a *feme sole*, she lacks the ability or opportunity to rise above her working-class status through virtuous emulation. Booker finds that "master classes celebrated

their own emulation of national heroes and virtuous heroines” (44). However, I suggest their discomfort with the social rise of laboring classes is evidenced in Mrs. Jewkes. Her status as a working female sole assigns her with masculine, corrupt, and unmotherly qualities that forever distinguish her as unredeemable through emulation that otherwise might lead to marital domesticity.

Independent Working Women

While women were formally excluded from the civic, or political, sphere and socialized to become wives in the domestic sphere, they were not legally prohibited from asserting economic agency in the commercial sphere. Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* arguably protected single women’s freedoms to control their labor and property within a liberal society. Locke claims that like the marriage contract and conjugal society, commercial society operates outside of civil society. Locke declares that all men have a right to property in a state of nature which precedes civil government. Individuals naturally possess their own body, labor, the land they cultivate, and the goods they produce (305-306). As C.B. Macpherson explains Locke’s thesis, “Men can be assumed to have a commercial economy quite independently of having a formal civil society...It is...the postulated moral reasonableness of men by nature, not the authority of a government, that establishes the conventional value of money and the obligation of commercial contracts” (210). Locke argues that civil government was formed afterward among men to protect individuals’ goods, estates, and commercial contracts (342). Although Locke always refers to a male individual, women arguably may have been included in his theory of possessive individualism. In alignment with Locke’s philosophy, English laws also regarded women as possessive individuals until they married and their rights were rescinded under marital coverture laws. Locke’s separation of contracts into distinct conjugal, commercial,

and civil arenas apparently helped to uphold women's limited freedoms in eighteenth-century English society. While women were excluded from civil politics, *femes soles* in the eighteenth century were not formally excluded from the commercial sphere and the labor market. Across class, *femes soles* took advantage of the laws allowing women to participate in contractual labor and support themselves financially.

Unlike many of their married female counterparts in the eighteenth century, significant numbers of single women exercised their freedoms to control their own labor and estates. Under the law, single women had the rights to own property, "to trade, make contracts, sue and be sued in the same way as a man" (Earle 158). Some wealthy single women enjoyed an independent inheritance, while middle- or lower-class widows may have carried on their husband's businesses (Hufton 364). Peter Earle also notes that a single woman who received her inheritance "at twenty-one was...quite capable, both financially and legally, of setting up in business, and many did so" (158). Unmarried middle-class women found service work as nurses, companions, housekeepers, governesses, school teachers, etc. (Hufton 368, 371). Meanwhile, large numbers of working-class young women found employment as domestic servants in upper- and middle-class homes. By the end of the century around 80,000, "or half of all employed women in London," worked in domestic service (White 227). Also, in urban areas, significant populations of women worked as prostitutes. In the second half of the century an estimated 20% of London women were engaged in some aspect of the sex industry (Cruikshank xi). *Femes soles'* pervasive presence throughout English society is reflected in the eighteenth-century novel. Independently wealthy women, landladies, dressmakers, housekeepers, maids, and prostitutes play central or secondary roles in many popular novels including *Roxana*, *Tom Jones*, *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, *Clarissa*, *Pamela*, *Fanny Hill*, and others.

English laws granted *femes soles* greater autonomy to work, negotiate contracts, and own property than their married counterparts. Despite the legal freedoms extended to unmarried women, wage gaps for female laborers in fact constrained working women's autonomy in the commercial sphere. Women's wages (outside of domestic service which often provided room and board) did not support an independent living. As Hufton reports, "the great problem for single working women was the inadequacy of the female wage which provided little more than a basic personal food ration" (361). Much as in our society until recent decades, employers of lace-makers and textile workers assumed female employees were supported by a patriarchal family, so women's salaries were not structured to provide independent women workers a basic living wage (361).

In addition to the great gender disparities in pay that working *femes soles* faced, feminists have argued that the very nature of employee contracts is in fact constraining. Carol Pateman reminds us that under liberal notions of contract, consensual relations between "capitalist or employer and wage laborer or worker" are perceived as equal (117). Thus, "The wage labourer now stands as a civil equal with his employer in the public realm and capitalist market" (117). Yet, she critiques that the "contract is the specifically modern means of creating relationships of subordination, but because civil subordination originates in contract, it is presented as freedom" (118). She suggests that the theory of contract perpetuates both a fiction of equality between agents and a fantasy of the (financially necessitous) employee's free will. Wendy Brown agrees with Pateman that in the past, the "'free' and 'voluntary' characteristics of contract served to anoint and naturalize the 'freedom' of both the wage laborer and the citizen of representative government" ("Liberalism's Family Values" 138). While women were not allowed to participate in civil government, single women were regarded as free to negotiate

contracts in the commercial sphere. However, economic need often drives workers into employment contracts, and the terms of the contract are generally dictated by employers who wield power in the relationship. Workers are not completely free to consent when they are “constrained by necessity and lacking choice or freedom of movement” (154). They may be dependent on their employer for income and housing, which hinders their freedom to choose and creates inequality between the necessitous employee and the prospective employer. In fact, research has shown that during periods of slow economic growth during the British eighteenth century, more single women who were left without dowries entered the labor market searching for economic support (Hufton 358). Also, there were large numbers of urban women left without sufficient employment, and female beggars in London (particularly those with children) outnumbered male beggars (Durstun 18). During difficult economic times, these groups of eighteenth-century women would have been particularly pressured to consent to unequal, if not unfavorable, labor contracts.

Brown also contends that the notion of consent in itself indicates subordination within contractual agreements. Echoing Mary Astell’s complaint that women’s marital consent is constrained, Brown explains that since “consent involves agreeing to something the terms of which one does not determine, consent marks the subordinate status of the consenting party” (Astell 68; Brown 163). While the consenting agent may negotiate the terms of the contract before agreeing to the contract, Brown convincingly defines consent as a more passive “response to power” that “adds or withdraws legitimacy” to authority, rather than “enacting...power” itself (163). Females legally and theoretically possessed the freedom to enter into equal or fair labor contracts with their employers. However, gender biases in pay, economic necessity, and

hierarchical differences between employer and employee prevented women's free or equal participation in labor contracts.

In *Pamela*, Richardson depicts contracted servants' constrained position, struggling between obedience and non-compliance under their unethical employer, Mr. B. In various scenes readers witness multiple servants, who may be financially strained, choose to maintain their income over defending their moral beliefs. The servant which Pamela calls "honest John" deceptively promises Pamela he will carry her letters to her parents while on business, but he acts as "an Implement to his Master's Hands," repeatedly delivering them first to Mr. B (92). Robert, the coachman, apologizes for carrying Pamela to Lincolnshire instead of to her parents' home. She reprimands him as the "Vile Tool of a Wicked Master," and he does not deny it. He replies, "I am sorry this task was put upon me; But I could not help it" (103). Although he does not disclose the reasons, Robert believes he cannot or should not refuse to obey his master's commands in this instance, despite his acknowledgement of guilt. Readers even witness Mrs. Jervis, Pamela's closest friend and protector, accept five guineas from Mr. B in an agreement that she may keep her job if she does not intervene again on Pamela's behalf (72). Pamela acknowledges that the housekeeper is in need of the guineas, as "she pays old Debts for her Children that were extravagant, and wants them herself" (75). Clearly, Mrs. Jervis' values conflict with her need for employment in order to support her family and herself. She represents many servants who may choose to uphold financial and ethical obligations to their family rather than defy corrupt employers. Like Mrs. Jervis, multiple servants initially choose to participate in their master's underhanded treatment of Pamela. However, once Pamela is falsely removed to Lincolnshire and imprisoned, several servants choose to defy Mr. B in order to help free Pamela. Mrs. Jervis, Mr. Longman, and Jonathan in particular are fired for working against their master,

proving that ultimately their personal codes of ethics are stronger than their need or wish for income. The novel illustrates workers' moral struggles between financially stable obedience and ethical insubordination. Yet, despite the real financial and social constraints placed on females and other workers in the labor market, in *Pamela* the characters almost always maintain the agency to choose. Whether characters are resisting seduction or colluding with an unprincipled master, Richardson seems to uphold the choice of the individual despite how limited one's options appear in the narrative. Richardson's depiction of employees' and women's agency illustrates Pateman's argument that the ideal of social parity promoted within Lockean contract theory depends on the fantasy of the individual's free choice (117-118). It appears that fantasy narratives like *Pamela*, which emphasize personal choice over constraint, are needed in the eighteenth century in order to uphold the faulty ideals of contractual parity and individual agency generated by Locke's theory of liberalism.

Mrs. Jewkes: The Odious Female Worker

Like the other contracted servants, Richardson depicts Mrs. Jewkes as an economic agent who has chosen to obey a particularly corrupt Master, intentionally selling her soul for profit. The working-class housekeeper at Lincolnshire is vilified as an autonomous agent who chooses to act as a criminal accomplice in the imprisonment and rape of Pamela. Because she follows the Master's wicked orders rather than her convictions, Mrs. Jewkes is equated with an unscrupulous bawd in the novel. Pamela uses this familiar, pejorative stereotype to describe the housekeeper. Upon arriving at Lincolnshire, Pamela fears, "I am got into the Hands of a Wicked Procuress," who "seems to delight in Filthiness" (108). Mrs. Jewkes' character is immediately associated with her position as a consciously underhanded wage laborer. She is set in opposition to Pamela who asserts early in the narrative that her highest duty as a female servant is "to

cherish her Virtue and good Name,” and “to value Honesty above my Life” (31). At various points, Pamela challenges Mrs. Jewkes to follow the servant code of ethics, declaring, “you will not, I hope, do an unlawful or wicked Thing for any Master in the World!” (110).²⁰ However, Mrs. Jewkes flippantly replies, “he is my Master, and if he bids me to do a Thing that I can do, I think I ought to do it , and let him, who has Power, to command me, look to the Lawfulness of it” (110). The housekeeper intentionally deflects legal and moral responsibility for her actions onto her employer. Unlike Pamela, she dismisses her rights to moral agency as a contracted worker. Mrs. Jewkes makes it clear that her allegiances lie with her employer, not with a fellow employee, despite Pamela’s moral justification and her vulnerability (109). Richardson suggests to readers through Mrs. Jewkes’ unethical responses that she (like other laboring *femes soles*) has internalized the callousness and corruption of the market and has lost a feminine compassion for others. As middle-class society came to value women’s domestic roles within the patriarchal family, conduct literature and fiction disparaged women as masculine and unscrupulous who exercised their legal and commercial freedoms outside of marriage like their male counterparts. Mrs. Jewkes illustrates that the social price economically independent women paid was to be accused of selfishness and to be “figured as monstrous in their departure from a (selfless) nurturant nature,” which women were to exercise through marriage and motherhood in the familial sphere (Brown 162).

Mrs. Jewkes represents financially independent *femes soles* who assume the characteristics of male agents as independent and self-supporting, and are thus socially denounced as degenerate and unwomanly. As Wendy Brown describes, “the autonomous woman—the childless, unmarried, or lesbian woman—is within liberalism a sign of disordered

²⁰ Servant conduct writers Richard Mayo (1693) and Zinzano (1725) both argue that servants are to obey God’s commands if their masters’ commands are contrary to Christian teachings (Mayo 30; Zinzano 14).

society or nature gone awry on the one hand, or of individual failure to ‘adapt to femininity’ on the other” (“Liberalism’s Family Values” 157). The eighteenth-century sentiment that single women are culturally aberrant or even monstrous is often evidenced in women’s conduct literature. Hufton correctly articulates that the unmarried woman emerges as a stereotype in eighteenth-century literature as someone “to be despised, pitied, and avoided” (356). In 1707 one female author writes that she avoids discussing the circumstances of unmarried women, a topic is altogether “not very agreeable to many of our Sex” because, as she articulates, “An Old Maid” is “look’d upon as the most Calamitous Creature in Nature” (38, 39). Spinsters are so troubling to authors urging young women into marriage that this particular author refuses to address the demographic of women who she identifies as disastrous distortions of womanhood. Similarly, William Kenrick declares in *The Whole Duty of a Woman* in 1753 that the unmarried woman, or “antient maiden is a byword with her sisters, and is accounted ill-condition’d among women” (42). Again, he regards independent women as notoriously deviant and unfeminine. It is not surprising that Richardson paints Mrs. Jewkes, the unmarried housekeeper as a social outcast. When Pamela meets Mrs. Jewkes, she provides readers a horrifically ugly description of her that aligns with many eighteenth-century portrayals of bawds, who are pejoratively stereotyped as female outcasts. As Bruckmann claims, she “looks like everyone’s nightmare” of a brothel keeper or madam (53). She is fat, aging (around forty years old), and a drinker, with a “Heart more ugly than her Face (114). As a hard-hearted drinker, Mrs. Jewkes is an unfeminine physical and moral outsider, positioned in opposition to Pamela whose virtue, beauty, and wit recommend her domestic value in marriage. Wendy Brown explains that historically, as civic autonomy under liberalism is seen “in opposition to the family, sexuality, and reproduction,” “efforts by women to assume such autonomy are often maligned as selfish, irresponsible,

or...simply unfeminine” (158). Accordingly, eighteenth-century writers castigate autonomous women without husbands and children as masculine and morally bankrupt. Mrs. Jewkes is the maligned illustration of an unwomanly eternal spinster deemed unscrupulous because she financially supports herself rather than caring for her family.²¹

Mrs. Jewkes’ masculinity others her as violent and physically dangerous to more delicate, feminine women like Pamela. Richardson emphasizes the differences in the women’s language in order to socially divide the *feme sole* from marriable young women. Pamela was raised by parents of middle-class sensibilities and was further educated as a gentlewoman by Mr. B’s mother. However, just as Pamela’s refined speech reflects her middle-class manners, Mrs. Jewkes’ indelicate speech, also directly reflects her status as an “unwomanly” working-class *feme sole*. Immediately offended upon meeting the new housekeeper, Pamela claims, “I was sadly teaz’d with her Impertinence, and bold Way; but no wonder, she was an Inn-keeper’s Housekeeper before she came to my Master; and those Sort of Creatures don’t want Confidence, you know” (108). Mrs. Jewkes’ language, which Pamela finds completely offensive, reveals her history as a woman independently earning her living through contractual labor. Pamela quickly suggests that Mrs. Jewkes’ work has corrupted her values and social etiquette.

In the first encounter between the women, Pamela is advising readers to avoid the vulgar character of female laborers, particularly among women who have engaged in commerce beyond domestic positions in a genteel home. Pamela also draws a dubious connection between the sexual services brothels and inns provide, which likely has corrupted Mrs. Jewkes’ sexual morality. Pamela equates Mrs. Jewkes’ impolite speech with what she considers to be the language of morally dissolute sex workers. Pamela writes, “that she talked nastily...more like a

²¹ Bradford Mudge has argued Mrs. Jewkes represents ‘an unnaturally depraved femininity, a femininity that has allowed itself to become unsexed by the corrupt ways of the world’ (193).

vile London Prostitute than a Gentleman's Housekeeper...she curses and storms at me like a Trooper...Indeed it cannot be repeated, she is a Disgrace to her Sex" (180). Pamela is further offended by Mrs. Jewkes' lesbian behaviors, when the housekeeper attempts to kiss her (108). In comparing Mrs. Jewkes' language and actions to the disparaged culture of street prostitution, Pamela is suggesting Mrs. Jewkes' work has completely tainted her character, marred her femininity, and made her unfit to join the refined middle-class family. The women's different opinions on what is acceptable feminine speech represent an impassible boundary in the relations between middling-class gentlewomen and autonomous working women whose character has supposedly been adulterated by the market.

Mrs. Jervis, the housekeeper at Bedfordshire, is presented as the antithesis of Mrs. Jewkes. Mrs. Jervis is as an estimable friend and mother-figure to Pamela. Although Mrs. Jervis is also an aging, self-supporting feme sole, she is not demonized like Mrs. Jewkes. Rather, she is "mightily respected" among the servants because she is "a Gentlewoman born, tho' she has had misfortunes" (17). Mrs. Jervis was raised with middle-class virtues, valuing "good Rule and Order" and female modesty (17). Thus, unlike Mrs. Jewkes, she becomes a confidante and counselor to Pamela in the absence of her parents (17). And, although Mrs. Jervis does collude with Mr. B in order to keep her job for a time, she defends Pamela against Mr. B's first rape attempt. When Mr. B rushes out of her closet to attack her, Mrs. Jervis verbally and physically defends her. She holds Pamela around the waist, blocks Mr. B, and declares, "you shall not hurt this Innocent...for I will lose my life in her Defence" (63). This scene directly parallels the second attempted rape of Pamela at Lincolnshire in which Mrs. Jewkes' acts as a willing accomplice. Rather than holding Pamela to protect her, Mrs. Jewkes holds Pamela's arm down to criminally assist Mr. B. and verbally encourages him to commit the rape. Mrs. Jervis is

eventually fired for plotting to rescue Pamela from her imprisonment at Lincolnshire. However, Pamela eventually promotes her reinstatement as housekeeper at Bedfordshire, and they reunite as dear friends. In a very sentimental moment, Pamela hugs and kisses the housekeeper, crying, “O my dear Mrs. Jervis!...my other dear Mother! receive your happy, happy, Pamela” (459). Mrs. Jervis serves as the exemplary virtuous friend that Mrs. Jewkes can never become. Although both women are lifetime housekeepers and are currently both *femes soles*, Mrs. Jervis’ motherly qualities, and her middle-class refinements and morals remain uncorrupted due to her previous marriage and her sheltered career in genteel homes. Her ethics and refined sensibilities set her above Mrs. Jewkes’ corrupted morals and vulgar etiquette.

While Mrs. Jervis’ capacity for friendship is restored by the end of the novel, Mrs. Jewkes exemplifies unscrupulous women’s dangerous capacity for treachery against other women. Conduct books repeatedly warn women about the dangers of associating with women without carefully investigating their characters. Amanda Herbert finds that prescriptive literature for women used the “gendered stereotypes that women were emotionally fickle and unpredictable,” and they “counseled women to forge friendships cautiously and to practice strict fidelity” (50). Kenrick advises female readers in 1753 that “the breath of the mouth is cheap and costeth nothing, and the tongue moveth slippery within,” so women should test one another’s sincerity repeatedly before forming relationships (3). In addition, he cautions “There are those who make friendships on purpose to betray; who confer obligations, that they may exact obedience” (31). Readers witness Mrs. Jewkes attempt these manipulations in order to gain Pamela’s obedience or garner information. The servant, John, warns Pamela that “Mrs. *Jewkes* is a Devil ” (120). Living up to her reputation, she steals Pamela’s money under false pretenses and has the parson, Mr. Williams, mugged to intercept Pamela’s letters. Although Pamela never

trusts Mrs. Jewkes, she is still astounded by the extent of Mrs. Jewkes' betrayal and the lengths she will go to uncover Pamela's secrets and force her into submission. After Mrs. Jewkes has Mr. Williams mugged, Pamela exclaims, "O this wicked Woman! to trick me so! Every thing, Man, Woman and Beast, is in a Plot against your poor Pamela, I think!" (152). Pamela's expressions of shock at Mrs. Jewkes' violence and deception reveal Mrs. Jewkes' criminally aberrant, unfeminine actions. Robert Erickson suggests that "Pamela senses an enemy even greater than Mr. B., because the woman Jewkes betrays her own sex" (90). Society comprehended male violence, or "law-breaking fury," within "visions of masculine subjectivity" (Saxton 83). However, reputable women were expected to model passivity, modesty, chastity, and religious virtue (Mudge, 194; Saxton 73, 84). Thus, a woman's aggressive and sexually violent betrayal of another woman within a genteel private sphere would be particularly appalling to Pamela and her readers.

The fact that Mrs. Jewkes does not regard seduction as unscrupulous or rape as criminal illustrates her corrupted alignment with the market and with patriarchal treatment of single women as sexual property. Mudge considers Mrs. Jewkes to be acting on "economic and not religious logic" (193). Since Mr. B has offered a financially advantageous offer to make Pamela his mistress, she "refuses to buy the theological importance of Pamela's chastity" (193). However, the novel condemns her economically-driven disregard for women's moral and sexual agency as cruel and degenerate. Pamela argues against being handled as objectified property, exclaiming, "how came I to be his property? What Right has he in me, but such as a Thief may plead to stolen Goods?" (126). She also rejects rape as a theft of subjecthood, asserting that "to rob a Person of her Virtue, is worse than cutting her Throat" (110). Yet, Mrs. Jewkes flippantly dismisses her beliefs. She responds, "if I was in his Place, he should not have his Property in

you long questionable...Not stand still-I shall-I, as he does; but put you and himself both out of your Pain” (126). Her response reveals that she approves of rape and that Pamela could expect nothing “from her Virtue or Conscience” (110). In this conversation, the housekeeper confirms that she subscribes to traditional patriarchal views of women as accessible and violable male sexual property. Her views stand in violent opposition to Pamela’s beliefs in women’s independent legal agency and their rights to sexual and marital consent until marriage, which upheld middle-class views of companionate marriage.

Mrs. Jewkes’ participation in Mr. B’s rape attempt illustrates that her status as an independent laborer is criminalized and also linked to her corrupted sexuality. When Pamela reflects on the assault in her letters, she declares, “And oh! What a vile and unwomanly Part that wicked Wretch, Mrs. Jewkes, acted in it!” (199). The night of the attempted rape, Mrs. Jewkes assists in staging the rape in the women’s bedroom, luring Pamela into bed, and assuring her that she was safe. Despite her lies, Mrs. Jewkes locks herself and Pamela in the bedroom with Mr. B., who was disguised as another Maid sleeping in the corner. When Mr. B enters the bed, he quickly held Pamela’s waist and pins her left arm under his neck while “the vile Procureess held my Right” (203), so she cannot get away. As he kisses her, she repeatedly screams out for help, and reprimands both rapists. Pamela calls him a “Wicked Man!” and her a “Wicked, abominable Woman!” (203). He listens to Pamela’s protests, and he again asks her to accept his offer as a kept mistress instead of being victim to rape. However, Mrs. Jewkes interrupts, encouraging him to complete the assault. She directs, “What you do, Sir, do; don’t stand dilly-dallying...She’ll be quieter when she knows the worst” (203). Here, Mrs. Jewkes pushes him to immediately force Pamela’s submission and acquiescence through rape. Her interjection makes her appear the more callous aggressor in this crime. Mudge suggests that “When the virgin and whore wrestle under

the watchful gaze of their indecisive master, they physically act out the novel's central conflict between 'good' and 'bad' femininity, between one definition...that celebrates women as corporeal vessels of religious virtue and another definition that portrays them as the embodiments of satanic vice" (194). Ultimately, Pamela's virtuous femininity and her rather passive resistance override Mrs. Jewkes' deviant sexual violence. Mr. B is less willing to coerce Pamela into sex than his housekeeper. He silences Mrs. Jewkes and gives Pamela a final ultimatum to accept his proposals rather than fall victim to rape (203). However, Pamela refuses. She continues to struggle against his grasp, and "With Struggling, Fright, and Terror," she faints, preventing the rape (204). Because Mr. B. fears she is dying, he desists from perpetrating the rape and afterward decides not to pursue any further rape attempts to force her compliance as his mistress. While Mr. B abandons his illicit plans, Mrs. Jewkes is further criminalized through her aggressive participation in Pamela's sexual assault. Through Mrs. Jewkes, the rape scene aligns working women's criminal potential with their sexual deviance. As Kirsten Saxton finds with convicted female murderers in the eighteenth century whose violent acts became attached to their status or histories as sexual deviants, Mrs. Jewkes' violence either violated "her natural sex role" as virtuous and motherly, or "horrifically" embodied it as unrestrained, uncompassionate, and mercenary (57, 83).

Mrs. Jewkes' vilification as Pamela's jailor and rape accomplice partially effaces Mr. B's culpability for Pamela's imprisonment, harsh treatment, and sexual assault. In his absence from Lincolnshire, he places the physical responsibility for Pamela's imprisonment on his housekeeper. After he reads Pamela's journal, he apologizes that "Mrs. Jewkes carry'd her Orders a little too far," and he offers to fire her in reparation (301, 302). He deflects the blame onto Mrs. Jewkes and then offers to remove her, thus eradicating any lasting trace of (his)

violence. In effect, Pamela equally blames Mr. B and Mrs. Jewkes in her letter to her parents. She claims God has delivered her “from the Paw of the Lion and the Bear; that is, his and Mrs. Jewkes’ Violences” (209). Pamela regards them both as threatening predators who share in the violence. As Flint claims, “the crudest persecution of the heroine (taking away her shoes, stealing her money, imprisoning her, physically punishing her) can take place without directly involving Mr. B and therefore making him appear to irreclaimable” (502-503). Similarly, Patricia Bruckmann suggests Mr. B’s housekeeper is used as a “lightning rod to deflect judgment from the hero” (53). Thus, while Mr. B partially salvages his reputation as a potential husband by distancing himself from his abusive orders, the text increases Mrs. Jewkes’ criminal culpability as his ambitious and sexually violent servant. Alex Townsend believes that Mrs. Jewkes is a representation of Mr. B’s displaced lust (132). Meanwhile, Flint believes that the housekeeper acts out Mr. B’s coercive “authority” and licentious “moral outlook,” and his “antifamily, antifeminine qualities become personified as a “female monster” (503). One could read Mr. B’s misogynistic and violent sexual qualities as projected onto Mrs. Jewkes. She is certainly a representation of monstrous femininity in the novel, and her sexualized corruption does allow for Mr. B to partially evade his responsibility for Pamela’s imprisonment and harsh treatment. Yet, as I have argued above, Mrs. Jewkes’ anti-feminine qualities are strongly associated with her own labor history as a feme sole rather than entirely a projection of Mr. B’s misogyny or lust.

After the second attempted rape Mr. B and Pamela’s loving and moral relationship is reconstructed through the condemnation and deflection of culpability onto the feme sole in their home, Mrs. Jewkes. Despite Pamela’s victimization through Mr. B’s violent rape and seduction attempts, she also agrees to trust him, shifting the culpability onto Mrs. Jewkes. After the attempted rape at Lincolnshire, Mr. B finally allows Pamela to return to her parents. At their

parting, he defends Pamela's virtue against Mrs. Jewkes' insults. This single sympathetic gesture prompts Pamela to acknowledge her affection for him. As she travels away from Lincolnshire, she reflects:

He was so good, he would not let Mrs. *Jewkes* speak ill of me; and scorned to take her odious unwomanly Advice. O what a black Heart has this poor Wretch! So I need not rail against Men so much; for my Master, bad as I have thought him, is not so bad as this Woman! To be sure she is an Atheist! (245-246)

When Pamela condemns Mrs. Jewkes as the greatest offender and most malicious traitor in her imprisonment and sexual assault, she is able to forgive and even esteem Mr. B. She writes to her parents that she no longer doubts his honor, and she is in love, overcome with his affection (248). Mrs. Jewkes' vilification as jailor and rape accomplice enables their reconciliation and union. Vilifying her also appears to restore Pamela's faith in men over women, which effects a transition from Pamela's reliance on women in the house for protection to her dependence on her future husband. In this scene, Pamela provides an example to other women, encouraging them to seek trust and security in marriage rather than in relationships among often unscrupulous and treacherous *femes soles*. Pamela's new reliance on her husband illustrates the novel's project to domesticate and subordinate young women under the patriarchal protection of their (reformed) husbands, while teaching them to avoid the debasing snares of dubious homosocial relationships with independent working women.

While moral and criminal blame is deflected onto Mrs. Jewkes, Mr. B's offenses against Pamela are forgotten or rewritten as God's providence. A number of scholars have read Pamela as a trial, captivity, or conversion narrative, and the principal aggressor's blame is positively

recast after Pamela's triumph over seduction and attempted rape.²² In a discussion with Mr. Williams before their marriage, she exclaims to Mr. B, "how unequal am I to all this Goodness! Every Moment that passes, adds to the Weight of my Obligations you oppress me with" (308). Any lingering feelings or suspicions of Mr. B. as a dangerous libertine and sexual aggressor have vanished. She is now oppressed with his goodness. Moreover, the parson, Mr. Williams, turns Mr. B's offenses into an example of God's providence and grace, which exonerates him. Mr. William declares, "how happily, Sir, you have been touched by the Divine Grace, before you have been hurried into the Commission of Sins...God has enabled you to stop short of the Evil; and you have nothing to do but rejoice in the Good, which now will be doubly so, because you can receive it without the least inward Reproach" (308). According to Mr. Williams, Mr. B's criminal offenses against Pamela are transformed into trials of faith, which he has surmounted, leaving him irreproachable. The good manners he displays and the generosity he shows Pamela's family afterward help to distance Mr. B, the reputable and genteel husband, from the ruthless libertine employer. In performing the role of the repentant, reformed rake, Mr. B also promotes his image as the moral husband and master who is to set an example of middle-class values for his upper-class friends and family.

As the marriage refashions Mr. B into an exemplary husband, the marriage also celebrates the promotion of Pamela to an exemplary middle-class wife. Through Pamela's promotion from servant to wife, the novel champions women's domestic role as wife over their role as contracted worker. Meanwhile, Mrs. Jewkes' vilification as an unmannered-- and even criminal-- woman worker reinforces the text's disapproval of female laborers who choose economic independence over raising a family. Pamela shines in her role as wife and mistress of

²² See Nancy Armstrong's *Reclassifying Clarissa*; Christopher Flint's "The Anxiety of Affluence (501, 503); and Vivasvan Soni's "The Trial Narrative in Richardson's Pamela," for their discussions of Pamela as a trial, captivity, or conversion narrative

the house, becoming an example of manners and charity for the neighborhood (499). As Richardson concludes, “As for the excellent PAMELA, she enjoy’d for many Years, the Reward of her Virtue, Piety, and Charity; exceedingly beloved by both Sexes, and by all Degrees; and was look’d upon as the Mirror of her Age and Sex” (499). Meanwhile, the reprobate housekeeper does not reform her manners or acquire a more respectable reputation. Armstrong claims that “not even the odious Mrs. Jewkes proves to be beyond the power of Pamela’s redemptive example” (126). However, while Mrs. Jewkes now acts civilly and dutifully toward Pamela, Pamela’s example does not improve the housekeeper’s vulgar character. In the final pages, the Lincolnshire housekeeper’s character is still referred to as “odious” (501). Also, after the women reconcile, Pamela continues to be disturbed that “the Woman has so little Purity of Heart,” that she dare not repeat Mrs. Jewkes’ gossip (339). Ultimately, Mrs. Jewkes’ character is stunted by her learned behavior over years of employment at an inn. While Mrs. Jewkes fulfills her duties as a domestic housekeeper under Mr. B, she is represented as unable to acclimate to the moral and polite household of middle-class manners. Thus, Pamela and Mr. B leave her behind in Lincolnshire, where she remains associated with Pamela’s past struggles against rape and imprisonment.

Like contemporary conduct manuals for young women, *Pamela* exemplifies middle-class ideologies that promote acceptable women’s “work” as the unpaid domestic duties married wives, mothers, and mistresses of the house performed within the patriarchal family. Pamela represents women who were encouraged to exercise their liberal agency and consent to favorable happy marriages through which their domestic labor was implicitly, or in Pamela’s case, explicitly contracted. Pamela, the middle-class housewife, is then celebrated as refined, maternal, charitable, and faithful to family and friends. Her felicitous union and subordination to

her wealthy husband distracts the reader from the difficult realities of coverture laws that denied wives legal agency to own property, negotiate contracts, and earn an independent income. In an effort to further encourage women to consent to marriage, *Pamela* vilifies the female Lincolnshire housekeeper not only as a vulgar and masculinized feme sole, but as a treacherous criminal who endangers the body, reputation, and consensual agency of the virtuous protagonist. Mrs. Jewkes represents independent working women whose way of life also threatens the middle-class ideal and institution of patriarchal marriage. Mrs. Jewkes' violation of female chastity, the sanctity of marriage, and fidelity within friendship can be generalized as the condemnation of supposedly corrupted femes soles who unscrupulously pursue public contractual labor rather than virtuous motherhood within marriage. Thus, the novel teaches women to seek moral agency and domestic employment as wives rather than corruptive economic independence as femes soles. In addition, by vilifying Mrs. Jewkes, *Pamela* creates a social divide between celebrated middle-class housewives and laboring femes soles. *Pamela* advises women intending to marry to avoid association with treacherous working femes soles, who stereotypically, have been morally tainted by the labor market. Despite women's legal freedoms to maintain financial independence outside of marriage, the vilification of female workers deters middling female readers from socializing with independent women and from seeking economic agency outside of marriage and the moralizing private sphere.

Chapter 2: “Can There be any Woman so Vile to Woman?” The Abduction and Rape of Female Subjects under Eighteenth-Century Law

The eighteenth-century novel’s investment in realism and narrative detail align with trends in popular non-fiction crime literature, which proliferated during the period. British court records were published in London and surrounding newspapers for an increasingly literate public. Newspaper publications boomed over the decades, and the papers, which were read and reread in coffee houses, covered the current felonies tried in Metropolitan courts. The publishers and reading public were usually “more interested in lurid offenses than the more mundane (and typical) crimes to be found in the capital” (Durstun 5). Thus, news of extreme and violent felonies “was reported, read, and widely disseminated in this period” (Simpson 64). Because of their violent and shocking nature, high profile rape and abduction cases particularly attracted popular attention throughout most of the century. This prompted both male and female offenders to be represented in proliferating court reports and increasingly detailed trial literature (Faller 121-122).²³ The trials of Irish male and female rape defendants were also reprinted for fascinated London audiences until late in the century. Journalists worked to provide “vivid, immediate, and convincing detail” of criminal accounts in order to increase the authenticity and realism of the event for the reader until 1790, when the government ruled that the details of the rape trials were too harsh for “increasingly delicate public sensibilities,” and then only the most general details were allowed to be published (Hunter 185; Durstun 4).

Throughout the century violent criminals also became memorialized as their trials were reprinted in anthologies. Accounts of several felonious women convicted of rape or kidnapping in the second degree were repeatedly anthologized, establishing their reputation as notorious

²³ Lincoln B. Faller estimates that 5,000-6,000 separate published criminal biographies and/or trials still survive from the period 1650-1800 (121-122).

violent criminals over the course of the century. Evidently, while few indicted women were actually convicted, those who were tried and found guilty left a memorable legacy of female violence in the public conscience and in crime fiction. Since the trials of these convicted women were republished many decades after their deaths, their stories continually reminded British readers of the shocking reality of women's culpable participation in kidnapping and/or heterosexual rape.

Like newspapers and anthologies' investment in reporting violent crime, popular eighteenth-century novelists often appealed to the reading public's interest in scandalous felonies. *Clarissa* (1748), for example, anticipates the public's awareness of legal discourse and its knowledge of contemporary case law in its depiction of the protagonist's kidnapping and subsequent rape. It also positions readers as jurors in the case and appeals to their interests in empirically-grounded accounts of the world by providing (lurid) realistic details of the crime. In this chapter, I examine the ways *Clarissa* engages with legal statutes described by Blackstone and also judicial proceedings exemplified in trial records to uphold, critique, or revise juridical definitions of women's individual consent and culpability. Richardson's novel carefully depicts a trial-like account of the female protagonist's struggle against the felonious crime of abduction (which by legal definition included coerced marriage and/or rape,) perpetrated by both male and female perpetrators. Audiences would likely read these fictional offenses as prosecutable felonies; however, *Clarissa* emphasizes the reality that victims and their families usually avoided appealing to the legal system for justice due to public embarrassment and the low probability of a conviction. *Clarissa* critiques gentlewomen's constrained legal agency within a biased eighteenth-century English judicial system and it promotes their legal protection as autonomous subjects. Simultaneously, the novel incriminates working-class women engaged in the sex

industry as culpable felons who threaten gentlewomen's consensual and legal agency and endanger their position within the patriarchal family. Although eighteenth-century rape statutes extend equal protection to all women, including sex workers, Richardson unjustly ties female accomplices' criminality to their status as prostitutes. Because of their unscrupulous involvement in the sex industry, they are also vilified as capable of great treachery and sexual violence in the novel. Through the narrative of Clarissa's abduction and rape, I argue that Richardson portrays propertied and marriagable young women as consensual individuals deserving of legal protection while he stereotypes female sex workers as unethical *femes soles* capable of violent felonies and deserving of capital punishment.

In constructing a realist narrative, Richardson, like his contemporaries, depicts contemporary English society operating under current statutes and he also attends to real legal issues including female abduction and judicial biases against female victims (Punter 73). *Clarissa* has been read by a number of scholars as a literary representation of an eighteenth-century trial, as it mirrors contemporary court proceedings and relies on legal terminology with which readers and court attendees would have been familiar. Beth Swan agrees with Tom Keymer that *Clarissa* is "the literary equivalent of a trial" (Swan 71; Keymer 221). Swan analyzes Clarissa's abduction and rape narrative in comparison to the 1702 abduction trial of heiress Pleasant Rawlins. Ann K. Wagner also argues that while "no civil litigation or criminal prosecution takes place in *Clarissa*," readers encounter the "legal terminology, documents, and crimes" as if they were in court (314). Accordingly, readers must assume the role of jurors as they evaluate witnesses, "assemble a coherent sequence of events and...assess criminal culpability" (313). She believes that while Lovelace fancies himself as a grand prosecutor, Clarissa is clearly the legal victim (315, 321). Like Wagner, John P. Zomchick also evaluates

Lovelace' role, similarly arguing that Lovelace' lawyer-like wit and actions are “inflected by juridical norms and procedures” (100). Yet, “His case becomes...an instance *par excellence* of the need for positive law to protect the innocent from the outlaw” (114). Richardson constructs the criminality of characters including Lovelace and Mrs. Sinclair through epistles, which serve as documentary evidence for the reading public to judge and condemn much as if they were reading other contemporary trial records.²⁴

The novel depicts the unlawful kidnapping, rape, and attempted coerced marriage of propertied women, as female abduction was defined by law. In *Clarissa*, the narratives of abduction and rape also highlight three contemporary legal debates over women's agency in eighteenth-century English courts. First, the abduction plots respond to the rising concern among wealthy families over “heiress stealing” and rape, which partially influenced The Marriage Act of 1753, officially titled, “An Act for the Better Preventing of Clandestine Marriage.” *Clarissa* participates in the political debates preceding the Marriage Act of 1753, defending propertied women's agency against forced marriage, while also protecting familial property and marital alliances. *Clarissa* advocates for gentlewomen's legal protection as subjects with violable individual liberties, which are implicitly claimed as equally deserving of protection as the property rights men claim over female heirs or possessors of dowries. Second, the novel critiques reputable women's great difficulty in prosecuting perpetrators of sex crimes. In reading

²⁴ Documentary evidence is “A type of written proof that is offered at a trial to establish the existence or nonexistence of a fact that is in dispute.” Forms of documentary evidence include “Letters, contracts, deeds, licenses, certificates, tickets, or other writings.” (*West's Encyclopedia of American Law*). Although eighteenth-century trial witnesses submitted letters as documentary evidence, the recorded Old Bailey Trial Proceedings and reprinted trial reports often omitted testimony details including these letters (“Witness Testimony” Old Bailey Proceedings Online). This prevented readers of the Proceedings from fully evaluating the trial and the guilt of the defendants. Yet, *Clarissa's* readers view the abduction case entirely through the documentary evidence (rather than real, or physical, evidence) provided in the characters' epistles.

Clarissa, it becomes clear that female victims of sexual assault and their families were deterred from appealing to English courts for justice because they wished to avoid public scrutiny and embarrassment particularly when a conviction was unlikely. The text critiques the fact that social biases favoring male and female abductors/rapists impeded gentlewomen's agency to seek judicial recourse and set legal precedents that would discourage women from prosecuting future rape and abduction felonies.

Although the novel defends gentlewomen's rights against rape and abduction, *Clarissa* also emphasizes a third issue surrounding violent sex crimes that historians and literary scholars do not witness in later centuries. *Clarissa* portrays eighteenth-century working women as culpable legal agents who feloniously assist in the abduction and rape of propertied female victims. Richardson's crime narrative resembles court records and news accounts of real women's collusion in kidnapping and rape. The novel brings attention to women's legal status as culpable perpetrators, who are as deserving of capital punishment as principal male offenders under current abduction laws. However, I argue that Richardson moves beyond simply acknowledging female culpability under English statutes. He unfairly incriminates women in the prostitution industry as violent felonious aggressors, which is unrepresentative of the majority of recorded female defendants in abduction trials. His vilification of prostitutes as sex offenders corresponds to the views of biased eighteenth-century juries, who discredited and usually decided against prostitutes who were tried for criminal offenses or who attempted to prosecute rape crimes. (Durstun 25; Beattie 126; Greenfield 6).

The novel follows the structure of a trial and confronts relevant issues within the judicial system while also positioning readers as empirical judges or jurors who evaluate each character's written testimony. Yet, *Clarissa* also expands on the genre of crime literature, challenging legal

modes of apprehending the world. Richardson grants Clarissa, Lovelace, and the other epistolary writers greater psychological subjectivity than courts, which seldom interrogated defendants' motives or allowed victims to change their minds during an abduction or rape. However, in the end, the novel's didacticism and its clear assignment of guilt to Clarissa's perpetrators also forecloses readers' capacity as imagined jurors to interpret the crime and independently determine the alleged offenders' guilt. Richardson's presentation of evidence in favor of Clarissa further complicates the empirical style of his novel. In this chapter, I will first evaluate Richardson's literary engagement with the English justice system in order to defend propertied women's legal rights. Then, I will examine his negotiation of trial and literary conventions to incriminate female sex workers as ruthless female accomplices to abduction and rape.

The Debate over Women's Agency as Legal Subjects:

The kidnapping narratives in *Clarissa* engage in the debate over women's legal right to bodily protection as independent legal subjects rather than simply as titleholders of family estates. By law, the grounds for abduction linked women to their property, since only female property owners or inheritors were deemed susceptible to kidnapping. Women who had no property (like Pamela) were not considered abductable, and could not charge aggressors with this crime. Blackstone defines an abductable subject under the law as a "woman, maid, widow, or wife, having substance in either goods or lands, or being heir apparent to her ancestors" (Blackstone 4.15.II). Under contemporary abduction laws, in order to bring an indictment, prosecutors had to "allege that the taking was for lucre," and that "it must appear that the woman has substance either real or personal, or is an heir apparent" (Blackstone 4.15.II). Thus, criminals' malicious intent to usurp a woman's income or property established the motive for this offense. Much like in *Clarissa*, the eighteenth-century female victims of abduction were taken against their will because of their independent property or prospective familial inheritance.

For example, the young Mary Wharton, was only thirteen years old when she was kidnapped. Wharton was the sole heir of Philip Wharton Esquire, who had died, leaving her a “1500 l. annum Estate and 1000 l. in Money and Effects” (“Trial of John Johnson, William Clewer, S.C., Grace Wiggan” Old Bailey Proceedings Online). Similarly, Rachel Rogers was in her sixties when she was allegedly abducted, coerced into marriage, and raped because she possessed 20,000 to 30,000 l. per annum. (“Trial of John Thompson...” Old Bailey Proceedings Online).

Although women’s inheritance established the crime, wealthy young women like Wharton were not simply objectified under the law as property holders. The female victims’ age (ten or older) upheld their status as independent legal agents, who were able to testify / prosecute in court and (those 12 and older) who could consent or reject offers of marriage (Blackstone 4.15.III). A woman’s agency to consent to, or resist, her captors was central in establishing the abduction as a crime. As William Blackstone explains, the prosecutor must prove that “She was taken against her will. It must also appear that she was afterwards married, or defiled” (4.15.II). Under eighteenth-century statutes, the crime of abduction hinged very precisely on women’s will and her capacity to deny consent at various stages of the kidnapping, marriage, or intercourse. According to English statutes, a woman only needed to reject the initial felony of abduction, even if she eventually agreed to the marriage. She also could resist transportation or marriage at any stage in the kidnapping even though she initially agreed to leave with her suitor or his accomplices (4.15.II). The law granted women their “own power” or “will” to verbally consent, resist, and to change their mind in order to distinguish consensual elopement from abduction. Their refusal, resistance, or non-consent (if unconscious) then determined the crime as a felony deserving capital punishment.

In accordance with statutes, *Clarissa* establishes the female victim/subject's capacity to make independent choices and to change her mind during the first abduction narrative. Clarissa is twice abducted by Lovelace and his accomplices with the intent to trap her as a kept mistress or marry her, and Lovelace eventually uses rape to force her consent to marriage. As in Eliza Haywood's novel, *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, and many other abducted women in eighteenth-century trial accounts, in her first abduction, Clarissa is lured away from her home under false pretenses. With the help of the Harlowe's servant, Joseph, Lovelace stages the pursuit of her family against them. Afraid and confused, she runs with him to a coach, and they depart (229). According to abduction statutes, Clarissa could intentionally leave with a suitor, intending to marry, and later change her mind. Although Clarissa initially agrees to meet her kidnapper unaccompanied, she refuses to travel further with Lovelace once she realizes she's been tricked into fleeing from her home. Once she refuses to continue with the suitor, but is retained, the elopement becomes a felonious abduction. As the law stated:

“Though possibly the marriage or defilement might be by her subsequent consent, being won unto by flatteries and after the taking, yet this is felony, if the first taking were against her will: and so *vice versa*, if the woman be originally taken away with her own consent, yet if she afterwards refuse to continue with the offender, and be forced to continue against her will, she may, from that time, as properly be said to be taken against her will, as if she had never given consent at all; for, till the force was put upon her, she was in her own power.” (Blackstone 4.15.II)

It is significant that the law described women as possessing their “own power” or “will” to verbally consent or resist as a legal subject. Moreover, the language of the law gave the woman some flexibility in changing her mind during her abduction, in order to resist her removal, and to

prosecute afterwards even if she originally agrees to leave with the abductor(s). Thus, the crime only occurs at whatever exact moment she is “forced to continue against her will.” Yet, a woman’s change of mind would have been difficult to substantiate in a court of law if there were no witnesses for the prosecution, and Clarissa has none. Her kidnapping narrative exposes this conflict between abduction laws protecting women’s agency to consent and the requirements of the court proceedings. It appears that in kidnapping cases, much like in rape cases, the courts relied heavily on physical evidence and eye-witness’ testimonies from marriage officiants, friends, or servants who witnessed the kidnapping, marriage, or defilement. Such witnesses testified that there was apparent and consistent resistance from the female abductees. Not surprisingly, I have not found any kidnapping trials from eighteenth-century Old Bailey Records in which female victims testified to changing their minds and pleading abduction after they had agreed to leave home or boarding school with their eventual male and female kidnapers. Rather, the courts were consistently presented with clear cases of women’s resistance against sustained coercion and violence in which perpetrators falsely lured or forced women away from their homes, schools, or friends against the assertion of their will as independent legal subjects. Otherwise, as Lovelace intends,²⁵ juries would easily be swayed to believe an abduction like Clarissa’s was actually a premeditated elopement. Clarissa alters the standard testimonial narrative in depicting the protagonist’s indecision and capacity to change her mind.

Abduction and rape laws both articulated women as consenting independent agents in their own right; yet, scholars debate whether eighteenth-century legal theorists and society at large considered kidnapping and rape to be a crime against property or against consenting female subjects. Was it still treated culturally as a crime against unmarried women’s patriarchal

²⁵ Lovelace writes to Belford, “As I have ordered it, the flight will appear to the Implacables to be altogether with her own consent” (233). Just as he has planned, the Harlowes believe Clarissa has run off with Lovelace intending to elope (284, 290).

families (as in previous centuries), or against women who were considered to be increasingly independent, embodied subjects before marriage? Anna Clark believes that rape was culturally regarded as a property crime. She argued that since families could still sue the defendant for damages over criminal seduction, as well as prosecute rape assailants for the victims, women's chastity was still viewed as familial property (48). Moreover, she insists that the commodification of women's sexuality contributed to women's difficulty in seeking justice after a rape or sexual assault. She argues, "The contrast between the public myth of rape and the private terror, the notion of women's sexuality as property, and male indifference to women's consent, all blocked women's efforts to articulate rape as a crime committed against them" (8). While the law articulated women as subjects in their own right, the very low numbers of reported rapes indicated that eighteenth-century society perhaps denied women ownership over their own sexual bodies and ignored their agency as consensual subjects. Similar to Clark, Anne Greenfield argues that rape in the eighteenth century was still socially "understood as the theft of a woman's chastity," and this chastity dictated her agency to marry, defend herself in court against rape (6). This is exemplified by the fact that while the language of the law protected unchaste women, including prostitutes, these "fallen" prosecutors almost never won a rape case (6).

Literary critics also suggest that mid-century upper-class society and English courts would have found the abduction in *Clarissa* most offensive because it violated property rights rather than a female subject's individual rights. Beth Swan explains that in both *Clarissa* and the 1702 Pleasant Rawlins abduction trial the female victim sees "the rape as personal injury but the other characters, like Rawlins' family, see it in terms of law, regarding her as 'belonging' to her family; her chastity and thus her potential worth in marriage negotiations have been irreparably damaged, and so they see it as a family dishonor" ("*Clarissa* and Eighteenth-Century Discourses

of Law” 76). Likewise, Joan Schwartz believes that Clarissa’s abduction would have been more objectionable to readers than the rape, as Lovelace was “stealing the grandfather’s property from the Harlowe estate” (298). This property theft through female abduction “was a serious wrong against the public and property itself and simply was not tolerated by either Parliament or courts” (298). Finally, Zomchick suggests, “Like the Harlowes, who are inclined to an economic regard of their daughter as a property-holder, Lovelace sees Clarissa as property to be held” (104). Yet, Schwartz, Zomchick, and Swan agree that Richardson uses the rape narrative to oppose popular beliefs and “to expose a legal system which denies the majority of women an individual legal identity, reducing them to an aspect of masculine property” (Swan “Raped by the System” 127; Schwartz 299-300; Zomchick 101). Richardson’s novel advocates for more stringent marital laws to protect young propertied women’s consent like those proposed in Hardwicke’s Marriage Act of 1753. The narratives of Clarissa’s abduction and sexual assault also promote the legal protection of women as independent agents-- not merely as property holders or as patriarchal property whose marital consent is dictated by family alliances and financial interests.

To illustrate this point, Clarissa constantly struggles against the pervasive cultural conception of her as family property to be protected or stolen. Cousin Morden warns Clarissa before she departs with Lovelace, “I mention not fortunes squandered, estates mortgaged or sold, and posterity robbed” when women marry contemptuous libertines (325). Even her sympathetic cousin is largely concerned about both the family reputation and the property holdings she influences through her dishonorable affiliation with Lovelace, not to mention her own inherited property that she may squander. Like Morden, Lovelace describes Clarissa as family property to Belford, questioning, “And whose property, I pray thee, shall I invade, if I pursue my schemes of Love and Vengeance? Have not those who have a right in her, renounced that right?” (399). She

is like an abandoned estate free for the taking, or abusing, in this case. Even though they are not married, Clarissa understands that Lovelace regards her as marital property after the abduction, writing, “the man who has the assurance to think me, and to endeavor to make me his property, will hunt me down from place to place, and search after me as a ‘Stray’” (429). She feels dehumanized and objectified as his possession, and that her will is dismissed as a female captive.

Despite the fact that the Harlowes and Lovelace objectify her as patriarchal property, Clarissa asserts her legal agency as an abducted woman. “Far as matters have gone,” she still claims, “I will for ever renounce you” (394). Thus, she sustains her lawful resistance despite Lovelace’ belief that he virtually possesses her as a result of the abduction. He expects that she must marry him and that they are “So near the time...that she must suppose, that all will be my own by deed of purchase and settlement” (394). He regards her as inevitably becoming his marital property after he kidnaps her. Yet, he lacks legal documentation that can only be achieved through her contractual consent. Thus, Lovelace uses rape, temporarily subjecting her body and will in order to compel her to marriage. However, after she regains consciousness, Clarissa also regains her stance as self-possessed legal agent, claiming, “Compulsion shall do nothing with me. Tho’ a slave, a prisoner, in circumstance, I am no slave in my will!—Nothing will I promise thee” (513).

Her non-consent continues to thwart Lovelace’s intentions to subject her to his will as a kept mistress or wife. As Ferguson suggests, “When Lovelace’s intention does not get translated into consent,” in his view, “his rape of her is rendered perpetually incomplete” (102). Accordingly, Lovelace further acknowledges to Belford, “*Once subdued, always subdued*— ‘Tis an egregious falsehood!—But Oh, Jack, she never *was* subdued. What have I obtained but an increase in shame and confusion! While her glory has been established by her sufferings!” (513).

Terry Eagleton argues that Lovelace is thrown into “temporary psychosis” by the truth, or reality, that “Clarissa is not to be possessed. She is absolutely impenetrable, least of all by rape” (60). Clarissa grieves that Lovelace has stolen her virginity after the rape, but he still has not conquered her will or her virtue. In addition, while Lovelace feloniously subjects Clarissa to abduction, he never obtains legal power over her as a wife. Through her avowals of self-possession (which are grounded in the language of contemporary laws), and her physical resistance against Lovelace’ crimes, Clarissa rejects the patriarchal social and legal systems that treat women as sexually violable male property.

Clarissa’s struggle to defend her own will and body against rape and imprisonment throughout her abduction sends a message to eighteenth-century audiences against violent modes of felonious patriarchal control of women as sexual property. Rather than objectifying gentlewomen as violable male property and as objects for sex, the novel re-enforces eighteenth-century statutes, which distinguish propertied female abduction and rape victims as legal agents resisting sexually violent subjection. Yet, despite this apparent argument for women’s legal agency, the contradiction remains that Clarissa possesses legal rights to defend herself against abduction (unlike Pamela) precisely because of her attachment to her inherited property and her position within a wealthy, landed family.

Before the Marriage Act of 1753

Richardson’s novel supports stricter marital laws that would mutually inhibit/ reduce female abduction crimes resulting in coerced marriage and/or rape, but in turn, would also protect reputable, propertied families. *Clarissa* was published five years before Lord Chancellor Lord Hardwicke’s proposed bill was passed as The Marriage Act of 1753. During this period, issues of parental consent and the protection of familial property weighed on the public

consciousness (Probert 449). Hardwicke's law was officially titled, "An Act for the Better Preventing of Clandestine Marriage."²⁶ Although clandestine marriages were probably most often practiced among the poor, such marriages also involved wealthy teens of marrying age and young adults (Lemmings 345). While largely attempting to squelch secretive and consensual elopements, this act also was to prevent abductors from legally marrying their female captives in England and Wales. David Lemmings finds that "By the early eighteenth century, clandestine marriage was out of control... a failure of the law which enabled adventurers, courtesans, and social inferiors to marry underage heirs and heiresses against the wishes of their families, without any possibility of annulment" (345). And, according to the British Parliament, the trade in irregular marriages (conducted by a clergyman, but often private or secretive, among underage individuals, and without parents' consent) had grown enormously in London by the 1740s (Parliament.UK). Before 1753, marriages could be performed anywhere outside of the church as long as they were officiated by an ordained minister. This allowed for irregular, secretive marriages without parental consent in which at least one of the partners was underage (under 21). As Michael McKeon notes, "in reality, the most common reason for clandestine marriages was to frustrate the opposition of parents and 'friends' who deemed it unsuitable" (124).

Clarissa exposes the lax regulation of marriage laws which increase young women's susceptibility to ill-advised, coerced, or criminal marriages; yet, Richardson apparently did not support authoritarian parental control over their children's marriages, which the Act, in effect, helped to maintain. Lord Hardwicke initiated the bill in 1753 as a solution to prevent

²⁶ Clandestine marriage in eighteenth-century England was understood as marriage celebrated before an Anglican clergyman, but not in strict accordance with the other requirements of the church's canon law established in 1604, which included the calling of banns in the couples' resident parish, or obtaining a license, as well as parental consent, two witnesses, and a marital record in their church register (Probert *Marriage Law and Practice in the Long Eighteenth Century* 6-8).

“scandalous clandestine marriages” like those with forged marriage licenses and Fleet ceremonies that were tried “before him as lord chief justice and lord chancellor” (Lemmings 346). Yet, as Lemmings contends, legislators’ promotion of the Act demonstrated “an abiding attachment to patriarchy among many of the political elite, insofar as they reinforced narrowly paternal and male control of marriage over the influence of mothers and children” (357). In the end, the law that was passed by Parliament had “very considerable implications for freedom of choice in marriage” (346). Although the act enforced parental approval, Richardson clearly articulates in a letter to Aaron Hill that “it is one of my Two principal Views to admonish Parents agt. Forcing their Children’s Inclinations, in an Article so essential to their Happiness, as Marriage” (72). Also, in his preface to multiple editions of *Clarissa*, he maintains the narrative is “to caution parents against the undue exercise of their natural authority over their children in the great article of marriage” (xv). In effect, *Clarissa* advocates for greater protection for women against abduction, rape, and coerced or clandestine marriage. Yet, through the vilification of Clarissa’s family, the novel also rejects strict patriarchal control over children’s marriages.

While the novel advocates for women’s individual freedom to choose their spouses, the narratives also suggest that women needed greater protection against abduction felonies. Before the act, covert marriage ceremonies sometimes resulted in two types of criminal marriage contracts. First, illegal, bigamous marriages duped spouses while ceremonies were performed unbeknownst to the new wives’ families (Parliament.UK; Lemmings 345). Second, the legal ability to be married privately by a clergyman within one’s home also contributed to felonious abduction and coerced marriages. As readers witness in *Clarissa*, kidnappers could simply lure the victim to another house down the street or transport her to a London residence unbeknownst to her family and then rape her or coerce her into marriage. Before the act, perpetrators did not

have to transport the victim out of England to attain a binding marital contract, as they would (have to travel to Scotland or France) after it was passed. The Marriage Act, promoted by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, made the older canon laws legal requirements for 'regular' marriage and increased punishments for violations of the new marriage laws. The act declared that all marriage ceremonies must be conducted in a public fashion. A minister had to perform the ceremony in a parish church or chapel of the Church of England after the posting of banns in order for it to be legally binding. And, "Clergymen who disobeyed the law were liable for 14 years transportation" (Parliament.UK). Moreover, the new law proclaimed that "No marriage of a person under the age of 21 was valid without the consent of parents or guardians" (Parliament.UK). After the Act of 1753, the new and existing marriage laws were more strictly enforced than before, so prospective husbands' "hopes of acquiring financial gain from the marriage were likely to be dashed" (Probert 418, 444). The two abduction scenes in *Clarissa* illustrate the dangers of lax and poorly enforced marriage laws before 1753, which failed to prevent irregular clandestine marriages. Through *Clarissa's* first abduction, Richardson depicts the female victim's difficulty in proving a forced kidnapping versus a consensual elopement in a court of law. The novel also portrays the ease of transporting and imprisoning women like *Clarissa* in London against their will. In addition, Lovelace attempts to attain a marriage license illegally and marry her clandestinely without her parents' consent. *Clarissa* eventually flees but is again easily recaptured by Lovelace and lured back by his female accomplices. Exasperated by her refusal to marry him, Lovelace then rapes her, fulfilling the definition of felonious abduction (as coerced marriage and/or defilement) according to eighteenth-century statutes. The crime narrative illustrates the various ways *Clarissa* suffered without the legal protection of The Marriage Act, which was passed five years after the novel's publication.

During Clarissa's first abduction, Lovelace repeatedly presses her to marry him clandestinely. Before they reach London, he urges her to take his hand in marriage. As Clarissa explains to Anna, "Mr. Lovelace offered to either attend me to Lord M's or to send for his Chaplain, yesterday. He pressed me to consent to this proposal, most earnestly; and even seemed desirous rather to have the ceremony pass here, than in London" (Richardson 294). Evidently, Lovelace already has a Chaplain who has agreed to marry them clandestinely outside of a church without parental consent. Swan notes that women like Clarissa would be well aware of the immoral and dubious nature of such clandestine marriages, and would have found these proposals insulting ("Discourses of Law" 78). Meanwhile, Anna Howe's confiscated letter to Clarissa reveals that Lovelace has been illegally attempting to procure marriage documents, which would again force Clarissa to marry him clandestinely without the witnessed consent of her parents and outside of a church where banns were to be posted (Probert 418-419). Lovelace has had two drafts of a marriage settlement drawn up by lawyers, and he has "more than once endeavored" to illegally obtain a marriage license (Richardson 425). While he had thus far been unsuccessful, Mrs. Howe's proctor believes that because of Lovelace's "high fortunes, these difficulties will probably be got over" (426). Lovelace is clearly manipulating or attempting to evade weakly enforced marital laws in his efforts to coerce Clarissa into an irregular, but legally binding marriage. As the proctor suggests, Lovelace's wealth probably would have allowed him to obtain a binding marriage contract. In court, this would inhibit Clarissa's legal ability to annul the coerced private marriage afterward or prosecute for rape.²⁷ However, despite his great

²⁷ Forced intercourse with Clarissa may be viewed as legal by courts if the marriage ceremony performed was deemed valid, as was determined in the kidnapping / rape case of Rachel Rogers in 1720. Rogers' five male and female abductors, which included the principal rapist, were found not guilty because the [forced] marriage was performed by an ordained parson who did not detect foul play. Thus, the court determined Rogers was legally wed to the rapist, John Thompson, during intercourse, although it is unclear

frustration over her refusals and the eventual rape, Lovelace never forces Clarissa to marry him, which differentiates this abduction narrative from many other contemporary abduction trial reports.

Culpable Female Accomplices

Clarissa narrates the private and psychological realities of abduction and rape crimes in order to advocate for gentlewomen's improved legal protection against sex crimes that stole their agency to marry and hold property. While Clarissa is often regarded as the victimized subject, little scholarly attention has been paid to ways in which the novel incriminates women workers in the prostitution industry as felonious perpetrators of sex crimes. *Clarissa* depicts female sex workers as likely perpetrators, culpable and dangerous criminal agents deserving of capital punishment under the law. *Clarissa* joins other popular novels including *Roxana*, *Pamela*, *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, *Tom Jones*, and *Fanny Hill*. in exploring women's criminal agency under current statutes as vilified accomplices to rape against female victims. Yet, female perpetrators and their male counterparts are not legally punished in these narratives, just as they are seldom punished by eighteenth-century courts. The texts compliment eighteenth-century statutes (rather than lenient juries), which held women highly responsible for their participation in capital offenses even if they were not the primary rapists or murderers. However, *Clarissa* moves beyond contemporary English laws that regarded female accomplices to be as culpable as principal male rapists and abductors. In *Clarissa*, Richardson attaches prostitutes' involvement in deviant sexual commerce to their capacity for violent crime, particularly stereotyping prostitutes as likely accomplices to sexual felonies. Although the epistolary format in *Clarissa* allows the propertied characters to express complex mental subjectivity surrounding the protagonist's

from the court records if the rape occurred before or after the marriage ceremony. ("Trial of John Thompson, etc." Old Bailey Proceedings Online).

abductions and rape, the accomplices are not afforded the same subjectivity. Richardson grants the educated, and thus literate, characters agency to testify on their own behalf through their letters. Yet, this is a right which is denied to Lovelace's various accomplices. Their thoughts, actions, and motives are not portrayed as testimonial evidence. Rather, their roles are only recounted through the letters of others. And, the depictions of the bawd and prostitutes in particular fall back on common pejorative stereotypes of sex workers as ruthless and sexually deviant criminals who have sold their virtue and ethics in the market.²⁸

In contrast to *Clarissa's* portrayal of female accomplices to abduction, the majority of English women tried as accomplices to rape and abduction were not reported as being involved in prostitution. However, there were a number of famous female precedents (who were working *femes soles* or whose labor status was unspecified) prosecuted for rape or the related crime of kidnapping at the Old Bailey throughout the century.²⁹ Female accomplices composed a small percentage of indicted rapists in the eighteenth century compared to male rapists acting alone. However, the limited number of male and female perpetrators who acted as accomplices to rape was more balanced. There were a total of 17 men and 13 women tried as accomplices to rape at the Old Bailey during the century. Despite the low number of defendants tried in London, women's alleged involvement in sexual felonies evidently influenced popular awareness and also the emerging domestic novel.

In closer alignment with the narrative of *Clarissa's* abduction, women were more often involved in kidnapping plots that involved rape. For example, in early eighteenth-century London, women were consistently indicted as culpable accomplices in the abduction of heiresses

²⁸ See the discussion of female workers as morally dissolute sex workers and bawds in Chapter 1 (24-25). Also see example descriptions of bawds in primary texts in Chapter 3 (48-51).

²⁹ See the list of anthology titles recounting the crimes of rape accomplice Alice Gray (1707) and abduction accomplices Mary Hendron and Margaret Pendergrass (1728) in the Introduction (14).

and other propertied women. Female abductors were involved in all four of the kidnapping cases prosecuted at the Old Bailey between 1690 and 1728 (the last recorded abduction hearing tried at Old Bailey during the century).³⁰ In three of the four cases there were two or more women assisting in the crime. These trial records describe a rape in which women directly aided and abetted by allegedly luring, drugging, undressing, and/or restraining the victim. These female accomplices and accessories were charged as principal felons and were equally subject to capital punishment under the law if convicted of abduction and forced marriage or “defilement.” As in other felonies, the man who perpetrated the kidnapping, the coerced marriage, or the rape, and the men and women who aided and abetted the primary perpetrator in that crime were equally regarded as principal offenders. As William Blackstone explained, he or she that is “present, aiding, and abetting the fact to be done,” whether “within sight or hearing of the fact” or not is also a principal perpetrator in the second degree, and is subject to the same punishment as the principal perpetrator in the first degree (4.3.I). This law holds true for both rape and abduction crimes. Thus, the women and men who aided and abetted in the luring and trapping, the marriage ceremony, or the rape of the assaulted women were equally tried as principal actors in the abduction. In addition, as in rape law, all of the accessories before and after the crime were also “deemed principal felons,” and faced the same punishments as the primary male offender (4.15.II).³¹ Thus, legal statutes held female accomplices or accessories to abduction equally

³⁰ Grace Wiggan and Mrs. C for kidnapping Mary Wharton, 1690; Catharine Creek for kidnapping Margaret Delye, 1711; Mary Dunford and Elizabeth Campbell for kidnapping Rachel Rogers 1720; Mary Hendron and Margaret Pendergrass for kidnapping Sibble Morris, 1728. Unfortunately, the legal records for abductions in other English jurisdictions are not as easily accessible as those from the Old Bailey in London, leaving us without a complete or accurate picture of abduction trends and the involvement of female accomplices throughout the eighteenth century.

³¹ Blackstone cites Matthew Hale’s definition that an accessory before the fact is a participant who is absent at the time of the crime but may “procure, counsel, or command another to commit a crime”

culpable for their participation in sexual assault crimes against other women. However, as in rape cases, jury conviction rates for perpetrators were low. Nonetheless, conviction rates at the Old Bailey were higher for abduction than rape prosecutions. In the four kidnapping trials of women from 1690 to 1728 (when the last case was tried) at the Old Bailey, three of the seven women charged were found guilty, and two were put to death. These women's trials and their publicity helped to shape popular awareness of women's subjecthood as victimized legal agents and as felonious sexual offenders. The trial reports of alleged and convicted female criminals also apparently influenced the eighteenth-century domestic novel's portrayal of female accomplices to abduction and rape. Audiences would have understood the fictional female accomplices in *Clarissa* to be guilty of a capital offense under English laws, even though defendants were seldom convicted in courts.

In comparison with contemporary trial reports, *Clarissa's* abduction and rape narrative depicts a large number of female accomplices who Lovelace relies on in order to effectively bait, capture, imprison, drug, and rape *Clarissa*.³² Lovelace invokes the assistance of seven (named) characters in order to kidnap and rape the heroine. He initially relies on Joseph Leman (the Harlowes' servant pretending to be a family member who has caught them together), who frightens her into Lovelace's protection outside of the garden. However, thereafter, Lovelace relies mainly on women to entrap, imprison, and assist in *Clarissa's* eventual rape. When the pair arrives in London, Mrs. Sinclair helps to imprison *Clarissa* in her house, and suggests that

(Blackstone 4.3.2). "An accessory after the fact may be, where a person, knowing a felony to be committed, receives, comforts, or assists the felon" (Blackstone 4.3.3).

³² For example, in the 1728 kidnapping and rape of Sibble Morris, five women were present and/or aiding in the crime (Old Bailey Online). Likewise, in the 1720 kidnapping trial of an elderly widow, Rachel Rogers, the court records suggest she was drugged during lunch at the female accomplice's home. Rogers became sleepy, then "took a Nap, and they carried her up Stairs, undrest her to her Shift, and put her to Bed: that Brown tied her legs to the Bed-Posts," and there she was raped (Old Bailey Online). Elizabeth Keagan also describes being drugged by Ann Carrol and Robert Kindillan in a 1790 rape case.

Lovelace drug and terrorize the young gentlewoman (477, 509). In addition, her female servant, Dorcas, steals Clarissa's letters, prevents her escape, and also helps to drug her (509, 556). Meanwhile, the other dissolute women living in Sinclair's bawdy house also help trap her, while Sally and Polly in particular, encourage Lovelace to rape Clarissa. After Clarissa manages to escape to Mrs. Moore's lodgings, Lovelace enlists two more kept mistresses, Lady Barbara Wallis and Johnetta Golding, to pass as his aunt and cousin. These women lure Clarissa back to Mrs. Sinclair's and then begin to drug her with opium-laced tea (553-554). Thus, Clarissa not only must protect herself against Lovelace, but she also must protect herself against a variety of colluding accomplices.

The women's callous and criminal behavior toward Clarissa may appear shocking to modern readers. Although we might find their violation of Clarissa's sexual vulnerability particularly harsh, there is evidence that lower-class women of London did not always respect other women's sexual vulnerability. For example, in eighteenth-century London, crime historian Gregory Durston has found that there was a notable lack of female solidarity in cases of female battery and public humiliation/exposure. He reports that "females were disproportionately represented amongst defendants in assault cases in which pregnant women were attacked" (19-20). Unlike the more disparate gender ratios among male and female perpetrators in other crimes, nearly one-third of the battery cases of pregnant women between 1685 and 1720 were perpetrated by other women (20). These early century statistics suggest the absence of women's, and particularly working women's, sense of shared vulnerability against particularly female crimes. In addition, Durston also reveals that metropolitan women "seem to have been more likely to 'sexually' humiliate other females when engaged in fights with members of their own sex, than men who assaulted women. This might be done by exposing their breasts or private

parts in public” (20). If it was the case that female offenders were known to attack and even strip other women in the city, then by extension, it is not so surprising that Richardson incorporates the narrative of lower-class women attacking Clarissa’s sexual vulnerability. Richardson appears to be providing a depiction of working-class women’s violent customs for middle-class readers’ consumption, much as it was portrayed in current trial reports. As Faller notes, “The material circumstances, speech habits, and experience of the laboring (and non-laboring) poor were conveyed to a more avowedly respectable public” interested in depictions of class within crime literature (65). Richardson presents female violence to emphasize the disparities between middle- and working-class women’s morality. Upon escaping the brothel, Clarissa declares, for “*Women to desert the cause of a poor creature of their own Sex in such a situation, what must they be!*” (432). Her exclamation serves as a rhetorical question condemning the treachery and violence of Lovelace’s female accomplices as nearly unimaginable. After the initial abduction, Clarissa consciously and consistently defends herself against Lovelace’s dishonorable advances. Yet, she repeatedly appears surprised by the criminal actions of her female aggressors, who disregard her vulnerability as a reputable woman deserving of protection against sexual violence. She naively does not take the women’s cultural differences across class into account when she assumes women’s mutual support in defending one another against heterosexual rape and protecting their right to sexual consent. Yet, in reading her incredulous responses to female betrayal, Richardson’s audiences perceive the disparity in cultural values these female characters hold toward other women and their bodies.

While Durston points out differences between female modes of aggression across social classes, *Clarissa* particularly stereotypes and incriminates women in the sex industry as deviant sexual perpetrators. Gladfelder argues that “from at least the late seventeenth century...a

‘disciplinary’ form of narrative attention on the deviant subjects of the various criminal genres responded in part to a desire for social control and the containment of rebellious drives” (7). Accordingly, a depiction of “criminality marks the boundaries of the licit and illicit, the normal and deviant or perverse” for crime literature consumers (5). Femes soles in the prostitution industry were regarded by reform groups and much of polite society as performing deviant female labor that disrupted reputable, conjugal sexuality. The prostitutes and bawd in *Clarissa* are portrayed much like the selfish, treacherous, and ruthless bawds described in other eighteenth-century conduct tracts that opposed prostitution. As mercenary individuals, they seek personal gain “at any cost, for status, property, sex, money, and revenge,” and act in defiance of “the agencies of social regulation, religion, and law” (7). *Clarissa* exaggerates prostitutes’ selfish individualism and deviant sexuality by connecting their labor to their participation in violent sexual felonies. Women engaged in sexual commerce then become othered as dangerous criminal threats to gentlewomen and respectable families.

Richardson constructs explicit class animosity between Lovelace’ female accomplices and Clarissa. The law establishes profit as the central motive for female abduction, and contemporary courts seldom worked to establish any further criminal motive. Likewise, readers assume that Lovelace is paying the prostitutes, who otherwise sell their labor and/or body through sexual commerce, for their assistance in Clarissa’s abduction. However, Sally and Polly in particular are driven by additional motivations beyond profit to injure Clarissa. Sally and Polly are jealous that Lovelace is exhibiting greater patience in pursuing Clarissa than in their first sexual encounters (361). Sally is also jealous that a gentlewoman has supplanted herself as Lovelace’s love interest, and she is envious that Clarissa’s fortune has afforded her educational and social privileges which she has been denied (575). Richardson invests Sally and Polly with

criminal motives beyond straightforward mercenary interests in order to expose their class resentment and moral depravity in comparison with the virtuous Clarissa.

Throughout Clarissa's abduction, entrapment, and rape, Clarissa calls attention to the female accomplices' shocking and violent betrayals. First, she reflects on Mrs. Sinclair's and Dorcas' treachery against her as they continually collude with Lovelace to ensure her imprisonment and block her escapes. She questions, "Can there be any woman so vile to woman? O yes!...The Lord Deliver me!" (509). Clarissa interrogates and then affirms the height of female malice and violence that she experiences in Mrs. Sinclair's home. Second, despite the evidence that she is twice drugged by the imposturous Lady Betty and Cousin Montague and then by a servant, Clarissa cannot bring herself to believe the women are plotting against her (554, 556). Clarissa, recalls, "I had no suspicion yet,...and I blamed myself for my weak fears.—It cannot be that *such* Ladies will abet treachery against a poor creature they are so fond of...They must undoubtedly *be* the persons they *appear* to be-- What folly to doubt it!" (554). She blames her own foolishness in suspecting them rather than trusting her instincts that the women are frauds and possess the criminal capacity to deceive and injure her. In her moments of disbelief, Richardson emphasizes Clarissa's grave error in reading unscrupulous and sexually deviant working-class prostitutes and kept mistresses as respectable and trustworthy women. In addition, her shock stresses the contrast between her respectability and their criminality.

Clarissa concludes her letter to Anna detailing the rape crime by charging the women, including the false Lady Betty, Cousin Montague, Dorcas, and Mrs. Sinclair with collusion. She blames the women pretending to be Lovelace's distinguished aunt and cousin for assisting in baiting and trapping her once again under Mrs. Sinclair's roof where Mrs. Sinclair, Dorcas, and other women of the house set up Clarissa to be raped. Clarissa explains, "I was so senseless, I

dare not aver, that horrid creatures of the house were personally aiding and abetting: But some visionary remembrances I have of female figures, flitting, as I may say before my sight, the wretched woman's (Mrs. Sinclair's) particularly" (557). Clarissa uses legal terms "aiding and abetting," to officially, although hesitantly, characterize Mrs. Sinclair and the other unnamed women's criminal role as principal rapists in the second degree who deserve capital punishment. Finally, Clarissa ends her account of the rape blaming Lovelace' female accomplices for luring her back and drugging her, which directly led to her rape. She exclaims, "Thus was I tricked and deluded back by blacker hearts of my own Sex, than I thought there were in the world, who appeared to be persons of honour: And, when in his power, thus barbarously was I treated by this villainous man" (557). Here, Clarissa emphasizes her victimization through female treachery and the women's felonious participation in her abduction and rape.

The women's deception and criminal actions force Clarissa to re-imagine the depths of female vice, which she has been almost unwilling to do. Clarissa ends the paragraph refusing to dwell or elaborate further "on a subject so shocking as this must ever be to my remembrance" (557). Yet, it is not only the rape (which she can't remember at all) that is shocking to her. Rather, it is her recollection of women's aiding and abetting in her imprisonment, drugging, and sexual assault that is unbearably shocking to her memory. Throughout her ordeal, Clarissa continually questions the limits of female crime that she encounters. Her repeated disbelief draws our attention to women's potential for sexual violence. The narrative answers Clarissa's repeated questioning of whether women can be so morally depraved with a resounding "yes." Her disbelief appears to be a didactic tool disparaging prostitutes for their supposed capacity for deception and violent crime. Ultimately, like Clarissa, audiences are lead to acknowledge female workers, and particularly female sex workers, as felonious perpetrators who complicate the

traditional construction of male sexual violence against female victims and who, according to Richardson, are equally deserving of capital punishment.

Women's Reluctance to Prosecute

Despite repeated evidence of Clarissa's resistance to the abduction, her clear non-consent during the rape, and her private professions of their crime, Richardson portrays her adamant refusal to charge Lovelace and his accomplices with rape. Her avoidance of the judicial system appears representative of many sexually assaulted women and their families. The low number of rape and abduction cases brought to trial and the even lower number of convictions, suggest that the public's dismissal of rape as a serious felony and its biases against female victims had not yet caught up with contemporary laws. Yet, the depictions of heterosexual rape in *Clarissa* and other courtship novels suggested gentlewomen were indeed violable subjects deserving of protection and legal recourse. Historians who have researched rape within the eighteenth-century court system note the very low percentages of rape cases tried in this period in comparison with murder and other violent capital crimes against individual. Three times as many murders were tried as rape offenses (Durston 141). Scholars note the even lower percentages of rape convictions for those brought to trial. For example, Gregory Durston has found that conviction rates at the Old Bailey only averaged around 16 percent from 1700 to 1799 (142). Scholarship on eighteenth-century rape often explores the various reasons for the meager number of (male) rape indictments and (male) convictions. Durston suggests that men may have believed they possessed a "strong sexual imperative" to seduce or rape wives, servants, children, and prostitutes (172). Also, the low number of charges and convictions are generally attributed to the great social, monetary, and logistical challenges female victims faced in the justice system. Anthony Simpson finds that class privilege in the justice system prevented wealthy men like

Colonel Charteris from either being convicted or receiving capital punishment for rape crimes (Simpson “Popular Perception of Rape” 35, 37). A number of scholars also argue that many individuals in this patriarchal society, who sometimes even included the women raped, did not find rape offensive enough to convict as a felony deserving of capital punishment.³³ There is evidence that victims were discouraged by friends and family from pursuing an arrest because of the severity of the death penalty (Constantine 52-53). Similarly, jurors were sometimes reluctant to convict due to the severity of the death penalty prescribed by law. Even when a rape case was brought to trial, due to the difficulty in proving that a rape had physically occurred *and* was non-consensual, jurors were reluctant to sentence an offender to death (Simpson 53). The popular sentiment against convicting rapists may even have been held by some magistrates and constables who ignored or discouraged women from prosecuting rapists, and encouraged them to settle out of court (Constantine 56; Beattie 129). As Durston articulates, despite the capital punishment designated to rape crimes, “In many cases it was probably thought unreasonable to hang a man, possessed of the strong sexual imperative attributed to him by the era, for doing what came ‘naturally’” (172). Thus, “The eighteenth century saw a marked divergence between the popular (male) interpretation of rape and its strict legal definition. This facilitated great prosecutorial discretion,” among magistrates, constables, and jurors who prevented arrests and convictions (172). Rape defendants benefited from “a degree of de facto tolerance for what was a publicly deprecated crime” (172).

³³ Bashar 40; Clark 7, 35, 48; Trumbach 277; Edelstein 367; Simpson “Popular Perceptions of Rape” 37; Durston 172; Constantine 37-8, 52-53.

Bashar argued that “Male judges and juries were loath to punish in any way other males for any sexual offense against females” (40). In addition, Constantine suggests that while today, we would consider many cases between servants and masters rape, “By contemporary eighteenth-century standards, what happened was, in extreme cases, rape, but most sexual encounters would have been thought of—not only by the men but also perhaps by the women—as being the result of coercion and persuasion that did not amount to rape. The men would have seen themselves as taking advantage of the power they had, and... not a crime” (37-38).

If women did wish to prosecute their offenders despite the likelihood of a conviction, the public testimony to prove abduction and/or rape was often too humiliating to pursue a trial. The victim's public character and previous reputation was attacked during trial as a defense strategy, which further embarrassed women and deterred them from filing criminal charges.³⁴ As Laurie Edelstein explains, a rape or sexual assault victim "would have to subject herself to a painful process of questioning, as well as public exposure, humiliation, and embarrassment" (361-362). In addition, courts expected victim prosecutors to present credible, and often professional witnesses (doctors and midwives, parents, employers, or other relatives or neighbors) to testify who had evaluated their visible vaginal injuries shortly after the rape occurred. This physical evidence gave credibility to their suit, but cost the victims further public exposure and embarrassment. She notes that "Henry Fielding targeted the reluctance of victims to prosecute as one of the primary problems in the effective operation of the eighteenth-century justice system" (Edelstein 363; Fielding 154). Yet, she and other historians believe that there was an even greater reluctance to prosecute rape crimes than other crimes due to the great public embarrassment, cost, and unlikelihood of a conviction (363). Moreover, victims in eighteenth-century Britain had to find and help arrest their aggressor, and then act as prosecutors, "whose responsibility it was to prepare the case, assemble witnesses, and take the lead in laying out the evidence in court" (Edelstein 371; Keymer 219; Beattie 35). These challenges resulted in a very low prosecution rate for rape in the metropolis and in provincial assizes during the 1700's. Despite these difficulties, Durston found that there were 281 people indicted for rape at the Old Bailey during the eighteenth century, while Anthony Simpson calculated 294 prosecutions between 1730 and 1830 ("Vulnerability and the Age of Female Consent" 188).

³⁴ Beattie 128; Edelstein 389; Simpson "Popular Perceptions of Rape" 33; Durston 155.

Joan Schwartz, who reads *Clarissa* against previous eighteenth-century abduction case law, suggests that Clarissa's first abduction would be hard to prove because of the circumstantial evidence of Clarissa's premeditated complicity. Her written correspondence to Lovelace and the linen and letters she prepares for Anna "both suggest her voluntary intention of going" (293). She believes Clarissa's letters in particular "suggest Richardson's awareness of the difficulties a naïve girl would have encountered in proving a case against an abductor with whom she had previously had correspondence or involvement" (293). Moreover, the fact that she intentionally ran away from her home and did not cry out against him, would incriminate her in a contemporary jury's view, despite the fact that the law allowed women to change their mind after they went off with a suitor (294). This is one point in which Richardson is exposing cultural dissonance with the legal statutes enacted to protect female abductees. Beth Swan also notes that Clarissa has no critical eye-witness testimony for the first abduction or the rape, while Lovelace would have a number of accomplices to testify in his defense ("*Clarissa* and Eighteenth-Century Discourses of Law" 76-77). Juries relied heavily on physical evidence and first-person testimony as proof of the crime, so in a court of law Clarissa's testimony alone would not likely convince a jury. Gladfelder finds that "verbatim transcripts figured increasingly in trial reports" in more detailed and "inclusive forms," and readers were to "sort out conflicting accounts" and witnesses' and defendants' credibility (71). The extensive detailed testimonies in *Clarissa* appeal to the increasingly sophisticated court attendees and readers of crime literature. And, as Wagner suggests, "Thanks to its voracious appetite for evidence, the jury of readers will be kinder than this hypothetical jury" who could weigh only the courtroom evidence and testimonies (316).

If readers could interpret the first kidnapping as a possible elopement, when Lovelace recaptures/ abducts Clarissa again at Hampstead (under the pretenses that she is his runaway

wife), he removes any ambiguity whether Clarissa may be consenting. Clarissa's second abduction from Mrs. Moore's at Hampstead more clearly incriminates Lovelace and his accomplices as kidnapers and provides additional motives for Lovelace's rape of Clarissa. In his letter to Belford, Lovelace establishes a motive for rape beyond the acquisition of her property, revenge. He vows to revenge himself upon Clarissa once he finds and recaptures her (416). And, after the previous near-rape scene at Mrs. Sinclair's, the narrative confirms that rape is the revenge he has been plotting (403-404). Also, Lovelace expresses an additional motive for the rape: to compel Clarissa to marry him. He predicts after the rape "The haughty Beauty will not refuse me, when her pride of being corporally inviolate is brought down" (468). Afterward, he further believes, "She has already incurred the censure of the world. She must therefore chuse to be mine, for the sake of soldering up her Reputation in the eye of the impudent world" (332). Thus, immediately after the second abduction, Lovelace turns to traumatic and irrevocable sexual coercion in order to force Clarissa's submission to marriage and exact his revenge.

Although Richardson lays out the criminal elements of an abduction felony, which proves the kidnapers' / rapists' guilt, he also allows the characters greater psychological subjectivity than in trial accounts, which complicates the crime narrative, but ultimately vindicates Clarissa. When compared to published accounts of real eighteenth-century crime, *Clarissa* more closely resembles other fictional crime literature that grants victims, perpetrators, and witnesses emotional and mental subjectivity through their written correspondences. Paul Hunter argues that eighteenth-century novels "provide a richer sense of context for human choices" and "portray human decisions as characterized by more complex motives and values" than other contemporary non-fiction writing (232). Popular criminal accounts are more straightforward, focusing on "concrete" and "direct" acts of violence (Faller 124). Accounts of

criminal offenses are “almost never emotional, or psychologically induced” (124). By contrast, in early crime novels including *Clarissa*, readers have “an intimation not only of the speaking subject’s processes of mind, then, but of the processes of mind of other, potentially speaking, subjects around him” (137). While published trial records take little to no interest in an alleged perpetrator’s motives or the victim’s feelings, the dated letters sent between Clarissa, Lovelace, and other secondary characters create an immediate sense of each individual’s intentions. Their values don’t seem to change in profound ways, but their emotions and choices certainly alternate and their uncertainty over others’ motives is evident throughout the abduction and rape narratives. Alex Townsend argues that a polyphony of voices is created in the text, particularly through Lovelace, who, although “morally ambiguous,” “leads a vital and vivid existence” that “wins the sympathy of readers” (172). In his letters, “He debates, argues, reasons; his emotions, drives, and imagination come into play,” constructing the principal perpetrator as “an attractive and intelligent rake” (138, 139). Alternately, Clarissa’s letters to her friend, Anna Howe, provide her means to express her innocence, “self-vindication,” “magnanimity and forbearance” (91). Townsend also suggests that Anna’s “quick-mindedness and self-assurance,” as well as her “practicality and pragmatism” in pushing Clarissa to claim her property, marry, or prosecute contrasts Clarissa’s didactic “devotion to virtue and duty,” and might appeal to young, like-minded, female readers (95). The conflicting perspectives of Clarissa’s felonious victimization and the multiple motives portrayed in the novel provide readers a complex, striking contrast to the straightforward physical testimony usually exhibited in contemporary trial reports. For example, in the *Annals of Newgate* trial report of Mary Hendron and Margaret Pendergrass for the abduction of Sibble Morris (1728), the courts only ask the primary witness, her servant, to provide a detailed narrative of the crime, which includes the defendants luring Morris and

assisting in the wedding ceremony and the rape (61-63). Likewise, the father only testified to the value of Sibble's estate and how he found out about his daughter's allegedly illegal marriage (65). There is no further interrogation of criminal intent, the defendants' or victim's characters, or the victim's possible consent in this case.

Although Richardson provides greater insight into the intentions, choices, and emotions of the novel's victim and her aggressors, he clearly maintains Clarissa's innocence by removing her subjectivity before the rape. Since Lovelace and his accomplices remove Clarissa's conscious ability to verbally consent or physically resist, the law would automatically define the intercourse as a rape. As Ferguson explains in "Rape and the Rise of the Novel":

Although Clarissa's unconsciousness deprives her of the capacity to know exactly what happened to her, it also ensures that her nonconsent will be inescapable. The stipulation that unconsciousness is nonconsent—even though it necessarily cannot manifest itself as a physical resistance—thus provides that Clarissa's nonconsent continues even in her absence, even in her unconsciousness." (100)

While Clarissa's unconsciousness legally substantiates her non-consent without her verbal refusal, Richardson also removes any doubt in the readers' minds that Clarissa would have consented, had she been conscious. He depicts a near-rape scene the night of the fire, just days before, that testifies to Clarissa's ardent resistance and self-defense. After fainting of fear from a fire, she awakes in Lovelace's arms horrified, believing he is attempting to rape her. Lovelace recounts to Belford, that "she appealed to heaven against my treachery" in "passionate exclamations," "redoubling her struggles to get from me, in broken accents and exclamations the most vehement, she protested, that she would not survive what she called a treatment so disgraceful an villainous" (403, 404). As in other rape narratives and testimonials, Clarissa

demonstrates her adamant demands that he desist in what she thinks is rape, and she physically fights to extricate herself. She also finds a “pair of sharp-pointed scissors” with which to defend herself against Lovelace, and “make her words good on the spot” (404). Readers witness Clarissa’s vehement self-defense against sexual assault. However, he recalls that he seized the scissors and then “clasped her one more time to my bosom,” but it was only “with the utmost difficulty that I was able to hold her,” until she slips through his hands to the floor, this time imploring his compassion and his honor as a gentleman (404). This scene of Clarissa’s vehement and sustained verbal resistance, her repeated physical struggle to free herself from her perpetrator, and her use of a weapon testify to her intense struggle against Lovelace’s sexual advances. Her adamant refusal and vigorous self-defense establish her agency, her resistance to the crime, and ultimately her victimization through the abduction and subsequent rape.

Clarissa’s readers witness a young and virtuous gentlewoman’s private struggle against her abductors/rapists. The text also explicitly draws our attention to sex crimes as a capital offense under the law. Yet, it never depicts the female protagonist or her family pursuing rape convictions in public courts because gentlewomen like Clarissa would have sought to avoid a humiliating public trial. Rather, *Clarissa* exposes women’s difficulties in bringing abductors/rapists to trial. As Francis Ferguson argues about the eighteenth-century novel, “Rape becomes the vehicle for the contrast between what can be said in public and proved and what is said in private and believed” (99). *Clarissa* represents the physical and emotional realities of abduction and rape that women experience despite their constrained agency as legal subjects in the court system. However, unlike in trials, there is no space created in the novel for public debate over the credibility of the victim or the guilt of the aggressor(s). The novel condemns

rapists and their accomplices as culpable villains while they critique a legal system that allows most perpetrators to go unpunished.

Richardson's novel differs from publications of trial narratives because *Clarissa* presents readers with clear perpetrators and direct didactic messages about female victimization. Courts interrogated female victims of rape or abduction as much or more than they did the defendants, allowing the trial attendees and the readers of trial reports to formulate their own (albeit biased) conclusions along with jurors. By contrast, Richardson's *Clarissa* conforms to other eighteenth-century didactic novels in its ultimate portrayal of right and wrong (Hunter 231). The virtuous and well-intentioned Clarissa is innocent while Lovelace, his accomplices, and Clarissa's family are clearly guilty. *Clarissa* exemplifies Hunter's description of "eighteenth-century didacticism," which depends on "its directness and faith in language to affect the behavior of readers in rational and predictable ways" (231). While readers may have debated Clarissa's culpability in her initial abduction, there is no question of her resistance to the second kidnapping and rape shortly afterward. And, where the novel's didacticism failed to convince independent-minded readers in the first edition, Richardson's editorial additions and footnotes in his second and third editions attempt to heavy-handedly guide unsympathetic readers to blame Clarissa's family and to condemn Lovelace and his accomplices (Townsend 34). For example, in the preface to the third edition, he insists the novel is "to warn the inconsiderate and thoughtless of one sex against the base arts and designs of specious contrivers of the other," who set Christian "doctrines at defiance, are condignly, and...consequentially punished" (xv). Here, he emphasizes rakes like Lovelace as perpetrators and naïve women like Clarissa as victims; however, the crime narrative in the novel portrays a much more complex

network of male and female perpetrators that victimize gentlewomen than he introduces in this preface.

Richardson points out a flawed justice system that fails to protect propertied women particularly in passages where Clarissa cites the law as her protector against Lovelace and his accomplices even though she refuses to prosecute. Before Lovelace initially draws her out of the Harlowes' garden, he threatens violence to her family if she does not depart with him. Yet, she responds, "To Providence, Mr. Lovelace, and to the Law, will I leave the safety of my friends" (225). At that moment she refuses to be made a sacrifice in order to further prevent his violent feud with her family. Rather, she relies on the laws to mediate their feud and prevent his retaliation. Unfortunately for Clarissa, Lovelace regards the British justice system as impotent against his crimes. He sneers at her belief in the justice system by facetiously responding that her will alone is his law. He professes, "May I perish eternally, if your will shall not be Law to me in everything" (226). We know he respects neither Clarissa nor the law, and he simply ignores her protests. While she is imprisoned at Mrs. Sinclair's, Clarissa again suggests that she may avenge herself "by Law," or appeal to her relations for redress. However, Lovelace responds, "D—n the Law...and all those to whom you talk of appealing!—I defy both the one and the other" (512). This is apparently true, as a felonious abductor, he has already criminally defied both her family and the justice system. Zomchick argues in his reading of *Clarissa*, "The stake in Lovelace's private war is no less than his right to transgress at will both the law and the bodily integrity of his opponent, whether James Harlowe or Clarissa" (101). Rather, he asks only for her forgiveness, which, if granted, would keep him safely out of public courts.

Lovelace believes that his wealth and the victimized women's silence place him and his accomplices beyond the jurisdiction of the justice system. He blatantly disregards British laws

protecting women because he has little fear of being prosecuted for capital felonies against women. After the rape, in his letter to Belford, he reminds readers, “For a Rape, thou knowest, to us Rakes, is far from being an undesirable thing. Nothing but the Law stands in our way, upon that account; and the opinion of what a modest woman will suffer rather than become a *viva voce* accuser, lessens much an honest fellow’s apprehensions on that score” (487). While a few women did prosecute against rape and abduction, from the low numbers of gentlewomen bringing rape charges in the eighteenth century his claim appears to be true.³⁵ As Anna Clark argues, “‘Respectability’ prohibited women from speaking out on any sexual matter, let alone sexual violence committed against them” (25). She then quotes an early nineteenth-century Lambeth magistrate, who claimed ‘the more decent or respectable females were, the more reluctant they were in coming forward to give public details of such gross outrages’” (25). Wealthy and middle-class victims, who could afford it, generally settled their rape grievances privately or through magistrates with monetary reparations (Simpson “Popular Perceptions of Rape” 37).

Just as Lovelace anticipates, Clarissa refuses to prosecute Lovelace and his accomplices in court. In her letters to Anna that detail her victimization, Clarissa regards Lovelace’s accomplices as equally culpable and deserving of legal punishment. She claims she has survived

³⁵ Rape within abduction crimes was occasionally prosecuted by the wealthy throughout England during the eighteenth century in order to revoke the legally binding marriage contract, which was allegedly forced upon the abducted woman. In these instances, wealthy women faced public scrutiny in order to extricate themselves from their perpetrators. For example, in the 1772 abduction and coerced marriage of Francis Harford, daughter of Lord Baltimore, the marriage was eventually annulled by English ecclesiastical courts after twelve years of legal battles (Clifford). In the 1787 abduction and Belgian marriage of the mentally disabled Fanny Fust, courts annulled the marriage contract and placed her finances under the supervision of a committee (Clifford). Finally, in the famous 1791 Bristol elopement case, guardians of Clementina Clerke indicted the fourteen-year-old girl’s husband for kidnapping and coerced marriage in Europe. However, by the time of the trial came to pass three years later, Clementina was pregnant with her second child and testified that the marriage was consensual (Clifford).

a “capital enormity,” reminding readers that Lovelace and his aids are deserving of capital punishment (558). Yet, she refuses to charge anyone because she cannot bear to participate in the public spectacle that a felony trial would ignite. She poses a rhetorical question to Anna, “But suppose, as his actions by me are really of a *capital nature*, it were insisted upon that I should appear to prosecute him and his accomplices in a Court of Justice, how do you think I could bear That?” Instead, she pleads, “Let me slide quietly into my grave” (558). Clarissa wishes to be forgotten rather than to publicly expose her sufferings at trial.

After the rape, Anna insists that Clarissa press charges against Lovelace to protect themselves and other women who may suffer by him in the future. Anna adamantly advises, “I must call upon you, my dear, to resolve upon taking Legal vengeance of the infernal wretch. And this is not only for our sakes, but for the sakes of innocents who otherwise may yet be deluded and outraged by him” (559). Anna attempts to protect potential female rape victims from the primary male perpetrator. Yet, she ignores the dangerous female accomplices who aided Lovelace in the rape crime despite Clarissa’s mention of their involvement. Why?

Anna joins Dr. Lewen and Clarissa’s family, who seem to focus only on Lovelace’s felonious violence against Clarissa. Like Anna, Dr. Lewen similarly presses Clarissa to either prosecute or marry, claiming the “the reparation of your family dishonour now rests in your own bosom: and which only one of these two alternatives can repair; to wit, either marry or prosecute him at law” (unabridged ed. 1251). He concludes his letter by encouraging her to charge him despite the burden of “telling so shocking a story in public court” (1252). Clarissa’s family and friends are most concerned with restoring her—and their-- honor, or public reputation, through either marriage or Lovelace’ prosecution. They focus on the primary male aggressor, a well-known upper-class rake, who in society’s view could rectify the assault through marriage or a

conviction. Prosecuting the many lower-class accomplices seems of little or no concern to Clarissa's friends because public pronouncement of their guilt cannot in itself restore Clarissa's reputation. However, Clarissa reminds Anna and readers that these female accomplices are also culpable, felonious agents who deserve punishment under existing statutes even though she refuses to seek public justice against them.

Despite Anna's and Dr. Lewen's beliefs that she should prosecute, Clarissa refuses to press any charges related to the rape or abduction. Clarissa declares that a public appearance in court will kill her. She believes, "I should not survive my first appearance at the Bar he should be arraigned at" (560). Instead, she vows that she will only prosecute for any "machination" against Anna or Mr. Hickman, as long as it is unrelated to her own abduction and rape. Just as Lovelace had predicted, Clarissa refuses the public exposure, censure, and shame of a trial. While Richardson depicts Clarissa's private resistance and condemnation of her perpetrators, he emphasizes that Lovelace and his accomplices will not be tried for their capital offenses under the law. Thus, Clarissa represents the silent women behind the very low numbers of prosecuted rape cases, which composed only "about one percent of indicted felonies" in early modern England (Durston 141). And, perhaps Clarissa is wise in avoiding a trial. Had Clarissa's abduction actually been tried in eighteenth-century courts, scholars who regard Clarissa as a trial narrative suggest that she likely would have lost due to a lack of witnesses, her inability to testify to the rape since she was unconscious, and Lovelace's wealth (Wagner 316; Constantine 203; Swan 84; Schwartz 300).

Even though Clarissa refuses to seek redress for her abduction through the justice system, she is not afraid to expose Lovelace and his female accomplices' crimes in her letters to family and friends. In a letter to her own family, Clarissa reveals that her father's curse has come

to pass, insinuating she has been raped by Lovelace. She also informs Lovelace's aunt, Lady Betty, that her nephew has raped her (537). She also inquires whether Lady Betty is aware that Lovelace has hired felonious women to impersonate her (535-536). Although she refuses to be further humiliated as the center of a public court and media spectacle, she is not secretive about the crime or hesitant to blame Lovelace and his accomplices for the abduction and rape. She also continues to adamantly reject any thought of marriage simply to cover up Lovelace's crime. Clarissa's letters can be, and are, "forged, stolen, lost, copied...censored, misread" (Eagleton 50). Yet, as Eagleton suggests, in her "oppressive society, writing is the sole free self-disclosure available to women," through which she can privately expose her perpetrators' crimes and exculpate herself from accusations of their elopement (49). Through her letters, Richardson provides Clarissa a form of poetic justice that she would be denied in legal discourse and the justice system.

Clarissa models after contemporary abduction trials, allowing audiences to witness the female protagonist's battle to protect her sexual body and her autonomy as a legal subject against her abductor/rapist and his accomplices. However, unlike the opposing testimonies debated in abduction trials that seldom led to convictions, the criminal accounts in *Clarissa* clearly establish the male and female perpetrators' culpability. Through the female protagonists' struggles, the novel exposes a broken judicial system, whose lax marriage laws fail to protect propertied women from abduction, and whose biased courts afterward usually fail to protect female victims or convict their aggressors.

Clarissa's struggle to resist her abductors sends a message to eighteenth-century audiences against the violent sexual subjection and coerced marriage of gentlewomen. Richardson's novel advocates for more stringent marital laws to protect young propertied women

against coerced marriage like those eventually proposed in Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753. The novel resists pervasive social ideologies and a justice system that continued to regard women as violable sexual objects, despite rape and abduction statutes which asserted women's legal subjecthood. Instead, *Clarissa* re-enforces eighteenth-century laws that distinguish female victims as agents deserving of legal protection from sexual coercion. However, although the novel advocates for propertied gentlewomen's legal agency, the text unjustly incriminates femmes soles engaged in sexual commerce as likely sex offenders. Through the many female accomplices, the novel emphasizes women's criminal capacities as legal agents similar to contemporary non-fiction trial reports and crime anthologies. *Clarissa* also employs eighteenth-century felony statutes which hold secondary female accomplices culpable as principle offenders, even though accomplices, like principle male aggressors, were seldom convicted in public courts. Yet, Richardson deviates from current trial reports of sexual offenses, portraying specifically the prostitutes, procuress, and servant at Mrs. Sinclair's brothel as dangerous and guilty felonious criminals who willingly aid Lovelace, the principal abductor and rapist. Readers witness the women's lurid participation in the kidnappings as they lure, imprison, and drug a virtuous young woman. Because the female criminals are depicted as unscrupulously involved in the sex industry, they are also vilified as capable of great treachery, cruelty, and physical harm. Their malicious intent to assault and imprison Clarissa at times exceeds the principal male abductor's criminal intentions and is also amplified beyond the standard motives and evidence established in eighteenth-century trials. Ultimately, Clarissa's abduction narrative promotes the legal protection of propertied and marriable young women, while it criminalizes female sex workers outside of the reputable middle-class family as guilty legal agents who threaten gentlewomen's sexual and marital agency.

Chapter 3:
“I had been the Devil’s Instrument”: Women’s Dangerous Occupations in *Roxana* and *Fanny Hill*

Give me leave to enumerate the abuses insensibly crept in among us, and the inconveniences daily arising from the insolence and intrigues of our servant-wenches, who, by their caballing together, have made their party so considerable, that everybody cries out against them; and yet...nobody has thought of, or at least proposed a remedy.

(Defoe, *Everybody’s Business is Nobody’s Business* 1)

The passage above, published in 1725, introduces Defoe’s grievances over maid servants’ supposed cunning attacks on their victimized employers. This tract, along with his final novel, *Roxana*, composes part of Defoe’s larger discourse on the servant problem, particularly his critique of masters’ failed authority and servants’ disregard of their contractual obligations and obedience in early eighteenth-century England. He criticizes his society for passively complaining about the power these women wield over their employers as a sizable labor force. He also accuses them for their impertinent scheming against genteel families. Yet, he claims there is no organized plan to squelch their supposed theft, gold digging, promiscuity, gossiping, etc., which Defoe believes defies masters’ authority and violates the security of employers’ families. In this essay, *Everybody’s Business is Nobody’s Business*, he outlines female domestics’ many offenses against the employer’s family, and then attempts to offer solutions to the female servant problem that he claims plagues wealthy families.

Defoe’s conduct writing on servant corruption and insubordination participates in a contemporary discourse on the “servant problem,” which also manifests in a number of other popular novels throughout the century including John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill*. In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which Defoe’s *Roxana* and Cleland’s *Fanny Hill* engage with the

ideologies of contemporary conduct literature on the servant problem and with the social realities of increasingly detached contractual master-servant relations in eighteenth-century England. In conduct and fiction writing on the servant problem, readers encounter an intersection between heightened social fears of corrupt commerce infiltrating the private sphere and rising concerns among the middle and upper classes over regulating servant virtue and subordination within employee contracts.

In the eighteenth century previous and nostalgic notions of loyal, paternalistic relations between servants and masters were being replaced by emotionally detached contractual work relationships (Hill *Servants* 5). E. P. Thompson explains that this period experienced the advance of “free, mobile wage labor” among working classes, which is evidenced in hiring fairs, new statutes declaring the rights of servant laborers to claim “a change of master,” and also workers’ rejection of excessive employment demands (37). While laborers found new freedoms, employers nostalgically “clung to the image of the labourer as an *unfree* man—a ‘servant,’” who was to remain stationary on the master’s farm or in his household (36). Kristina Straub cites many employers’ aggravation over the “servant problem” and the lost paternalism in master-servant contractual relations throughout the century, from Swift and Defoe in early decades, to Jonas Hanway and Sarah Trimmer late in the century. She concludes that by the end of the century, “generosity and gratitude seem to be precluded by the financial and practical motives with which these emotional bonds had previously coexisted” (10).

Straub suggests that during this social shift over the course of the century, conduct writers either “depict the servant as an individual agent, selling his labor for the best available price, or conversely, as part of the family, working from motives of affection and loyalty” (6). She suggests that servants bear the “contradiction between personal autonomy and a deep-seated,

emotional dedication to others' wishes" (6). Moreover, their "mixed contractual and affective status formed the basis for many of the contradictions embodied in the family under early capitalism" (6). Straub attributes this contradiction to the fact that "relations that we...usually associate with privacy and family tended to overlap with contractual agreements and labor relations that we more comfortably associate with the public sphere" (2). There were particular strains between the personal duties of affection and loyalty and the public contractual roles of consumer, employer, and employee within the home. Masters and mistresses in the eighteenth century were uncomfortable with the changing and pervasive boundaries between unreliable commercial spaces and the trusted spaces of the private (extended) family. As a result of the uneasy cultural shift to contractual labor relations, conduct authors including Defoe harshly criticized servants for insubordination, disrespect, theft, and violations of family privacy.

In specific discourses on female servants, women workers' insubordination was often sexualized. In an era that increasingly valued the moral sanctity of the private sphere, female servants were suspected of being conniving, sexually promiscuous agents of commerce, who might also work as prostitutes or seduce male household members. Writers of the employer classes expressed fears that through sexual affairs with men in the house female domestics could destabilize the servant-master hierarchy and corrupt employers' families, who wished to remain morally protected from the market. They argue that female workers' chastity needed to be regulated in order to maintain the virtue and social order of the private sphere. Yet, in reality, female domestics also were vulnerable to seduction and rape in the private sphere by men in their household. Bridget Hill has found there were many real cases of "servant maids seduced by their masters, their sons, or male servants in the household" (137). Anna Clark also calculated that masters or their relatives made up 20% of rape prosecutions in eighteenth-century Old Bailey

and Northeast Assize cases, meanwhile fellow workers or lodgers made up 18% (138).³⁶ Unlike contemporary treatises on the servant problem that blame female workers for promiscuity, mid-to late-eighteenth-century novels like *Maria*, *Pamela*, or *Miss Arabella Bolton* more accurately present virginal female domestics who are subjected to sex through rape, attempted rape, or an attempted seduction by a master or family friend within their employers' home. Portrayals of servant rape challenge the claim that female servants were promiscuous by showing that in fact they were often victims of sexual assault. However, I argue that in *Roxana* and *Fanny Hill* the rape narrative is skewed to protect employer classes. In each novel, the rape of the female servant is distanced from the virtuous private sphere of the conjugal family as the male rapists' culpability is largely displaced onto disparaged women of sexual commerce who aid and abet in the rape.

Repositioning the rape crime within corrupted, pseudo-domestic spaces amongst women debauched by the market also helps deflect the middling- and upper-classes' responsibility for servant rape. *Roxana* and *Fanny Hill* largely shift the blame for sexual assault onto commonly stereotyped fallen women participating in sexual commerce. A promiscuous mistress, Roxana, and a conniving bawd, Mrs. Brown, become perpetrators. The sexually active, and thus sexually threatening women, not only ensnare men but also ensnare virginal maidservants. In *Roxana* the adulterous mistress of the house assists in her servant's rape and claims a guilty responsibility for her subsequent pregnancy and moral ruin. In *Fanny Hill*, the narrative largely blames an aging procuress for the sexual and moral corruption of the young, virginal and virtuous, female servant. These female characters' felonious participation in organizing the rape move the felony of rape outside the moral eighteenth-century household and mitigate the primary male rapists'

³⁶ Also see Eliza Haywood's "A Present for a Servant Maid" 47-48, and Gregory Durston's *Victim's and Viragos* 149.

culpability, who, according to court statistics, otherwise appear responsible for raping or seducing numerous female domestic workers.

Sexualized Female Servants in the Domestic Sphere

Eighteenth-century England experienced the emergence of an ideologically championed 'private' domestic sphere, which was regarded as separate from the public realm and served to anchor the virtue of the rising commercial middle-class (Harrington 34). Dana Harrington explains, "middle-class domestic ideology...functioned to sanction the pursuits of commercial activities by creating a separate moral sphere to compensate for the corruption of civic virtue traditionally associated with commerce" (45). The notion of the private sphere suggested that the home provided a protected, virtuous family space that checked the corruption of trade and commerce outside one's door. However, in reality, the market continually pervaded the boundaries of wealthy and middling-class homes. Businessmen most often borrowed loans from family members, couples bought domestic goods on credit, and if business failed family possessions could be confiscated and family members imprisoned (Hunt 23). In addition, most families of the middling and upper ranks of society employed domestic servants, especially female domestics, which brought the labor market directly into the privacy of their homes. Huffon suggests, since their labor was "cheap and abundant," a maidservant "was one of the first luxuries even a modest family permitted itself" (Straub 39). Thus, young, unmarried, female servants were a common figure of domestic commerce circulating in affluent homes.

Servant women were at the center of the controversial servant problem because of the contradictory nature of the female laborer's perceived position as both a contractual agent of unwavering virtue and virginity and also as alienable sexual property available for use by the

master or other men in the household.³⁷ Straub finds that “domestics...are held to the strictest standard of chastity, while simultaneously occupying an intensely sexualized position in the cultural imagination” (35). Genteel families feared that “Women servants cause trouble in families even without active effort. Just by being, their sexuality threatens to ensnare any man, servant or master, who comes within their purview” (35). A young woman entering into domestic service often immediately had to negotiate this contradictory sexualization. The prevalence of rape often made the private domestic sphere a dangerous workplace for female servants. Despite their susceptibility to rape, women maintained their labor contracts based on employers’ trust that they were inviolably virtuous (which was directly reliant on their virginity or chastity). Yet, as we see in the writings of Defoe and other conduct writers, there was an uneasy reliance on the stability of a servant woman’s virtue. Because it could be performed, female domestics’ chastity was mistrusted much like unsecured credit in the eighteenth-century marketplace. Female laborers’ reputation and respectability was speculative because there was little physical proof of their virtue and virginity (beyond character references and recommendations) until it was proven corrupted by injury, pregnancy, or sexual disease.

The physical spaces female servants circulated in and the long hours they worked increased their vulnerability to sexual assault by men in the master’s household. Eliza Haywood sympathizes in her conduct book, *A Present for a Servant Maid* (1743), “being so much under his Command, and obliged to attend him at any Hour, and at any Place he is pleased to call you, will lay you under great Difficulties to avoid his Importunities...” (44). Yet, Haywood offers no solution for women servants, who were under their masters’ beck and call at late hours and in private, isolated spaces, leaving maids susceptible to rape. Servants performed tasks of great

³⁷ See Hill, *Servants* 49. Also, Ann Louise Kibbie argues this female servant paradox is represented in eighteenth-century literature particularly in *Pamela* and *Fannie Hill* (561-562).

intimacy with members of the master's family, which contributed to their vulnerability. Straub recalls that Samuel Pepys, like other masters, had servants help dress him and comb his hair (46).³⁸ Finally, domestic servants seldom slept in private, formal bedrooms with doors that locked. Many slept in attics, outhouses, or landings, in spaces without locks and sometimes without doors (Hill *Servants* 44-45). There were seldom private, protected spaces to shelter servants from rape. While awake or asleep, domestics were equally subject to sexual assault, and there were many real cases of "servant maids seduced by their masters, their sons, or male servants in the household" (5). Thus, it is not surprising that female servants had the highest number of reported rape cases in English courts, even though they had the least money to prosecute rape offenses. Anthony Simpson finds that in sixty-seven percent of cases heard at the Old Bailey from 1730 to 1830, the victim was a female domestic servant (48). In reality, the private sphere of otherwise reputable families could prove to be a sexually threatening work environment for female servants.

Despite the realities of sexual assault, in discourses on the female servant problem authors who wished to defend the employer classes avoid addressing servant rape. Instead of acknowledging domestic rape crimes, they blame women workers for promiscuity and sexualize their insubordination. As Nathalie Wolfram suggests, "within Defoe's pamphlet (*Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*), the burden of proof in cases of sexual deviance lies with the maidservants themselves, whom he pinpoints in particular as the original source of problematic sexuality" (468-469). Defoe and his contemporaries, who wish to defend middle- and upper-class employers' economic authority, critique the sexual promiscuity of female domestics whose supposed affairs with men of the house destabilize the household hierarchy.

³⁸ In fact, Pepys, notorious for his amours, wrote of an affair with his wife's seventeen-year-old companion, Deborah Willet, who combed his hair (2138).

Servant rape not only violates the body and security of the servant but it also corrupts the family's domestic sphere. In addition, rape also crosses obvious physical and professional boundaries between contracted servants and masters. Yet, unlike consensual affairs between servants and members of the masters' household, which may intentionally destabilize prescribed roles of authority and subordination, rape is always a violent act of physical and mental subordination perpetrated by the aggressor(s). As Ann Cahill defines it:

Rape is the attempt on the part of one subject (the assailant) to overwhelm the subjectivity of the other in a particularly sexualized way. He imposes his will upon her, imposes his body upon her, imposes his sexuality upon her, obliterating her ability to speak or enforce her own will, prohibiting her from living her bodily, ontological autonomy. (25)

Female servants had little freedom to refuse sex from masters/ men in authority. As Haywood asks, "to satisfy his brutal Appetite,...what may not Lust seconded by Power Attempt?" (46). Here, she confirms that masters' unchecked power to rape female servants is very difficult to thwart. A servant's will and sexual body were often at the mercy of male authority figures in their house. Female domestics might avoid the master's or another man's advances, as Eliza Haywood suggests, by immediately and silently leaving the house (46). However, in most cases, "if such advances came from their masters they were well aware that their whole future—both economic and marital—lay in their employer's hands (Hill *Servants* 47). Forced intercourse damaged a chaste woman's reputation, which made her socially unfit for domestic service or marriage.

Through their representations of female servants and rape, *Roxana* and *Fanny Hill* engage in the eighteenth-century discussion on the servant problem. Both novels reveal middle- and upper-class employers' anxieties over an increasingly contractual labor market and uncontrolled

servant mobility. Each addresses distinct public complaints over female servant insubordination and social climbing. In *Roxana*, Defoe represents the problematic inversion of the mistress-servant hierarchy through Roxana and Amy's intimacy. He also censures Roxana as an incompetent mistress, who loses her moral and economic authority over her servant through her adulterous relationship with the landlord. Alternately, *Fanny Hill* presents the stereotype of easily corrupted female country servants flooding urban centers with dreams of marrying into a master's family. Conduct writers often accuse social climbing servants of devastating the fortunes and reputations of genteel families. In addition, Fanny illustrates employers' fears of servants' easy transition between domestic service and prostitution. Fulfilling the conventional assumption that domestics were sexually corrupt, Fanny is quickly consumed by London's expanding prostitution market. Ultimately, Fanny and Amy follow popular eighteenth-century preconceptions of lower-class female servants, as both become sexually promiscuous. Yet, unlike much conduct literature on the servant problem, which blames servants' own cunning seductions or unrestrained desires, both novels depict rape or attempted rape as the cause of their sexual promiscuity. However, I argue that the blame for female servants' sexual violation is largely removed from their male perpetrators. Consequently, the narratives deflect blame for the high statistics of female servant rape away from a genteel male readership, who historically attacked women workers in the domestic sphere. Instead, the novels displace the culpability onto women who genteel society deems unscrupulous for engaging in modes of prostitution. The figures of the kept mistress in *Roxana* and the bawd in *Fanny Hill* are already operating within a corrupted pseudo-domestic sphere that is set in opposition to the moralized conjugal family. Previous scholarship has begun to evaluate *Roxana* as engaging with discourses on master-servant relations.³⁹ However, I suggest that both novels expose the ways in which genteel employer classes attempted to avoid self-censure for servant-master sexual relations and for

³⁹ See Kristina Booker's "Richardson's Pamela, Defoe's Roxana, and Emulation Anxiety in Eighteenth-Century Britain"; Terry Castle's "Amy, Who Knew my Disease"; Bram Dijkstra's brief discussion in *Defoe and Economics* (28-31); and Kristina Straub's "Dangerous Intimacies" in *Domestic Affairs*;

servant sexual assault in the supposedly moralizing domestic sphere by displacing culpability onto female characters already censured for their participation in sexual commerce.

Roxana

Defoe's last novel, *Roxana*, can be read as part of Defoe's larger commentary on the servant problem in early eighteenth-century England, and particularly his critique of masters' failed authority and servants' disregard of their contractual obligations and obedience. In the third dialogue of *The Family Instructor*, published in 1715, Defoe admonishes unprincipled masters who fail in guiding their servants to be virtuous and diligent workers. This treatise advocates for a paternalistic model of fostering servant morality that largely disappears from his conduct writing on the servant problem in the 1720's and is replaced by his arguments for employer distance and discipline. However, the drunken and immoral master who corrupts the household in *The Family Instructor* resembles the unprincipled mistress in *Roxana* nine years later. *Roxana, or The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), narrates the exploits of an adulterous and mercenary mistress who corrupts her loyal servant, Amy. As the novel heavily focuses on the character's private lives and relationships, it points to the domestic realities of female servant rape and employers' great distrust of their female domestics' virtue. The novel also provides a bad example of the inverted servant-master hierarchy that Defoe particularly criticizes in *The Great Law of Subordination* (1725). In this treatise, which he published the same year as *Roxana*, he complains of passive and desperate masters and their insolent servants, who are inverting the proper social order in England. Here, Defoe contends that the servant problem stems from ineffective laws that fail to reinforce masters' authority, and from individual employers themselves, who fail to properly reprimand and subordinate servants. If this national problem continues, he speculates that soon "the Poor will be Rulers over the Rich, and the Servants be Governours of their Masters" (17). *Roxana* and *The Great Law of Subordination* are

quickly followed by another of Defoe's harsh critiques on the servant problem in 1725, *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*. While *The Great Law of Subordination* focuses mainly on male servants' offenses, *Nobody's Business* largely emphasizes England's corrupted female servant population. In a biting representation, Defoe claims that women workers often manipulate and abuse genteel families while dressing above their station, seducing male members of the house, and working as prostitutes. In this tract he depicts the victimization of the wealthy by deceptive female domestics; yet, he never addresses the prevalence of female servant rape that also violated women workers and corrupted genteel households.

Many critics (including Jacobsen, Kibbie, Hentzi, Healey, Pagetti) have discussed Roxana's participation in the market as a prostitute and business woman, while her work as a kept mistress positions the narrative within the sexually private realms of her domestic life. Though scholars have noted Roxana's commercial pursuits and accumulation of wealth in the private sphere, it is also important to evaluate the intimate, domestic, working relationship between Roxana and her longtime maidservant. In this reading of *Roxana*, I will examine the ways in which Defoe's final novel engages with his other treatises on female domestics' corruption. *Roxana* specifically critiques the violation of master-servant relationships through servant insubordination in a rising era of capitalism and social contracts.

Defoe presents Roxana as an unscrupulous and ineffective mistress over her servant. Roxana's own unethical contracted labor as an adulterous kept mistress makes her an impotent authority figure over Amy. Also, Roxana quickly becomes a cautionary symbol of employer violence, implementing rape as a means of servant subordination. Defoe's female protagonist is unlike many other virtuous female protagonists struggling against sexual assault and female perpetrators or accomplices in eighteenth-century domestic novels and conduct literature. In

contrast, Roxana quickly becomes a corrupted woman engaged in sexual commerce, who is a violent perpetrator of rape against her virginal female servant. Kristina Straub argues that polemical and instructional literature generally constructs female servants in two contradictory sexual stereotypes. First, “the maid is an innocent victim, by definition unable to act in her own defense” or “she is condemned as a sexual entrepreneur,” and a sexual threat to men in her household (37). The female characters in *Roxana* appear to adapt these opposing stereotypes. The young maidservant, Amy, becomes the victim of rape perpetrated by a criminalized female sexual entrepreneur. Roxana is vilified as sexually active, and thus sexually threatening woman, who not only ensnares men, but also sexually ensnares her maidservant. Through this crime, Roxana betrays her servant’s trust and obedience, while violating her sexual body, consent, social reputation, and autonomy. Rather than upholding her position as authority and moral guide for her servant, Roxana assists in Amy’s rape and then implicates her in her own unscrupulous life of prostitution, adultery, and greedy capitalist accumulation. The novel’s emphasis on Roxana’s violence works to overshadow the culpability of the landlord-- the new master and principal male rapist in the text. Defoe’s depiction of servant rape instigated and assisted by a fallen woman occupying a domestic sphere violated by commerce and adultery transfers the blame for servant rape and corruption away from the usual suspects: male members of the private, conjugal family.

In Roxana’s home, readers encounter a private sphere increasingly contaminated by the market and destroyed by the effects of commerce. Defoe initially presents Roxana to readers as a virtuous wife and mother who has been financially ruined and deserted by her foolish husband and then shunned by his family. Roxana marries an inept businessman, who loses his brewery business and passively watches his stocks decline. Yet, he does not decrease his spending until

the family is penniless. Just six months before her husband leaves, her brother loses his own fortune and was placed in debtor's prison (13). As Margaret Hunt explains, business risks and failures "were the rule rather than the exception for middling families in the eighteenth century," while household goods were impounded to repay debt or family members could be imprisoned for insolvency (23). Indeed, Roxana's husband's excessive spending and failure in the market drowns her domestic life in shame and disorder. She is deserted by friends and family and left "with five Children, and not one farthing subsistence for them," a predicament that goes to great lengths to elicit the reader's sympathy (12, 13). In a sentimental depiction, Roxana sends her children to away to their aunt's house in order to prevent their starvation (18-19). According to rising eighteenth-century domestic ideology Roxana, as the wife, was to uphold domestic virtue as a model for her family (Harrington 33-34). However, her poverty makes that seem impossible, and she loses everything but her servant and her house.

While the impoverished Roxana is deserted by her husband and most of her friends and family, she relies on her extraordinarily loyal maidservant. Amy is introduced as an ideal servant, a sincere and dutiful worker that eighteenth-century conduct writers promote in resistance to contractual labor relations. For example, in *A Servant's Calling* (1725), Zinzano considers the first "fundamental duty" of contracted servants to be humility, which is "peculiarly necessary to a State of Subjection, and a Quality without which no one can be a good Servant" (12). In *A Present for Servants* (1693), Richard Mayo suggests that servants' subjection stems from a loving obedience for their masters (31). According to him, servants' sincere affection, respect, and submission stem from doctrines of Christian love and duty. Because workers are made servants under their masters by God's intention, servitude requires not only love, but "a reverend subjection of the Mind, and respectful honour" for one's Master (23). Mayo's Christian

model of affection, virtue, and loyal service among servants reinforces employee contracts of obedience and subordination. Accordingly, early in the novel, Amy fulfills Mayo's Christian model of servitude, charitably assisting Roxana through her darkest hours of desertion and poverty.

Amy is initially praised for her constancy and even generosity while she stays with her destitute mistress. Roxana recounts, "tho' I was not able to give her any Wages...she would not leave me; and as long as she had any Money, when I had none, she would help me out of her own; for which tho' I acknowledged her kindness and fidelity" (16). Amy stays to help and support Roxana through her poverty, volunteering her labor and even her own savings. Amy is represented by Defoe as the direct opposite of many underhanded servants depicted in contemporary conduct literature. In the eighteenth century many masters and mistresses complained of the high turnover rates among domestic servants, who, for practical reasons, would leave for better pay or work conditions elsewhere (Hill *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics* 136-139). Yet, Defoe attributes servant turnover to workers' itinerancy and greed rather than disparities in pay, living conditions, and work demands. Defoe complains in *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business* that "you [domestic employers] are never fixed, but always at the mercy of every new comer to divulge your family affairs, to inspect your private life, and treasure up the savings of yourself and your friends. A very great confinement, and much complained of in most families" (4). Not only are families continually seeking new servants, but Defoe complains that the servant population is prone to gossiping, slander, requiring exorbitant tips, and stealing (3). There are seemingly few loyal employees like Amy who are praised by eighteenth-century conduct writers. Moreover, it is highly unlikely and impractical for contracted employees to charitably stay on without payment or boarding as Amy does. However, Defoe

presents Amy as an exemplary servant early in the novel, proving her loyalty through poverty and many decades of service under her Mistress. As Christina L. Healey suggests, Roxana's "relationship with this maid is seemingly Roxana's most secure investment" (499). Amy's support through hardship and decades of profitable extramarital affairs helps Roxana gain economic independence.

While Amy is to perform willing obedience, Roxana's socially prescribed role as mistress is to supervise and mentor her servant. Defoe articulates the master's duty and authority over servants and apprentices in *The Family Instructor* (250, 260). This closely reflects John Locke's prescriptions in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*. Locke claims, "the duty, which is education, belongs to the father" until "he has made his son an apprentice to another" (154). Likewise, when the child becomes another's employee, "a great part of his obedience to himself and his mother" are transferred to the new master (154). For both Locke and Defoe, when the servant comes under the authority of their new master, the employer has a duty to properly supervise and educate their servants. According to Defoe in the *Family Instructor* (1715), in addition to supervising a servant's religious education, the employer adopts the specific responsibilities "of warning him, instructing him, reproofing him, restraining him, and correcting him" (250, 260) in his daily conduct. While these writings on servants and masters are gendered male, the same expectations hold true for mistresses of female domestics like Roxana.⁴⁰ Conduct writers suggest that "the good mistress teaches her servants to love the routines of the household religious practices: family prayers morning and evening, strict attendance at church on Sunday" (Straub 86). The mentoring role of the master and (pre-contractual) paternal systems of servitude come into conflict with servant independence and mobility established under

⁴⁰ As Defoe articulates in *The Great Law of Subordination*, "when I say Masters, I shou'd be understood to mean Mistresses as well as Masters, for they stand in the same Place, in Point of Argument" (258).

contractual labor agreements. These paternal / maternal roles also further blur the domestic divisions between regulating public labor and servants' private moral character. Defoe appears to be moving away from ideologies of paternalism between 1715 and 1724/1725 when he publishes his other tracts on the servant problem. In his later texts, he advocates for laws enforcing employers' authority and disciplinary measures which hold servants to their contractual obligations. For example, in the preface to *The Great Law of Subordination*, he complains that "the Peace of Families is ruined" when employers cannot "depend upon any Contracts they make...having no Law, no Power to enforce their Agreement, or to oblige the Poor to perform honestly what they are hir'd to do, tho' ever so justly paid for doing it" (3). Yet, in his depiction of Roxana, he continues to illustrate his view expressed in the *Family Instructor* that masters and mistresses are to remain moral authorities over their contracted domestics. And, in stark contrast their prescribed roles, Roxana corrupts, rather than provides religious instruction or other moral guidance to her maidservant.

Roxana is also a bad mistress because she has created an intimate, affectionate relationship with Amy that does not uphold the master-servant hierarchy. Their friendship confuses the roles of mistress/mentor and employee, and the blurred social boundaries reduce her authority. Kristina Straub argues, in the novel "the most enduring love affair is between Roxana and Amy, whose material partnership and emotional intimacy takes on a psychological complexity...The love affair blurs the separation between servant and employer and forms them into a single, highly effective, entrepreneurial unit" (93). Yet, Straub describes this "affective bond" between the female employer and employee as both "wonderful and awful" as it simultaneously leads to "financial success and moral ruin" for both women (96). Defoe repeatedly rails against masters' blurred authoritative relationships with servants in *The Great*

Law of Subordination. He complains that workers' indolence and arrogance is due to "the unseasonable Lenity, Kindness, and Tenderness to Servants in this Country.... as I may truly say that the poor know not what it is to be Servants, so the Rich, I must acknowledge, know not how to be Masters" (258). While Roxana is to provide moral guidance for her servant, the intimate affection, trust, and even dependency Roxana has on Amy blurs their class positions and disables Roxana's authority.

Amy's excessive affection for her mistress further contributes to their dysfunctional domestic work relationship. Amy's sincere devotion to her mistress surpasses what Defoe and Mayo prescribe in their conduct writing. Roxana describes Amy as possessing an extreme affection for her. She explains, "the Girl loved me to an Excess, hardly to be describ'd," and she is unreasonably elated by the Landlord's financial assistance to Roxana in exchange for a sexual relationship (31). Defoe writes, "the Girl was half distracted with the Joy of it; a Testimony still of her violent Affection for her Mistress, in which no servant ever went beyond her" (32). While Amy's acts of charity and loyalty are commendable, her immoderate emotional attachment to Roxana and her interference in Roxana's love life is problematic. Mayo insists to servants that "God has not set you as Companions with your Masters" (25). Yet, Amy's intimate knowledge of Roxana's love life as if she were a close friend positions her as a companion or sister rather than a servant. Moreover, her extreme offers to stand in as a sexual surrogate for her mistress in order to promote Roxana's financial stability become very troubling for readers of the employer classes. When Roxana questions her offer, Amy professes, "you are undone if you do not; and if my doing it wou'd save you from being undone, as I said before,...if he asks me I won't deny him, not I; Hang me if I do" (39). Amy claims that she is willing to sacrifice her body and chastity to save her mistress from destitution. Her offer is made "not out of affection to the

Landlord, but for the love of her mistress” (Straub 93). This extreme offer of self-sacrifice further breaches Roxana’s and Amy’s contractual and socially prescribed roles as maternal moral authority and obedient maid. Sexual surrogacy stemming from such excessive love clearly transgresses traditional boundaries between masters/mistresses and servants. Straub also argues that Defoe uses the “economic and affective power of female intimacy to disrupt the household’s hierarchy, the stabilizing roles of mistress as mentor and the maid ‘in the posture of children,’” who is in need of guidance and management (91). For employers hanging on to paternalist servant relations, domestics’ loyalty helped to diffuse the detached commercial nature of servant contracts. However, Amy’s “violent affection,” or love, for Roxana (which some scholars have argued are homoerotic),⁴¹ surpass her contractual obedience. When Roxana invites Amy to be an emotionally involved confidant and advisor, the women’s intimacy ruptures the prescribed divide between the mistress as authoritative employer and mentor over the respectful and governable servant.

Roxana and Amy’s unstable roles as mistress and servant contribute to both women’s first major moral fall in the novel and set the stage for their downward spiral into decades of corruption in pursuit of financial gain. After Roxana has found a new home for her children, her landlord begins pursuing her with generous gifts and free rent. In a role reversal between mistress and servant, Roxana heeds Amy’s advice as her personal confidant. Roxana’s request for advice and Amy’s candid response challenge the mistress-servant hierarchy. Elsewhere, Defoe warns that masters and mistresses make their servants “familiar, arrogant, proud, impertinent, and impudent” when “level themselves to them in their Intimacies” (*The Great Law of Subordination* 138). Eliza Haywood also strictly advises female servants to avoid giving their superiors advice

⁴¹ See Peter Marbais’ “Roxana and ‘My Woman, Amy’: Failure of Mutual Recognition in Defoe’s Roxana” (2006); and Carlos Pagetti’s “Deceiving Roxana.” (1997).

two decades later in *A Present for the Servant-Maid*. She reminds domestics, when a mistress “will throw aside all Disparity, and seem willing to take the judgment of a Servant,” “*A close Mouth makes a wise Head*” and “*it makes an easy Mind*” (43). Haywood makes it clear that servants should not advise their employers on their affairs under any circumstances, because it will only get them in trouble. One might flatter or contradict her mistress’ opinion, and face “Numberless Reproaches” for providing her counsel if it is not well received (43). Yet, Amy falls into this trap. She gives her mistress morally misguided advice, convincing Roxana to enter into an adulterous, false marriage with her landlord.

Amy encourages her mistress to accept the landlord’s propositions for sex. Rather than supposing that Amy is intending to corrupt her mistress by encouraging this affair, the reader can see that Defoe presents Amy’s practical economic perspective from that of a working woman who is also familiar with wealthier men’s sexual propositions. Meanwhile, the naive Roxana, who was raised as a virtuous gentlewoman, cannot see or believe the ulterior motives behind the landlord’s professions of goodwill and assistance (27). Amy advises her that he is being more than charitable and reminds Roxana of her vulnerable, impoverished position:

O Madam,...there’s an abundance of Charity begins in that Vice, and he is not so unacquainted with things, as not to know, that Poverty is the strongest incentive; a Temptation, against which no Virtue is powerful enough to stand out...Why then he knows too that you are young and handsome, and he has the surest Bait in the World to take with you.” (27-28)

As Roxana’s maid, Amy is representative of contemporary female servants in Britain, who lacked financial stability, who were more sexually active before marriage, and who were also more susceptible to sexual harassment, seduction, and rape by masters, their sons, or fellow male

domestic servants than women of middle and landed classes.⁴² Hill notes there were numerous cases of seduction among female servants in eighteenth century Britain, and conduct literature was continually warning servant women “of the danger they were in from the men of their households” (*Women, Work, and Sexual Politics* 137). As a worldly domestic servant, Amy is able to decipher the landlord’s seemingly charitable motivations toward Roxana. As a servant reliant on her income, she also understands Roxana’s financial need to comply with his subtle sexual propositions. Amy operates on what Terry Castle calls “life-saving pragmatism” (86), or what Kristina Booker calls “survival at any price” (54). I agree with Booker that Amy “sees poverty and distress as the greatest problem rather than recognizing, as her mistress does, the threat of ‘the real Devil,’ of sexual immorality” (54). Accordingly, Amy strongly encourages Roxana to sleep with the Landlord. She asks her mistress, “has he not...brought you out of the blackest Misery that ever a poor lady was reduc’d to? Can a Woman deny such a Man any thing?” (37). However morally misguided she may appear afterward to Roxana, Amy’s advice stems from a female domestic’s financial pragmatism, which contrasts sharply with Roxana’s upper-class, but naïve, feminine ideologies of men’s civility and women’s chastity.

Instead of maintaining her virtue and acting as a moral example and corrective for her servant, Roxana eventually gives in to Amy’s advice and her own growing attraction to her “kind” and beneficent suitor (34). In fulfilling this sexual contract, Roxana re-establishes financial security, but not moral propriety. She unscrupulously becomes a kept mistress engaged in sexual commerce. As Jacobsen suggests, Roxana “recognizes her relationship with the jeweler

⁴² Trumbach finds working-class women were more sexually active before marriage (233-234). Also see primary authors and secondary scholars who contest the most culpable groups of male perpetrators committing female servant rape: Clark 138; Haywood 47-48; Defoe *Everybody’s Business is Nobody’s Business* 7; Durston 149; Hill *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics* 137; Trumbach 234-237)

as commerce in its most rudimentary form: it is an exchange of goods,” sex for room and board (222). She immediately regrets that she has unscrupulously exchanged her physical body, her virtue, and her self-respect for material comfort and financial security. Remorseful, she declares, “I received his Kindness at the dear Expense of Body and Soul, mortgaging Faith, Religion, Conscience, and Modesty, for (as I may call it) a Morsel of Bread” (38). Roxana cannot quite suppress her feelings of shame over her seduction and adultery. Her guilt from her first adulterous act continues to resurface periodically throughout the novel as she narrates her later sexual exploits and indulgent life as a kept mistress.

In addition to the guilt she bears over her seduction, Roxana is also troubled that her sinful affair has further debased her position of authority over her servant, Amy. When Roxana violates her chastity and sells her body as a sexual commodity, she further breaks down the mistress-servant hierarchy and corrupts the domestic sphere. Roxana’s entry into prostitution as a kept woman lowers her status from a middling housewife and mother protected from the market who supposedly moralized the home. Now, involved in sexual commerce, she grows nearer in status to that of a domestic servant, whose sexuality was also often treated as a sellable commodity. In addition, both women now are paid for their services within the private sphere, which decreases the distinction between their social ranks. The women’s labor contract also is complicated through Roxana’s affair because the landlord takes over paying Amy’s wages. After Roxana sleeps with the Landlord, Roxana recounts that “he paid her all of the Arrear of her Wages that I ow’d her, and gave her five Guineas over” (45). Roxana is no longer her direct employer. The landlord now supports both women’s livelihoods, further leveling the mistress-servant social order.

After her initial sexual encounter, Roxana believes that she had wrongfully accepted her servant's advice. The mistress blames her maid for maliciously leading her into adultery and corrupting her virtue. Upon reflection, Roxana repents, "had I consulted Conscience and Virtue, I shou'd have repell'd this *Amy*, however faithful and honest to me in other things, as a Viper, and Engine of the Devil" (38). *Amy* mourns the violation of her chastity after she is raped, suggesting her virginity. However, *Amy*'s insights into the landlord's sexual proposition lead Roxana to suppose that she may be a promiscuous young woman, only feigning honesty and virtue in their relationship. As Tassie Gwilliam contends, in prostitution, "representations of counterfeit virginity can have the perhaps unintended side effect of disturbing patriarchal complacency by intimating the unknowableness of women" (519). Accordingly, Roxana (assuming the patriarchal role of mistress / master in this novel) formerly *knew* *Amy* to be an honest and loyal servant and chaste young woman. However, *Amy*'s immoral sexual advice leads Roxana to reconsider her servant's apparent virginity and affection as perhaps only a cunning performance of virtue. She believes her servant manipulated her into consenting with "too much Rhetorick in this Cause" and "she argued...with her utmost Skill," and then vowed she would sleep with him herself if Roxana refused (39). *Amy* was not intending to ruin her mistress' character, but wishing to rescue her financially. However, Roxana now believes all of *Amy*'s persuasions were intended to corrupt her chastity and reputation.

Roxana also regrets that following her servants' advice further subverts the mistress-servant hierarchy. When Roxana requests *Amy*'s advice, she is creating a role reversal in which *Amy* is allowed to stand in as authority figure over Roxana. Sandra Sherman argues that in several of Defoe's treatises on the servant problem, his anxieties intersect with macro-economics, "particularly with the credit-based market where notes stood in for cash" (551), just

as a servant could stand in for, or represent, his/her employer. Sherman further suggests that “Defoe’s barbs aimed at servants thus domesticate a concern with signifying practices...” (551). Roxana’s mistrust of Amy’s supposedly forthright advice and honest character compares to Defoe’s mistrust of unsecured credit circulating in the eighteenth-century marketplace. Roxana relies on her speculation of Amy’s character and she consumes her advice, only to regret its iniquity and to suspect Amy’s longstanding performance of character as false. In this scene Roxana clearly feels duped by what she believes to be Amy’s false “signifying practices,” presenting herself as a virtuous, trustworthy servant, who then maliciously leads her mistress into immoral sexual commerce.

After Roxana allows Amy to assume the role of advisor, Amy’s apparently unadulterated chastity also makes her morally superior over Roxana, who remains engaged in the sinful financial affair. While Roxana struggles with her own guilt and shame, she recalls, “I always found her a very modest Wench, as any I ever saw in my Life.” (44). Dijkstra suggests, “the proper structure of the master-servant relationship had thereby undergone a dangerous shift, exacerbated by the moral control Amy could exert over her mistress as long as Roxana had prostituted herself while her servant remained ‘virtuous’” (28). Roxana’s resentment over Amy’s bad advice and her guilty realization of her own moral and social ruin prompt her to quickly re-establish her authority over Amy.⁴³ Thus, Roxana wishes to regain superiority as mistress over her chaste servant/advisor. Therefore, soon after Roxana’s own moral fall she “ruin’d the Girl’s Modesty for ever” (Defoe 44).

⁴³ As Booker argues, “Having allowed her servant to ascend into the position of (im)moral arbiter,...she reacts by attempting to pull Amy down from her emulative gentility back into the role of (working-class) whore” (56).

The audience gets a detailed account of Roxana's entrapment of Amy in a rape perpetrated by her own lover, the landlord. She "sat her down, pull'd off her Stockings and Shoes, and all of her Cloaths, Piece by Piece, and led her to the Bed to him" (46). After she had "fairly stript her," she "threw open the Bed, and thrust her in" against Amy's weak attempts at resistance (46). As Marbais notes, "This scene captures one of Roxana's few direct actions in violent, domineering terms of stripping, throwing, and thrusting" (119). The mistress takes deliberate physical control over Amy with the intention to subject her sexual body, ruin her virtue, and violate her agency. In addition to her violent instigation of the rape, Roxana "stood-by all the while" her lover was assaulting her servant in the bed, as if supervising the event. Through the rape act, Roxana is trying to distance herself from her own adulterous relationship while also ruining her servant's virtue. She claims that this act "is enough to convince anybody that I did not think himself my Husband" (46). Moreover, she intends that the violent sexual subjection of her servant would help to re-establish their hierarchy. She confesses, "As I thought myself a Whore, I cannot say but that it was something design'd in my Thoughts, that my Maid should be a whore too, and should not reproach me with it" (47). Marbais argues that "the actual bedding of Amy is a tragic scene in which Roxana's assertion becomes full-blown aggression in her desire to dominate the other who represents all that she despises about herself" (137). Yet, I would modify his claim to state that Roxana forces Amy *to represent* "all that she despises about herself" through the rape act. In subjecting Amy to rape and moral /social ruin, Roxana attempts to project some of her shame, guilt, and sexual vice onto her servant while reasserting her dominant authority as mistress. Cahill theorizes in "Sexual Violence and Objectification," that the rapist, "In order to establish his (*or her*) own dominance, the assailant must have a real person (*a subject*) to dominate; she may be seen as a lesser person than he (*or in this case, she*),

as a kind of person who is deserving of this treatment” (20). As Cahill suggests, Roxana views her servant as a lesser subject, who can be dominated or subordinated through rape. Perhaps, Roxana even reflects contemporary social perceptions of female servants’ sexual objectification, treating Amy as a servant in a station open to sexual violence in order to reposition her within the mistress-servant hierarchy.⁴⁴ Dijkstra contends that the rape is Roxana’s “deliberate humiliation of her subordinate” in order to emphasize “the disparity in their social positions” (29). He compares this scene to Defoe’s repeated claims in the *The Complete English Tradesman*, that “the master-servant relationship...should always be enforced, and, if necessary, with a ruthless assertion of discipline” (Dijkstra 28).

Just as Roxana uses the rape to assert her authority, Amy performs the role of the submissive servant throughout the assault. When Roxana begins to take her clothes off, the mistress recalls, “She pull’d back a little,” and “would not let me pull off her Cloaths at first” (46). Yet, “when she see I was in earnest, she let me do what I would” (46). Although Amy is clearly against having sex with Roxana’s lover, she does not actively resist her mistress’ will in this moment. After throwing her in the bed, Roxana acknowledges that Amy “began to repent” and would have tried to escape, but the Landlord assists Roxana and “held her fast” in the bed” (46). According to Roxana’s narrative, Amy does not struggle against either perpetrator. Instead, “she lay still, and let him do what he wou’d with her” (47). Unlike other sexually assaulted maids in *Fanny Hill* or *Pamela*, the maidservant in Defoe’s novel does not fight against her mistress or Roxana’s lover in order to prevent the sexual assault and preserve her virtue.

⁴⁴ Anthony Simpson suggests that middle-class society would not generally find the rape of servants particularly offensive even though it was a capital felony (37). In his research on female rape in the eighteenth-century, Gregory Durston also claims “there were regular instances of men, like Colonel Charteris, deliberately employing young girls with the sole intention of seducing them, and some domestic agencies appear to have acted as procurers for this purpose” (149).

Why doesn't Amy resist? Servants in the eighteenth century would have felt significant pressure to remain obedient and submissive to their masters and mistresses, even in disturbing or violent situations. Contemporary conduct authors advocate servant subordination and obedience even under hostile, foolish, and malicious masters. However, Amy has just cause to challenge the hierarchy when she is being criminally assaulted. Yet, John Waugh suggests in his 1713 sermon entitled "The Duty of Apprentices and other Servants" that workers are bound to contractual subordination, dutiful subjection, and loyal obedience which are implied, if not explicitly specified, in their contracts. He argues that employees do not uphold their work "covenant" "unless you obey *in all things* that are particularly express'd in your Agreement; and likewise in all others, which by Custom of the Place you live in, you are presumed to have agreed to" (15). These all-encompassing social contracts and the broad social expectations for servants' subjection make the grounds for resistance hard to decipher. What sort of servant self-defense is allowable and outside of "*all things*?"

Several conduct writers including Richard Mayo and John Waugh base servant submission on Christian duty. Mayo counsels servants to follow Timothy's example of obedience and fortitude in the Gospel. Like Timothy, Mayo suggests to employees:

If yours be unbelievers, wicked Persons, without so much as Profession, your duty is more difficult; it is hard to honor a Fool, or reverence one that you frequently see in his Vomit of Drunkenness, or Venom of Malice and Passion. But yet the authority they have from God, and you must reverence the image of God's Dominion in them, lest you cause the name of Christ to be blasphem'd (24).

While Mayo does not explicitly suggest that a servant should tolerate physical abuse or violence from one's master, he does advise that, as Christians, servants remain reverently obedient to

reckless, wicked, angry, or spiteful ones. Asking servants to patiently endure the commands of immoral and tempestuous employers forces servants into dangerous and abusive situations that might encompass Amy's experience of rape.

It becomes clear from the conduct literature that as a subordinate Amy is in a very difficult psychological position to resist assault by her employers. As Susan Brownmiller articulated in *Against our Will*, rape victims are often trapped and confused by rapists who serve as authority figures. She claimed, "Rape by an authority figure can befuddle a victim who has been trained to respect authority so that she believes herself complicitous. Authority figures emanate an aura of rightness; their actions cannot easily be challenged" (271). Since Amy is forced into sexual intercourse by a mistress and landlord who she trusted, obeyed, and knew intimately, it is understandable that she does not forcefully struggle against them. Moreover, like her female contemporaries, Amy depends on a good relationship with her employers for character references if she leaves their home in search of another maidservant position. Defying her master and mistress might place her on the street without income or future job prospects.

Nonetheless, in being forced into sex with Roxana's lover, Amy feels that her consensual subjecthood has been stolen from her. Amy regards her right to sexual consent as central to her autonomy as a socially reputable and marriageable woman. She grieves the next day, calling herself a "Whore" and "Slut," "ruined," and "Undone" (47), common labels for women whose reputation and social agency had been destroyed through seduction or rape. Amy's self-censure reveals that Roxana succeeds in fracturing Amy's self-esteem in order to re-establish her superiority as mistress.

In *Roxana*, Defoe depicts his "fortunate mistress" violating many of the social and legal codes upheld within the master / servant work contract. These violations infringe upon Amy's

rights as a reliable servant as well as an autonomous subject, who legally deserves protection from rape. We can read Roxana's actions as violating eighteenth-century master-servant contractual agreements set forth by Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government*. A subject may not grant another absolute control over his life, labor, or body (132). However, an individual may "make an agreement for a limited power on the one side and obedience on the other" for "the service he undertakes to do in exchange for wages he is to receive" (133, 162). The agreement between two consenting, rational subjects grants masters limited and reasonable power in exchange for servants' obedience and paid labor. However, raping a servant clearly takes power over that subject's body and individual freedoms. Roxana criminally breaches the limited power of their master-servant contract in order to reassert total control over her servant and enslaves Amy during the rape. In addition to the capital felony she commits by assisting in the rape, Roxana is vilified for grossly exceeding her limited power over her servant and for abusing Amy's loyalty and obedience.

While twenty-first century readers would also correctly blame the male rapist, Roxana repeatedly blames herself for the rape, reminding the reader of her culpability. From the moment Roxana introduces Amy in the novel, Roxana immediately establishes that she has defaulted on her responsibilities and abused her authority as mistress (16). After the assault, Roxana explicitly takes all of the blame for the rape(s) and Amy's pregnancy out of wedlock (48). Years later, she again insists, "I had been the Devil's Instrument, to make her wicked; that I had stripp'd her and prostituted her to the very Man that I had been Naught with myself; that she had but follow'd me; I had been her wicked Example; and I had led her into all..." (126). Instead of upholding her moral responsibility as a protective mistress throughout the novel, she holds onto a

guilty responsibility for subjecting her servant to rape and debauchery.⁴⁵ In addition to harboring guilt for her own vices, Roxana carries the blame for her felonious acts as mistress. Her repeated professions of guilt persuade the audience to accept her culpability and to condemn her as an unethical employer.

Roxana's confessions of responsibility for the rape work to overshadow the landlord's central role in the rape. In addition, he also blames Roxana for his role in Amy's rape, claiming, "You see your Mistress has put you to-Bed, 'tis all her doing, you must blame her" (46). The landlord speaks as though he is also submitting to Roxana's wish that he and Amy have sex. Yet, this accusation seems contradictory just before he "held her fast" in the bed and "did what he would with her" (46-47). At that moment, he chooses to rape Amy, and is clearly culpable. Yet afterward, his heavy conscience suggests his repentance (47). While he immediately appears regretful, Roxana does not relent in her efforts to convince him again to have sex with Amy. Rather, she proceeds to "make others as wicked as myself" (48). Finally, Amy's pregnancy prompts the landlord and Amy to end their sexual relations, as the landlord fears more children will be produced (48).

Carlo Pagetti alternately reads the rape narrative as a *ménage à trios* intended to arouse male audiences rather than as a depiction of a violent sexual assault. He views this as a voyeuristic scene that provides "titillation" "to the (male) reader/author, who vicariously shares the sexual opportunities of the generous Landlord" (171). I disagree with Pagetti's interpretation that this scene of sexual coercion, which leaves Amy traumatized, is meant to be a titillating *ménage à trios*. Yet, if we consider as Pagetti does that Defoe and/or his male audiences would

⁴⁵ See additional passages reinforcing Roxana's regret over the rape which enacted Amy's moral and social fall into a life of vice as her servant (48, 125, 126). For example, Roxana claims, "I am guilty of my own Sin, and thine too," and that "I have been thy Ruin, Amy; I have brought thee to this, and now thou art to suffer for the Sin I have entic'd thee to" (125-126).

identify with the wealthy and otherwise devoted lover/landlord who rapes Amy, then it is possible that the author would wish to mitigate the landlord's culpability, and by extension, male culpability for the rape of a female servant. Defoe argues in *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*, "nothing is more common, and withal so little taken notice of "than gentlemen's "underhanded" affairs, which often "ruin" their friends' maidservants (7). As Defoe suggests, his male readers may be familiar with comparable real life seduction or rape scenarios, in which gentlemen usually escape social exposure and legal culpability. While he chides his peers for having intrigues with maids in *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*, he avoids blaming them entirely for servant rape in *Roxana*. The novel exposes sexual assault as the major cause of a female servant's sexual corruption without directly censuring his genteel patriarchal audiences, who may condone or ignore servant rape. Rather, Roxana assumes (as in her later amours) the role of a sexually unprincipled and manipulative mistress who blames herself for Amy's downfall, while her lover is otherwise depicted as generous and loyal to her. Before the rape, the landlord rescues her from destitution, albeit through an adulterous, false marriage. After the rape scene, he is continuously depicted as a loyal and protective husband, who treats Roxana as his legal wife, even signing a contractual agreement which provides for her after his death (43). His generosity toward Roxana further helps to overshadow his culpability in Amy's rape.

While the landlord's reputation improves, Roxana's adulterous relationship and her instigation of Amy's rape explosively begin her personal narrative as a publicly reprehensible business woman. Roxana's first moral fall begins her new life down an avaricious path of accumulation through adultery and prostitution. After the landlord/jeweler is murdered, Roxana makes the sale of her sexual body as a kept mistress into a successful career. As she accumulates massive wealth and improves her social status through liaisons with European royalty, her affairs

generally mimic her initial seduction with her landlord. Moreover, the “fortunate mistress” brings her servant, Amy, into her unscrupulous life of capitalist accumulation within the sex industry. Scholars debate whether Roxana’s career and eventual downfall are the result of her corrupt modes of accumulation or if her financial pursuits should not be read as tragic. Jacobsen argues that Roxana’s dishonesty ultimately causes her bankruptcy (230), while Kibbie suggests that her “monstrous” accumulation of capital “destroys the self it creates” (1031-1032). Conversely, Dijkstra does not believe Defoe intended to morally condemn Roxana’s business career, but to acknowledge the dark emotions (including a dread of loss) that “attend the ownership of capital” (84). Laura J. Rosenthal also suggests that Roxana illustrates how sentimental detachment and self-division can be productive and rewarding in the marketplace. Rosenthal contends that it is Roxana’s attempt to reconcile her self-division as mother and capitalist that leads to her tragedy (95). I argue that Roxana models a range of unethical behaviors for Amy during her career as a kept mistress amassing wealth and protecting her investments, which leads to tragedy. Roxana continually proves herself a bad mistress to her servant, allowing Amy to emulate her promiscuous and dishonest behaviors and also assist in her financial and family affairs. Amy’s learned corruption and insubordination finally culminates in Amy’s murder of Roxana’s daughter at the end of the novel.⁴⁶

Through the complicated mistress-servant relationship in *Roxana*, Defoe illustrates several causes of the servant problem that conduct writers argue plague middle- and upper-class English families. Defoe depicts the very problem he rails against in his other treatises as Amy and Roxana fail to uphold the proper social hierarchy between mistresses and servants. Amy is a

⁴⁶ There is debate among *Roxana*’s critics whether Amy serves Roxana’s unspoken wishes in murdering her daughter or whether Amy acts independently and commits the ultimate crime of servant insubordination through the murder. I agree with Booker (57) and Straub (97-98) who interpret the murder as a felonious act of insubordination by a protective servant. However, Castle (92,93), Pagetti (173), and Jacobsen (230) read Amy as the mistress’ agent in fulfilling her either conscious or subconscious wishes.

loyal servant, but Roxana is far too lenient, intimate, and emotionally dependent on Amy to retain her authority as her employer. In return, Amy's excessive and intimate affection for Roxana transgresses social boundaries of contractual servitude. As Booker suggests, Defoe presents the loyal and affectionate Amy early in the novel as "well-intentioned and free of malice" "in order to argue that working class emulation," leading to insubordination is "inherently destructive" (53). Unlike Defoe's other texts on the servant problem, which charge female domestics with seducing their master's sons or men in the household, Amy does not attempt an affair with Roxana's lover / landlord. Yet, *Roxana* still illustrates the breakdown of master-servant relations when employers grow to distrust their servants' virtue. Roxana punishes what she interprets as Amy's malicious insubordination with rape. In attempting to re-establish the mistress-servant hierarchy through coerced sexual domination, Roxana's crime violates her servant's legal subjectivity as well as their work contract. It is significant that Defoe depicts servant rape in *Roxana* because he avoids addressing this prevalent cause of servant degradation in his other writings on the female servant problem. Moreover, in this novel, Defoe even sympathizes with the raped female servant. However, this sympathy comes at the expense of the vilified mistress, who in reality is an unlikely perpetrator. Roxana's own narrative of her violent participation in the assault and her lingering shame largely overshadow the landlord's culpability for the rape. It seems morally convenient for wealthy readers / employers that male sexual violence and patriarchal responsibility for female domestic servants' sexual and social degeneracy is largely displaced onto Roxana, a licentious kept mistress. The greatest blame for servants' sexual promiscuity is cast on a fallen woman outside of the traditional, domestic household and beyond the reputable marketplace. Roxana's culpability protects employers' consciences from the realities of rape and seduction perpetrated in genteel homes. Yet, in reality,

rape was a violent crime of sexual subordination, which made the domestic sphere a dangerous workplace for female servants.

Fanny Hill or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure

As in *Roxana*, the narrative of Fanny Hill's transition into prostitution directly engages with contemporary discourses on the female servant problem. While *Roxana* critiques corrupt and incompetent masters' failures to reinforce servant subordination, *Fanny Hill* addresses a different set of issues, including unregulated servant mobility, their circulation between employers' homes and the unscrupulous market, and the threat of servant-master intermarriage. Fanny represents a large influx of young women flooding the servant market in London. Moreover, she illustrates employer anxieties of the stereotypical female servant's economic dream and the middle- and aristocratic family's nightmare: marrying a wealthy master. A young woman looking for social advancement through domestic service like Fanny would be perceived as deceptive and promiscuous, capable of ensnaring the master's son and abusing reputable families. Yet, as a servant, she faces a double bind because she depends on her virtue for employment and, perhaps, for marriage, while her status as a female laborer suggests her commodified body is available for sex. Her sexualized status as a female domestic links her to prostitution in the cultural imagination, which Cleland uses as the basis for his pornographic plot.

While *Fanny Hill* and *Roxana* engage with separate issues surrounding the servant problem, *Fanny Hill* still resembles *Roxana* in primarily attributing the female servant's sexual corruption to other licentious and fraudulent women of sexual commerce, rather than to Fanny's first male aggressor or her subsequent male clients. Cleland mitigates male blame for Fanny's initial fall into prostitution because his novel is oriented toward a pleasure-seeking male audience. He displaces much of the criminal guilt onto characters portrayed as sexual deviants

outside the middle class: a working-class bawd and, to a lesser extent, an aggressive but impotent aristocrat. Because the primary readership does not identify with the vilified characters, they avoid responsibility for the sexual assault that Fanny faces as part of her initiation into prostitution. Rather, the naïve Fanny is quickly deceived by a predatory procuress posing as an honest lady, who entangles her in prostitution, and coordinates an attempted rape to profit from her virginity. The novel condemns a socially demonized woman of sexual commerce and a repulsive, impotent, male attacker rather than reproach mainstream male clients (and, by extension, readers) who also often sought out sex with virginal women forced into prostitution (Faulk 262).

Reminiscent of *Roxana*, *Fanny Hill* begins with a broken domestic sphere that leaves Fanny dependent on the market and her labor for income. Just as Roxana's husband's poor business sense shatters their domestic safe haven from the evils of the market, the death of Fanny's poor but virtuous and industrious parents left her orphaned and penniless. Fanny, like many working-class country girls in need of income, resolves "to launch (herself) into the wide world by repairing to London to seek her fortune" (15). The novel immediately leaves the ideologically virtuous private sphere of the conjugal family, separating the moral middle-class family from the autonomous female laborer forced into sexual commerce. However, Fanny's origins within a loving and hardworking family also help to endear her to domestic readers who then voyeuristically enjoy her later salacious sexual encounters.

Fanny represents many young, unmarried, working-class women who sought domestic employment before marriage and migrated to urban centers where there were more employment opportunities (Hill *Servants* 4). Hill describes the migration of female servant workers to London as "a flood of country girls," whose families could not financially support them (*Women, Work,*

and *Sexual Politics* 130). They provided a huge base for the domestic service industry, which middle- and upper-class families depended on. According to Naomi Tadmor, during the eighteenth-century up to two-thirds of the British adolescent population had worked and lived with a family as either domestic servants or apprentices (35). However, this migration of young workers was a cause of concern for genteel English critics because they feared the influx of a fluid, and supposedly ill-educated, corrupted / corruptible laboring-class (4-5). For example, Defoe disapproves of this great migration of young men and women who come to London for work, complaining, “London, like the Ocean,...swallows up all the scum and filth of the Country and here they need not fear of getting Places;...this helps to fill the Town with a generation of Whores and Thieves” (*The Great Law of Subordination* 86). Defoe is suggesting that country laborers are already corrupted before reaching the city, and their infiltration pollutes London. A year later he complains that humble country servants quickly grow presumptuous and insubordinate, demanding higher wages and dressing above their station until “plain country Joan is now turned into a fine London Madam,” who will seduce the men in her household (1). Defoe’s criticisms of female domestics migrating to London resonate with fellow employers’ disparaging remarks, since Hill has found “The majority of comments on servant-maids in diaries, journals, memoirs, and autobiographies give the impression that female domestic servants were a body of totally unscrupulous, inefficient, immoral, unreliable, and dishonest women” (*Women, Work, and Sexual Politics* 131). These popular complaints revealed employers’ suspicions, if not actual experiences, of conniving and insubordinate servant women corrupting their employer’s domestic sphere. These complaints may likely indicate employer discomfort over servants’ adoption of middle-class consumption and negotiation practices. As the passage suggests, Defoe finds these emulative behaviors as offensive examples of insubordination.

Fanny's plan for economic success also illustrates employers' fears of servant social climbing through intermarriage. At fifteen, Fanny intends to secure a domestic position and then hopes to marry into the master's family. A wealthier acquaintance, Esther Davis, selfishly convinces Fanny to be her traveling companion to London. She falsely sells Fanny the economic dream of prosperity and protection, which awaits her in London through domestic servitude. The young orphan travels with Esther to the city to seek her fortune after Esther fills her head with stories about "how several maids out of the country had made themselves and all of their kin forever: that by preserving their virtue, some had taken with their masters, that they had married them, and kept them coaches, and lived vastly grand and happy; and some mayhap, came to be duchesses" (15). Esther recounts the female servant's rags to riches tale, which was also famously portrayed in Richardson's *Pamela* just eight years before Cleland's novel. She claims that maintaining one's chastity can dramatically elevate a female servant's class status while attracting wealthy male employers. Fanny has little education, inheritance, or practical knowledge of society, but she has her virtue. With no friends or relatives and few skills to recommend her, she decides to capitalize on this critical asset.

Unbeknownst to Fanny, her dream to marry into the master's family was a cause for anxiety and servant termination among wealthy employers in the eighteenth century. While a small number of female domestics did in fact marry their masters, the chances of social elevation through uneven marriages was slim (Hill *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics* 143).⁴⁷ Eliza Haywood strictly advises young women to guard themselves against romantic dreams of marrying into the master's family. She warns that the master's sons in particular will promise marriage only to seduce servants (48). And, while matches between masters and servants have

⁴⁷ Hill claims that masters most often married servants after their wives' had died, and they needed help maintaining the housekeeping, etc.

happened, she claims, “Examples of this kind are very rare, and as seldom happy” (48). Haywood suggests the scarcity of such marriages is due largely to the social censure the son will face as well as the couple’s lifetime of unhappiness, which stems from their disparities in wealth, upbringing, and education (48). Haywood avoids blaming servants, but warns young women against the realities of seduction and unhappy marriages. In contrast, in *Everybody’s Business is Nobody’s Business* Defoe directly blames female servants for violating the social hierarchy, transgressing class lines and servant-master boundaries through sex. He claims that artful servants “take advantage of a young man’s simplicity and unruly desires,” and who “draw many heedless youths, nay some of good estates into their snares,” disgracing “many good families” (2). In his opinion, conniving, social climbing female servants use their sexuality to take advantage of their domestic position and corrupt virtuous families. Like Defoe, in 1741 Henry Fielding famously warns readers against falling for artful maidservants in *Shamela*. Fielding recasts Pamela as a prostitute-turned-servant attempting to seduce her master. *Shamela* inverts the social reality in suggesting all maidservants are plotting to seduce their masters, when in fact, women workers were often seduced and victimized in their work environment. As *Shamela*’s narrator ironically advises, “the Character of Shamela, will make young Gentlemen wary of how they take the most fatal Step both to themselves and Families, by youthful, hasty, and improper matches; indeed they may assure themselves that all such Prospects of Happiness are vain and delusive” (52). *Shamela* illustrates that the characterization of social climbing servants persisted from Defoe’s writing to mid-century despite many maid servants’ struggles against seduction and rape in the domestic workplace.

Yet Fanny, the innocent country girl, does not realize that her body and reputation are instantly highly sexualized as a servant-- a commodified laborer and a participant in public

commerce. Ann Louise Kibbie argues this occurs in eighteenth-century literature as “the conflict between a current and a fixed self is the central drama of the female character, as her own status as alienable property compromises or makes vulnerable the constant abstract virtue she is supposed, ideally to represent” (561-562). At 15, Fanny is unaware of her own sexuality as usable property, and the sorts of private and public predators she should be guarding her virtue against (Cleland 14). Fanny’s sexual virtue, or, according to Kibbie, “that inviolable property she owns in herself, her personal integrity” as a woman, which makes her a respectable woman and a valuable worker, proves to be too weakly guarded (562). Ironically, this is despite the fact that she believes her virtue/virginity is her greatest asset in seeking work as a maid servant and a prospective wife. Unfortunately, Fanny’s body and virtue quickly fall prey to a London bawd, who clearly recognizes her virginity as a highly marketable sexual commodity.

Because working-class female domestics as a collective were highly sexualized in the public imagination and their labor was commodified, they were often stereotyped as harlots and suspected of prostitution. Michael McKeon paraphrases one midcentury tract suggesting, “female domestic service and prostitution were scarcely distinguishable stops on the same circuit” (194). Defoe is also often quoted for complaining, “thus, many of them rove from place to place, from bawdy-house to service, and from service to bawdy-house again, ever unsettled and never easy, nothing being more common than to find these creatures one week in a good family, and the next in a brothel...so that in effect, they neither make good whores nor good servants” (*Everybody’s Business is Nobody’s Business* 2). Since female servants and prostitutes did similar conceptual work in sexually destabilizing the ideology of the private sphere, it is not so surprising to readers that Fanny quickly crosses over into prostitution. Rosenthal argues that the prostitute exposes “the ambiguous boundaries between the public and private, disturbing

negotiations of personal identity in the marketplace, and conflicts between a traditional sense of virtue and an unpredictable commercial economy” (7). Sexualized domestic servants occupy a very similar position to prostitutes in public consciousness. Their presence literally brings public commerce into the private sphere, and they also carry the dirty stereotypes of market corruption into the home. As prostitution commercializes sex, which was otherwise viewed as belonging to the private sphere (Rosenthal 2), affairs between family members and contracted servants also commercialize sex within the family’s private sphere. Through sex, both prostitutes and sexualized servants undermine boundaries between the domestic and public spheres.

Popular eighteenth-century texts and terminology further blurred the conceptual lines between domestic service and prostitution. Just as female servants were stereotyped as prostitutes, prostitutes were also commonly referred to as commodified laborers. Common labels for sex work generalized prostitution as hard labor and objectified prostitutes simply as commodities for sale. Slang for female prostitutes included the terms “jades” or “hacks,” which literally referred to “horses exhausted by drudgery and by extension anyone who hired him/her out for remunerative but unengaging, degrading, or unenjoyable work” (Rosenthal 6). These nicknames generalize the prostitutes’ alienable labor beyond strictly sex work in the social imagination. In addition, low brow slang for women’s genitalia was “commodity” (6). The writer of *The London Bawd* (1705) also uses the terms “commodity” and “wares” to objectify the prostitutes themselves. For example, he/she claims, “so careful is she to help Men to a Good Ware, that she seldom puts a Commodity into their hands, but what has been try’d before,” and “She makes nothing of Selling one Commodity to Twenty Customers” (1, 2). The prostitutes’ labor is emptied of its specificity, but not in order to euphemize their work. The male clients remain agents in this passage, but the female sex workers become disembodied and objectified

simply as things for sale. Women involved in prostitution and the large population of young women in London seeking domestic work, who Defoe generally labels “whores” (*The Great Law of Subordination* 86), are treated as sexualized counterparts circulating in the marketplace.

The sexualization of female servants as prostitutes in the public imagination is also represented to a lesser extent in contemporary erotic literature and pornography. While the prostitute is a central figure in eighteenth-century pornography, the figure of the female servant is less prevalent.⁴⁸ However, female servants are still commonly depicted in erotic domestic scenes, being punished through flogging within the genteel English home (Peakman 185, 192). Chambermaids are also portrayed, frequently as acquiring and reading porn in order to establish their libidinous “sexual nature” within pornographic texts (35-36). *Fanny Hill* was the most popular and influential pornographic novel of the century, and Fanny’s swift transition from a servant to a prostitute also illustrates the correlation in pornography between female domestic service and prostitution. Julie Peakman finds that the sexual acts domestic servants and other members of the household perform in English pornographic texts violated “family values and the inner sanctum of the home,” producing an intended shock value for readers (194). As a daughter, and then servant-turned-prostitute who works in the pseudo-domestic space of the brothel, Fanny similarly challenges readers’ ideologies of the home as a moral sphere.

Neither pornography nor conduct literature portrayed realistic images of prostitutes or female servants. Not surprisingly, sexualized female workers are constructed in ways that promote each genre’s particular social agenda. Conduct writers, including those discussed above, disparage female domestics as seductive prostitutes corrupting the family. Likewise, moralists either vilify or sentimentalize the working-class prostitute they wish to remove from city streets.

⁴⁸ See Kathryn Norberg’s discussion of the prostitute’s pervasive presence in pornography (225-252).

Meanwhile, authors of pornography including Cleland generally depict prostitutes euphemistically as satisfied workers with healthy or insatiable sexual appetites, in order to appeal to their voyeuristic male audiences.⁴⁹ Lynn Hunt and Kathryn Norberg also argue that contemporary porn literature uses the figure of the successful prostitute to expose and criticize restrictive family values and gender roles for women. Hunt argues that eighteenth-century pornography uses a character like Fanny Hill to criticize “existing social and sexual relations” and to uncover “the hypocrisy of conventional morals” held by contemporary society (40). For example, she contends that “the ideology of a separate, private sphere for women depended on the reassertion of fundamental male and female sexual (and, therefore, social and political) difference. Pornography in contrast, always intentionally transgressed the boundaries establishing difference” (45). Indeed, Fanny’s swift transition from her role as a daughter, to a domestic servant seeking employment, to a prostitute exposes the fragility of the private, moral, middle-class family that wishes to reaffirm its stable familial roles, and its protection from economic ruin and sexual corruption. The novel illustrates that economic struggles can quickly rupture the patriarchal social boundaries that uphold women’s maternal gender roles within the family, pushing women into sexually and socially transgressive public labor. Fanny’s experiences as a prostitute may challenge social ideologies of women’s maternal roles within the private sphere. However, Hunt’s reading of eighteenth-century pornography disregards the vilification of the aging and fraudulent bawd who orchestrates Fanny’s sexual assaults and traps her in prostitution. The bawd provides a cautionary example of an autonomous female whose economic independence and sexuality are censured within Cleland’s text.

⁴⁹ Kathryn Norberg (226), Randolph Trumbach (“Erotic Fantasy and Male Libertinism in Enlightenment England 266), David Weed (8), and Bradford K. Mudge (206) all agree that pornography presents unrealistic and euphemistic, if not fantastic, images of the prostitute.

Like Hunt, Norberg believes that pornography in the eighteenth century used the popular prostitute figure to assert a libertine perspective⁵⁰ of “female sexuality and attitudes toward women” (226). Norberg appears to read Fanny as a combination of the two dichotomous prostitute figures she finds represented in eighteenth-century pornographic and libertine literature: the “libertine whore” and the “virtuous courtesan” (225). Fanny’s original status as an orphaned country girl looking for servant work (and a husband) positions her as a “virtuous courtesan,” or a victim who is tricked into public sex work rather choosing a career as a prostitute (233). By contrast, Norberg finds that the libertine whore is an independent, sexually skilled, “public woman” who is not victimized through prostitution, and “who knows nothing of woman’s supposedly inherent modesty and cares little for her role in the family” (228). She suggests that libertine whores reject new middle-class domestic roles within the family and the sexual virtues of modesty and chastity. They are also more cautious business women than Fanny and avoid falling for romantic love, which would reposition them as wives in the domestic sphere without economic or sexual agency (235-236). However, like libertine whores Fanny narrates her own history of erotic pleasure and becomes financially successful as a kept woman and courtesan before retiring from prostitution as a middle-class wife. Her sexual enjoyment and economic success throughout most of the novel align her with other libertine prostitute characters who defy domestic subordination within the patriarchal family. However, the novel presents Fanny as a successful, sexual, business woman who also can refashion herself into the virtuous domestic wife. Her transition back into the respectable private sphere opposes the philosophy of the sexually independent libertine whore. Moreover, her marriage proves

⁵⁰ Libertines believed “that sexual experience was central to human life and that sexual desire and pleasure were good and natural,” and not only circumscribed within conjugal relations (Trumbach “Erotic Fantasy and Male Libertinism in Enlightenment England,” 254).

incredibly unsettling for middle-class readers, who ultimately would regard prostitutes -- commercially and sexually corrupted *femes soles*-- as the unassimilable' antithesis of the professedly chaste patriarchal family. Like Hunt's, Norberg's analyses of the libertine whore or virtuous courtesan operating in pornography also fail to account for the treacherous procuress figure, whose economic autonomy, immodest libertine sexuality, and lifelong rejection of women's domesticity within the patriarchal family are criminalized in contrast to Fanny's re-domestication.

Fanny's trajectory from virtuous domesticity to sexual public labor is impelled by a fraudulent labor contract and sexual assault. She warns readers against pursuing her mistaken economic dream, claiming "repairing to London to seek my fortune (*is*) a phrase which, by the by, has ruined more adventurers of both sexes from the country than ever it made or advanced" (15).⁵¹ Almost immediately, her independence, lack of worldly experience, and poor reasoning skills fail to protect her from the corrupt market, represented by the predatory procuress waiting at the London intelligence office (an agency where domestic servants were to be hired by prospective employers). When she arrives applying for work, she mistakes Mrs. Brown to be a respectable gentlewoman looking for a maidservant (18). The brothel keeper protests against the evils of London so convincingly that Fanny perceives her "as a grave and matron-like lady" rather than a bawd (19). Based on her professions of care and virtue and the stated terms of their labor contract, Fanny "enter'd her doors with the most complete confidence and exultation," (19). She believes she has found a beneficent mistress, who will provide her financial stability and a protected, domestic, work environment. Yet, rather than finding a maternal, protective, employer,

⁵¹ Cleland's inclusion of ruined men and women in this warning broadens his discussion beyond only women in Fanny's position. Her idealistic and risky business venture in London warns innocent and credulous individuals of both genders against seeking their commercial fortune in this rising era of capitalism and contracted labor.

Fanny is tricked into a pseudo-domestic sphere in which sexual commodification and profit replace maternal relationships. Fanny is blindly lured into the sex market where, as Gautier suggests, “not only are daughters commodities produced by mothers, marketed, and sold...but daughters are also a sort of bourgeois office space for repeated business transactions between mothers and clients” (481). In this instance, Mrs. Brown takes on the role of an abusive surrogate mother who commodifies and sells her adopted daughter, the innocent Fanny, to the highest available bidder. The domestic work space, which Fanny previously perceived as a place of protection for young women, becomes the marketplace where she is assaulted. Mrs. Brown’s deception establishes her culpability for Fanny’s entry into prostitution while Fanny’s victimization increases her virtuous appeal as a sexualized figure. Her innocent search for the safety of a second home sentimentalizes and domesticates her for Cleland’s readers, while the procuress is demonized.⁵²

Cleland’s portrayal of Mrs. Brown aligns with various depictions of pernicious bawds in contemporary conduct writing. Authors complain of the many bawds entrapping naïve female servants in prostitution. For example, in 1743 Eliza Haywood published a conduct book for female servants, entitled *Present for a Servant-Maid*. She begins her text with a warning to the young women of London looking for a domestic servant position. Surprisingly, the dangers she describes directly parallel the opening narrative of *Fanny Hill*, published six years later. To avoid the naïve and ruinous mistakes Fanny makes, Haywood advises young women to inquire into the reputation of houses and businesses before contracting to work anywhere. Haywood warns that “There are some Houses which appear well by *Day*, that it would be little safe for a modest Maid to sleep in at *Night*” (2). She particularly cautions women workers against:

⁵² Trumbach argues as the status of women were “modified by new ideals of romantic marriage” and maternity, aristocratic men “did not give up whores,” but “domesticated the brothel” and sentimentalized the prostitute (“Erotic Fantasy and Male Libertinism” 254, *Sex and the Gender Revolution* 175).

Houses which have no public Show of Business, are richly furnished, and where the Mistress has an Air of the strictest Modesty, and perhaps affects a double Purity of Behavior: Yet under such Roofs, and under the Sanction of such Women as I have described, are too frequently acted such Scenes of Debauchery as would startle even the Owners of some common Brothels...for these Sort of People have commonly then Emissaries at Inns, watching the coming of the Waggons, and...presently hire them in the Name of some person of Condition, and by this means make the innocent young creature, while she thanks God for her good Fortune, in being so immediately provided for, is ensnared into the service of the *Devil*. Here Temptations of all Kinds are offered her, she is not treated as a Servant but a Guest, her Country Habit is immediately stripp'd off, and a gay modish one put on instead; and then the design'd Victim, willing or unwilling, is exposed to Sale to the first lewd Supporter of her Mistress' Grandeur that come to the House: If she refuses the shameful Business for which she was hired, and prefers the Preservation of her Virtue to all the Promises can be made her, which way can she escape? She is immediately confined, threatened, and at last forced to Compliance (2-3).

Just as Haywood describes, in Cleland's narrative Fanny enters into a "handsome back parlour," "magnificently furnished," that does not appear to be a brothel, but the abode of "a very reputable family" (19). The house alone meets her expectations for domestic propriety. Next, she is supposedly hired as a companion above "domestic drudgery," who is invited to eat at the Lady's table and wear fine clothes procured from London dress shops (21). Yet, as Haywood warns this house is unfit to sleep in at night. Her first night in the house, Fanny was coerced into sex with Phoebe, "whose business it was to prepare and break such young fillies as I was," in order to prepare the young servant girl for her work as a prostitute (20). Haywood evidently

believes it is critical to warn prospective female servants like Fanny because she chooses to begin her conduct book with this extended and detailed commentary on the prevalence of predatory procuresses, who entrap women in rape and prostitution. Haywood depicts sexual coercion and forced prostitution (which we today would likely define as sex trafficking⁵³) as a serious problem for young women workers like Fanny in mid-eighteenth-century London.

In *Satan's Harvest Home*, published in London the same year as *Fanny Hill*, the anonymous author also depicts prostitution as a rampant problem in London and suggests young women, regardless of social class, are prey to deceptive bawds luring young women into prostitution. As we witness in Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, the author tells a story of a particular "elderly woman" he supposedly knew who lived near King Street in Westminster.⁵⁴ Every day she performed the part of a reputable matron, as she scouted the London Inns for newly arrived female laborers looking for domestic work. "Each morning she took her Rounds to all the Inns, to see what Youth and Beauty the *Country* had sent to *London* to make their Fortunes; and when she found a Rural pretty Lass step out of a Waggon, she drew her by her smooth Language" (29). The aged woman then sympathetically depicted the hard life of a domestic, and offered the unsuspecting woman a free apartment safe from the dangers of London until "she saw if she should like the Town" (29). Just as Cleland's bawd, Mrs. Brown, vows to shelter Fanny from the city's corruption, the bawd in *Satan's Harvest Home* treacherously drew women into her brothel

⁵³ The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines the crime of human trafficking as the recruitment, enticement, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining "by any means a person" in which "force, fraud, or coercion...will be used to cause the person to engage in a commercial sex act" (U.S. Department of Justice).

⁵⁴ Cleland provides the stereotypical description of the ugly and aging procuress readers would have encountered elsewhere. Fanny blushes at the "squab-fat, red-faced, and at least fifty," year-old Mrs. Brown who immodestly "devours" Fanny "with her eyes" (18) at the intelligence office. This aligns with other descriptions claiming these corrupt women are aging prostitutes over forty, who are "forc'd to leave off Whoring and turn Bawd" (*The London-Bawd* 1). They are heavy drinkers, very cunning, and quite ugly (1).

by claiming she would protect them from such vicious traps (29). The author uses this supposedly real figure to emphasize the threat of coerced prostitution to young, unsuspecting women of London, just as Haywood does in 1743. The circulating myths and public complaints over these demonized bawds were very common in conduct literature and the cultural imagination, if not also in the streets of London. Cleland seems to craft Mrs. Brown after these popular infamous figures, treacherous women of sexual commerce, who corrupt naïve young women's virtue and lure them into prostitution.

As Haywood describes, Fanny quickly becomes “the design'd Victim, willing or unwilling,” who “is exposed to Sale to the first lewd Supporter of her Mistress' Grandeur that come to the House” (3.) Within a day after entering Mrs. Brown's brothel, Fanny is twice subjected to rape under her supervision. First, Phoebe, a prostitute, pretending to be Mrs. Brown's cousin and her bedfellow, encourages her to undress down to her shift and kisses her (21). Fanny is totally confused by her display of affection. So, she returns “her the kiss and the embrace with all the fervor that perfect innocence knew” (22). Her naiveté is comical, but Phoebe's advances grow more serious and invasive. Fanny recalls that she “wander'd over my body, with touches, squeezes and pressures that either shock'd or alarm'd me” (22). Yet, the innocent and confused Fanny repeatedly mentions her passivity and lack of resistance during this coerced erotic encounter with Phoebe (23). Moreover, Fanny seems very unaware of lesbian sexuality or the possibility of rape because she was taught as a child only to fear men vaguely, or as she articulates, “to look on a man as a creature of prey that will eat her” (14). Phoebe's intention is to take advantage of Fanny's passivity and to corrupt her naïve virtue through this sexual assault, so that she will not resist her work as a prostitute. As Cleland bluntly writes, it was Phoebe's art “to break young girls” before being introduced to Mrs. Brown's male clients

(23). Fanny also recalls that she “artfully sounded me on all the points necessary to govern the designs of my virtuous mistress on me” (24). Fanny admits that this first coerced sexual encounter with Phoebe initiated her corruption and participation in prostitution. She reflects, “the first ideas of pollution were caught by me that night” (24). In this passage, we see a parallel between Fanny’s rape, which initiates her fall into prostitution, and Amy’s rape, which leads to her corrupt labor under *Roxana*.

During her experience of entrapment, betrayal, and forced prostitution under Mrs. Brown, Fanny twice acknowledges the great artifice women can use to violate one another’s trust, virtue, and agency. After her sexual encounter with Phoebe, Fanny claims “that the acquaintance and communication with the bad of our own sex is often as fatal to innocence as all the seductions of the other” (24). Here, she argues that homosocial relations with deceptive and immoral women are more dangerous and personally damaging than heterosexual seductions. In this passage, Cleland directly overshadows female ruin through heterosexual seduction with a warning to young women about female treachery. Yet, this argument is not surprising in a novel that glorifies heterosexuality while it deflects the culpability of male seducers, clients of prostitution, and voyeurs who are titillated by Fanny’s later sexual encounters. Fanny also regrets naively trusting Mrs. Brown, a woman who promised to care for her while secretly plotting to have Fanny sexually assaulted for her own profit. Just before Mrs. Brown entraps Fanny with the detested client against her will, Fanny reflects, “to my shame be it confess’d, such was my invincible stupidity, or rather portentous innocence, that I did not yet open my eyes to Mrs. Brown’s designs” (27). She confesses, “little did it then enter my head that all this gay attire was no more than decking a victim out for sacrifice, whilst I innocently attributed all to mere friendship and kindness in the sweet good Mrs. Brown” (26). This procuress illustrates that in

the contemporary social imagination femmes soles' enduring engagement in the sex trade translates into their criminal capacity for deception, physical violence, and sexual assault.

Cleland depicts the procuress as the embodiment of both violent sexuality and corrupt female labor, while Fanny is portrayed as her naïve victim. Fanny is oblivious of the value of her virginity and the sexual contract Mrs. Brown is negotiating with the highest bidder. Only in retrospect, Fanny complains that Mrs. Brown had negotiated the following “unrighteous contract,” “fifty guineas peremptory for the liberty of attempting me, and a hundred more at the complete gratification of his desires, in the triumph over my virginity” (27-28). Since Fanny’s virginity is highly valuable, “Mrs. Brown is concerned with converting Fanny’s maidenhead into money as quickly as possible,” and sending her body into circulation (Kibbie 571).⁵⁵ Through the fraudulent contract, Mrs. Brown has stolen Fanny’s physical autonomy and her ability to control her own labor. As Laura Faulk articulates, “Brown establishes greedy ownership of her, enacting and justifying the horror story of the ruthless bawd. Cleland sets Brown as the feared corruptor of innocence” (263). Thus, Mrs. Brown, the representative of licentious commerce, becomes the central aggressor (even more than Fanny’s impotent male rapist), and mitigates Fanny’s culpability for her involvement in prostitution.

Mrs. Brown is depicted as guilty for procuring a high-paying client for Fanny and forcing her into sex under false pretenses. She introduces Mr. Crofts as her wealthy and honorable cousin, who is “smitten” with her (28). Like the woman who brought Fanny to London, Mrs. Brown deceptively attempts to sell Fanny the same economic dream of marrying a wealthy man who would make her a fortune (28). However, repulsed by his old age (over 60) and his “ugly,” “cadaverous” figure, Fanny politely resists his favors and postpones her dreams of marrying up

⁵⁵ Faulk explains that virgins were the most expensive, even above higher-class prostitutes. This is because they were free of venereal disease (and often believed to kill venereal disease) and because men believed “taking virginity proved virility and masculinity” (262).

(until the end of the novel) (26). When Fanny refuses to cooperate, Mrs. Brown suddenly departs, entrapping Fanny with her “cousin,” the client. Initially, Fanny is again shocked by her mistress’ betrayal into a state of passivity, as she sat “motionless, and petrified, without life or spirit, not knowing how to look or how to stir” (29). The client, finding her “next to senseless and unresisting,” continues his advances (29). During this second attempt, she claims, “I was roused out of my passive endurance” (29). Fanny lies in a passive position for the majority of her later sexual encounters (Holmes 124). However, in this attack she springs away from him and begs him not to harm her (Cleland 29). He disregards her pleas and “renews his attack,” “seizes” her, holds her down on the settee, and pulls up her petticoats, leaving her naked (29). Defiantly, Fanny continues to “struggle with indignation,” until he prematurely ejaculates, preventing the rape. His power is exhibited in forcing Fanny onto the bed and partially removing her clothes. However, Cleland presents him as an unattractive and ultimately impotent male aggressor who seeks out prostitutes because of his impotence and who cannot subject resistant women to rape.

Tassie Gwilliam suggests that implementing this unrelatable and monstrous figure as the ineffective perpetrator separates the male audience from the aggressor. She claims:

The purchase and threatened destruction of the maidenhead appear in the context of a narrative that defuses both audience guilt and female terror; because the speaker is the supposed victim, the reader (inevitably male) can experience the scene while remaining morally detached from the odious perpetrator, and because the speaker remains canny and undiminished, the reader does not feel he is participating in degradation. (530-531)

The attempted rape makes Fanny aware of her coerced position as a prostitute without ultimately sacrificing her virginity to this repulsive character. In addition, while attempted rape is still a

criminal offense, it does not carry the severe capital punishment, and possibly social stigma, of a rape felony. This may mitigate readers' guilty experience of a sexual crime. I also agree with Gwilliam that male audiences would not identify with the "cadaverous" Mr. Crofts, which releases them from guilt or culpability as voyeuristic readers of a sex crime. Furthermore, I argue that the readers' guilt is alleviated because Mrs. Brown bears partial culpability for selecting this unattractive client, arranging the sexual assault, and deceptively trapping Fanny alone with him. Unlike Gwilliam, I don't believe that readers "can experience this scene" as they do Fanny's later sexual adventures due to the sheer violence of the scene, which ultimately leaves Fanny on the floor, her "nose gushing with blood" (30). Her vehement fight to fend off the repulsive Mr. Crofts prevents readers from the sexual titillation they experience with Fanny's later clients, even if they do not feel they are participating in her degradation in this first coerced encounter. If readers can forget the violent and deceptive beginnings of Fanny's transition into prostitution, or if they can avoid identifying with the culpable aggressors, the ugly and aging working-class Mrs. Brown and the repulsive and impotent Mr. Crofts, then readers are free to focus on the subsequent pleasurable scenes in the novel.

David Weed suggests that *Fanny Hill* blends libertine pornography with the emerging cult of domesticity for middle-class men, promoting a more controlled, romantic vision of male sexuality that mitigates undisciplined and violent aristocratic sexuality. He contends that the novel rethinks "libertinism, traditionally the province of aristocratic men, as a bourgeois male practice," in its "reaction against the excesses of both masculine violence and effeminate weakness that Cleland's novel encodes in its depictions of upper-class libertines" (9). Mr. Crofts is derided as old, repulsive, and impotent, and readers are led to reject both his sexual violence and enervation. As Peakman finds in her study of eighteenth-century erotic literature, "the most

prominent image of masculinity” is a partner who maintains “self-possession and self-control,” while the excessive libertine (embodied in the impotent Mr. Crofts), is characterized as an “enfeebled, weakened,” and “spent force” (190). Mr. Crofts represents what Renee Heberle has also argued about the act of rape in modernity, that “sexual violence” is not a “proactive act of dominance and control,” but “an acting out of failure” (142). Cleland appears to be modifying concurrent libertine pornographic rape narratives that otherwise “testify to the power of male will” “to override female objections to defloration,” liberating women’s “sensual pleasure” from “dictates of modesty and decorum” (Mills 146-147). Fanny vigorously resists the repulsive aggressor’s unwelcome advances, demonstrating that unrestrained sexual violence is incompatible with an emerging vision of romantic middle-class male sexuality. In contrast, Fanny’s sexual experiences with her future husband, Charles, exhibit a new “model of sexuality that demands both indulgence and restraint, a demonstration of virility and civility that prevents him...from burning out like the modern English aristocrat,” Mr. Crofts (Weed 18).

Readers and clients alike wished to detach themselves from the guilt of female workers’ seduction and/or rape. The thwarted rape scene and displacement of culpability for the assault onto a working-class bawd and an impotent aristocratic make that possible. Dan Cruickshank finds in his study of London’s sex industry in the eighteenth-century, “it was usual at that time for male observers to accept that many a harlot’s initial fall had been due to male seduction and deceit, but then to consider her—if she was considered at all—only as a means of male pleasure and convenience” (442). Cleland’s readers may have behaved much like eighteenth-century clients of prostitution, forgetting Mr. Crofts’ traumatic attack after Fanny recovers and transitions into prostitution.

Furthermore, Cleland's readers wish to ignore the pornographic prostitute's financial reliance on her sexual labor. Margaret Mitchell argues that Cleland's strategy is to invite "his readers to believe that Fanny has embarked on a career of prostitution for the sheer pleasure and adventure of it, a view no doubt more flattering to masculinity than the alternative explanation that most women generally took to prostitution rather than to starve" (309). Yet, Mitchell's article notes the text's recurrent emphasis on Fanny's economic need despite her narrative of sexual pleasure. Mitchell's reading also aligns with Haywood's claim that there were high numbers of female servants turning to prostitution rather than starvation after they were seduced or raped. She declares, "Every Street affords you Instances of poor unhappy Creatures, who once were innocent, till seduc'd by the deceitful Promises of their Undoers, and then ungratefully thrown off, they become incapable of getting their bread in any honest Way, and so by Degrees are abandoned to the lowest Degree of Infamy" (44). These servants were unable to recuperate their reputation or find further domestic employment once their rape or seduction was exposed, and most likely were forced to resort to street prostitution. Unlike other victimized female servants who turn to prostitution out of desperation, Fanny is not violated while working as a domestic. Rather, she is immediately lured into a brothel under a false domestic labor contract and then sexually assaulted. Yet, like Haywood's description, Fanny's experience illustrates that prostitution was a coerced means of income for poor, and often sexually violated, female servants. While the attempted rape in Cleland's novel does not ultimately rob Fanny of her virginity, her fellow prostitutes entice her interest in sexuality, and she confesses she has no other contacts or means of financial support (30, 34-35). Thus, she becomes trapped in prostitution. After being deceived, assaulted, and then slowly acculturated, Fanny chooses to

stay in the brothel rather than “be turn’d out to starve in the streets, without a penny of money or a friend to apply to” (30).

Fanny soon escapes the brothel, becoming a kept mistress, and over four years eventually works her way up the economic and social ladder by saving money as a woman of pleasure for wealthy clients, and then inheriting a large estate from a gentleman patron she had been living with. Once she becomes independently wealthy, she again seeks to reconnect with her first lover/client, Charles. His father has died and his inheritance lost through a number of shipwrecks. He could now make Fanny “as happy as he could wish” since he had “the world to begin again” (195) without an estate or parental supervision, and she had an estate to offer him. Ultimately, Cleland inverts this servant / prostitute rags to riches tale in order to justify their unequal and rather scandalous marriage. Fanny even warns him “against degrading himself” and “having, for respect of fortune, barter’d his honour for infamy and prostitution, in making one his wife, who thought herself too much honour’d to be his mistress” (202). Yet, despite her past life of prostitution, Charles marries Fanny and together they construct a new virtuous domestic sphere, where the conjugal family is once again separated from the evils of sexual commerce.

This servant-turned-prostitute narrative ends well with Fanny’s social redemption through marriage. Yet, before she can marry, she spends four years working her way out of prostitution, which was imposed on her through a fraudulent domestic labor contract and attempted rape. Fanny is a representative of the many country girls seeking domestic work in London, who become entangled in sexual commerce. Her short path to prostitution appeals to employers’ fears of female domestics’ pretended virtue and their supposedly facile transition between prostitution and domestic service. Likewise, her happy marriage at the end of the novel

reinforces wealthy employers' anxieties that their sons will rashly marry disreputable, sexualized women of commerce, whether they are (reformed) prostitutes or promiscuous maid servants.

Fanny's marriage proves that she is not blamed or ultimately punished for her fall into prostitution as a naïve girl unaware of London's snares. Rather, the censure for Fanny's moral and sexual corruption as a servant-turned-prostitute is mainly placed on another social outcast, the vilified procuress of sexual commerce. Mrs. Brown embodies the stereotype of the corrupt, working-class bawd, who cheats and defiles young virtuous servants. Through a fraudulent contract and orchestrated sexual assaults, Mrs. Brown attempts to ruin Fanny's virtue, deny her physical autonomy, and steal her ability to control her own labor. As a prostitute in her brothel, she sells Fanny's virginal body to the highest bidder. The aging and impotent, intended male rapist maintains some culpability for knowingly and violently attempting to coerce her, but as a client, he is held less responsible than Mrs. Brown. In effect, Cleland's polite male readership would not identify with either of these physically and morally repulsive characters, and they can avoid internalizing patriarchal social guilt for the female servant's sexual assault and her subsequent scandalous work as a prostitute. Fanny can provide respectable men like Charles sexual pleasure without provoking their remorse for her fall. Like *Roxana*, the novel ultimately mitigates patriarchal culpability for the social realities of female domestics' rape and seduction, which often forced young female servants out of wealthy employers' homes and into prostitution.

Roxana and *Fanny Hill* specifically reflect employer classes' association of female servants' insubordination and social climbing with sexual promiscuity. Yet, unlike Defoe's conduct literature, which avoids discussing servant rape altogether, the rape narratives in these two novels suggest the prevalence of rape crimes against female domestics. However, I argue

that these fictional representations of rape continue to deflect blame from the principal male rapists in the private sphere onto female accomplices: socially vilified femmes soles engaged in sexual labor that threatens the morality of the middle-class household. By extension, the narratives remove the criminal responsibility for the high numbers of female servant rape from audiences who Defoe and Cleland protect as an ideologically moral middle class. Rather, independent women disparaged for their involvement in the prostitution industry were further criminalized as ruthless, treacherous, and violent perpetrators of sexual assault.

**Conclusion:
The Female Accomplice's Disappearance from the Novel**

As the eighteenth century advanced, the rising middle class placed an increasing value on the private family and women's roles as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere. However, as the century drew to a close, women workers still composed a large percentage of the English workforce outside of the home. Domestic service continued to be a huge industry, so that by 1851 there were over one million servants in Britain, and many of them were women (May 4). Also, during the Industrial Revolution in England, "high proportions of the labor force employed in manufacturing were female, especially in the newer textile industries" (Berg 167). The prostitution industry also remained strong, so that by the end of the century, "it could still be observed that 'they [prostitutes] throng in our streets'" (Cruikshank 473). And, the industry's income "vied in importance with brewing, construction, and the London docks" (xi). I have argued in the chapters of this dissertation that popular domestic and courtship novels often incriminate working-class femmes soles as corrupted, mercenary, and sexually deviant accomplices to abduction and heterosexual rape in order to deter women from seeking economic agency outside of marriage and the domestic sphere. Although large numbers of working women continued to compete with increasingly popular ideological constructions of female maternity and domesticity, depictions of vilified femmes soles virtually disappear from the domestic novel by the end of the century.

This conclusion will attempt to explain why fictional depictions of women's participation in sexual felonies against other women wane toward the end of the eighteenth century. The virtual disappearance of fictional female accomplices to rape may be attributed to a number of social factors. These include a growing social intolerance for violent crimes and public

impropriety, which also led to the government censorship of scandalous crime reports. In addition, changing stereotypes increasingly regarded women as emotional and passive, prompting courts' greater leniency toward female offenders. Finally, increasing middle-class sympathies toward "fallen" femmes soles, and young prostitutes in particular, may have hindered authors' portrayals of femmes soles as ruthless and deviant sexual aggressors.

Although it was experienced unevenly between classes and social groups, there were shifting views of crime and women in late eighteenth-century English society. J. M. Beattie finds that, based on his research of Surrey and Sussex assizes, late eighteenth-century English society saw a decrease in the toleration of violent crimes, which led to greater numbers of prosecutions for rape, manslaughter, domestic abuse, and other forms of brutality (132,133). He contends that "such changes proceeded not in response to legislation, but from a shift in attitude on the part of jurors and judges and from what was at the bottom a growing hostility toward forms of physical violence that had been readily accepted a hundred years earlier" (136). During this time, a parallel shift in sensibilities also occurred, particularly among moralists of the middle and elite classes, who began to reject the consumption of violent and salacious crime literature (Wilson 119-120; Beattie 135). However, in contrast to Beattie's research, Gregory Durston finds that there was a continual decline in rape convictions in London from 1749 through the end of the century (143). Likewise, the last woman charged as an accomplice to rape at the Old Bailey was tried in 1780. Thus, there were no women recorded for rape felonies in the last two decades of the eighteenth century at the Old Bailey. Although there may have been a growing public intolerance of violent crime, it did not lead to an increase in rape prosecutions in London, and the trend appears to be uneven throughout the country.

However, Durston identifies another shift in public sensibility toward women in the judicial system, particularly after 1750. He finds that courts began to sympathetically view women as less culpable than men based on growing assumptions that women were more often “poor...led astray...in distress...and more deserving of charity” (23). These assumptions corresponded with negative stereotypes of women as “weak, easily led, emotional, and essentially passive in their behavior” (23). Durston quotes *The Times* (1788), which claims women are “the weaker body, [they] are more liable to error, and less entitled to severity” (23). Beattie also finds that female victims may have perceived the courts “as slightly more sympathetic to their plight, slightly more willing to consider women as victims than earlier views of women as sensuous and morally dangerous” (132). As the century progressed, women of previously good character were more often exonerated on these grounds than were women of bad reputation (prostitutes or kept mistresses, etc.) or men (25). Durston suggests that shifting eighteenth-century attitudes toward female defendants established the foundations for the increasingly sympathetic treatment of female offenders by Victorian courts (22). Since the role of the female accomplice is greatly diminished within domestic and courtship novels by the end of the eighteenth century,⁵⁶ perhaps courts’ growing sensitivity and leniency toward female defendants helped curtail fictional depictions of women as dangerous, colluding felons.

Although contemporary courts were not particularly lenient toward women with previous criminal records or engaged in prostitution, moral reform organizations did begin to treat women in the prostitution industry more charitably and compassionately in the second half

⁵⁶ See my analysis of Elizabeth Inchbald’s 1791 novel, *A Simple Story* (6-10). Also see Mary Hays’ 1799 novel, *The Victim of Prejudice*. Both novels depict the kidnapping and rape or attempted rape of the female protagonist by a relentless rake, who bears the blame for the crime. The female accomplices in these narratives are attendants who only play a minor role aiding in the victim’s imprisonment (Inchbald 326-327; Hays 113-117). In Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Maria* (1798), the female servant is raped by her master without the assistance of any accomplices (56-57).

of the century. For example, the Magdalene Hospital for the Reception of Penitent Prostitutes was founded in 1758 to combat street prostitution and to reform young “fallen” women.⁵⁷ Trumbach claims that after 1750 such social programs initiated to reform street prostitutes were inspired by “new ideals of romantic love and the domestic family” (184). Accordingly, Jonas Hanway, a prominent humanitarian, published a defense of the Magdalene Hospital in 1759. He constructed a sympathetic depiction of wayward prostitutes, deserted by friends and their sexual partners and enslaved by demonized procuresses (19, 21). He claims, “surely there are none who stand in greater need of assistance than these unhappy women. Can there be greater objects of commiseration than those thoughtless girls, who are hurried into ruin by temptation...against their intentions?” (15). Hanway’s sentimental portrayal removes prostitutes’ intentionality and culpability (but not the aging bawds’), making “artless” *femes soles* more easily redeemed. He aims to reform the penitents into virtuous and industrious women who will hopefully become wives and mothers in the domestic sphere (34, 47). The Lock Asylum was a similar project that followed the premise of the Magdalene Hospital. Founded in 1789, it also admitted contrite prostitutes after they had been cured of venereal disease, with the intention of rehabilitating young women back into Christian domestic roles (Lock Asylum 12).

Trumbach and Rosenthal agree that the charity hospitals established by moral reformers and philanthropists who intended to reform repentant prostitutes had no literal or practical impact on the large prostitution industry (Rosenthal 200). Despite the positive reception of the reform efforts among polite society, the scale of these hospitals was too small to affect any real social change. The Magdalene Hospital never had occupancy of more than “60 to 100 women in it between 1758 and 1790”, while there were an estimated 3,000 prostitutes working on the streets

⁵⁷ The complete title, The Magdalene Hospital for the Reception of Penitent Prostitutes, was maintained until 1938, and the hospital finally closed in 1966 (Saint George-in-the-East Church).

of London at any given time (Trumbach 186). Likewise, the Lock Asylum only admitted 20 penitent prostitutes at a time (188). In addition, only 122 of 2,197 women released from the Magdalene Hospital had married by 1786 (187), which also suggests that former female prostitutes were not likely to be re-assimilated into a domestic maternal role. Although these charity projects helped very few women escape prostitution, their presence illustrates a shift in middle-class sympathies toward young, independent women engaged in sexual commerce. The growth in public compassion for the “plight of victimized prostitutes” stands in stark contrast to the criminalized, malicious prostitutes Richardson depicts as Lovelace’ felonious accomplices to rape and abduction in *Clarissa*. Moral reform movements reflect improved middle-class conceptions of the working-class *feme sole*, who before was irreparably corrupted by her public labor. However, unlike younger, and thus redeemable, “fallen” *femes soles*, the aging bawd (supposedly cemented in her immoral occupation and past the age of motherhood) is not reformable in the public imagination.⁵⁸ Despite bawds’ continued vilification in society, charitable reform movements may have influenced fictional depictions of prostitutes. By the end of the eighteenth century, domestic and courtship novels no longer portray prostitutes as violent, treacherous, and sexually deviant accomplices to rape and abduction.

Moral reformers also restricted the public’s access to salacious crime literature, which, in turn, might have deterred the incorporation of explicit rape narratives in the late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century domestic novel. Court bans and government proclamations prohibiting the detailed news of violent crimes in the late eighteenth century helped to limit the public’s awareness of women’s sexual violence. In the 1780’s, English society witnessed the re-

⁵⁸ Hanway continues to blame aging procuresses for the entrapment and vice of younger female prostitutes, and the Magdalene Hospital refuses to admit aging women, who are beyond “the prime of life” and the possibility of reform (19, 47).

establishment of moral reform societies that worked to curb public immorality and lewdness. They particularly focused on censoring “blasphemous and indecent publications” like those depicting abduction and rape (Dictionary of National Biography 210). William Wilberforce, a politician and Evangelical philanthropist, convinced King George III to issue an official proclamation against vice in 1787. The same year, Wilberforce founded the Proclamation Society. It was composed of high level political and religious officials, whose objective was to find and prosecute those guilty of “dissolute, immoral, or disorderly practices” including drunkenness, profanity, and gaming (Hitchcock, Howard, and Shoemaker 1). Over the next twenty years, the society proved ineffective and prosecuted very few offenders (Wilson 119, Hitchcock, Howard, and Shoemaker 1). However, its establishment illustrates the growing social value of public morality and propriety within middle-class and elite society. In addition, the Proclamation was quickly succeeded by another 1790 court ban “forbidding the publication of all but the most basic facts about rape hearings and some other potentially salacious cases” (Durstun 4). The government wished to protect “increasingly delicate public sensibilities” from offensive depictions of corruptive criminality (4). In addition, the ban intended to curb growing public anxiety over widespread violent crime and sexual scandal, which was portrayed in the growing number of increasingly detailed crime publications (Lemmings 6-7). The government’s censorship of rape and abduction trial reports along with other violent crimes helped to remove female perpetrators of sexual violence from the public consciousness.

A Simple Story, published to great critical acclaim in the final decade of the eighteenth century, exhibits the increasingly conservative moral reforms that likely curtailed depictions of criminalized femmes soles as accomplices to rape in the evolving domestic novel. In 1791, the popular playwright and author Elizabeth Inchbald concluded her first novel, *A Simple Story*, with

the dramatic abduction of the young and virtuous female protagonist. Matilda's sudden and violent abduction instigates her estranged father's protection, prompts their reunification, and re-establishes her inheritance. In using kidnapping as the crisis which resolves the family's conflict, Inchbald's novel participates in the eighteenth-century abduction and (attempted) rape narrative tradition. Like the rape narratives in the popular novels I previously analyzed, Inchbald's novel features a colluding female domestic, who assists in the female protagonist's abduction. However, Inchbald's portrayal of the female accomplice contrasts with popular abduction and rape narratives earlier in the century. Her involvement and culpability in the crime is quite limited compared to the principal abductor / attempted rapist and the numerous male accomplices who forcefully remove Matilda from her home.

In contrast to early and mid-century novels in which female characters are incriminated for plotting the rape (*Roxana*, *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, and *Tom Jones*), in *A Simple Story*, the principal aggressor plots Matilda's abduction with the help of an all-male cohort. Lord Margrave consults his close male friends about whether to seduce or abduct Matilda. Some of his friends "advised seduction," while others "painted the triumph and gratification of force" (249). Lord Margrave's companions worked to convince Margrave that force was the best option because he does not need to fear criminal prosecution or her father's retaliation (249). When his "companions and counselors" realize there is no hope of persuading Matilda through "gentle methods," they "strenuously commended open violence" (319). His group of advisors then compose the gang that abducts her. Three of his gentlemen friends "with three servants, trained and tried in all the villainous exploits of their masters" use a diversion tactic to capture Matilda (320). The band of men abduct Matilda, claiming the house is on fire just as the inhabitants were going to bed. (320). The men then carry the screaming Matilda in a carriage to Margrave's

house just outside of London (325, 326). Eighteenth-century trial reports and domestic novels usually portray one or more female accomplices involved in luring in the victim. However, Inchbald changes this narrative, vilifying Margrave and his six male assistants as the felonious sexual aggressors who capture Matilda.

While no women are complicit in seizing Matilda or in her attempted rape, *A Simple Story* depicts one “one of his lordship’s confidential females,” apparently a maidservant employed under Margrave, who aids in Matilda’s imprisonment (326). Her role in the crime is limited compared to popular rape narratives earlier in the century. She is to construct a false sense of safety and comfort for Matilda, who is terrified at Margrave’s intentions to rape her and keep her as a mistress (326). Like fictional abduction and rape victims before her, Matilda is easily deceived by her show of kindness. Unfamiliar with “those worthless characters of which this person was a specimen...she found consolation in her seeming tenderness” (326). However, when Matilda fights her imprisonment with passive resistance, refusing to eat or change her clothes from the “torn disordered habit in which she had been dragged away” (326), the previously sympathetic maidservant begins to show her alliance with her corrupt employer. Fearing Matilda will die, the attendant becomes obstinate, threatening to bring Margrave to her room if she persists in fasting. At this point, Matilda recoils from her deceitful attendant (327). However, the maidservant’s culpability is mitigated for readers by her contractual duties and her concern for Matilda’s well-being. Inchbald writes that the servant was placed in charge of her health as if she were a physician, and she solicits the help of her employer / Matilda’s abductor out of fear Matilda will die without food and water (326). Unlike Mrs. Jewkes, the maidservant who treats Pamela with excessive brutality and drives her to attempt suicide, Inchbald’s female accomplice attempts to protect the female victim from suicide (327). Finally, the attendant calls

in Lord Margrave into Matilda's room to address her hunger strike. Then, she leaves the room and disappears from the narrative. Alone with Matilda, Lord Margrave eventually becomes the sole attempted rapist, mitigating the maidservant's culpability for the attempted sexual assault.

In accordance with increasingly polite late eighteenth-century sensibilities, which prompted the censoring of trial reports, the near rape scene that follows does not depict a violent or sexually explicit struggle. The absence of detailed sexual violence contrasts with the abduction and rape narratives readers often witnessed in earlier domestic novels including Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and Haywood's *Miss Betsy Thoughtless* and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy*. Instead, Inchbald presents only Matilda's verbal resistance to Margrave's intended rape. She cries, "Leave me, my lord, or I will die in spite of all your care; I'll instantly expire with grief, if you do not leave me" (327). Just as he moves to touch her, Matilda's father, Lord Elmwood, fires a pistol in the house and then storms into the room to rescue her from the trauma of rape and subsequent social ruin (328).⁵⁹

At the end of this attempted rape scene, Inchbald suggests that Lord Elmwood plans to prosecute Lord Margrave. This is highly unusual in eighteenth-century rape narratives. *A Simple Story* is the only novel in my collection of rape narratives that presents an upper-class family intending to pursue a public trial in order to seek justice. As we saw in *Clarissa*, families feared public embarrassment, and Matilda's reputation would likely have been interrogated and tarnished in a trial over her abduction and attempted rape. However, Lord Elmwood refuses to settle this offense privately by dueling with Lord Margrave. Rather, he responds, "Would you make me an executioner? The law shall be your only antagonist" (329). Not only does he imply that he will seek legal redress, but he reminds both Margrave and Inchbald's readers of the

⁵⁹ Lord Elmwood's rescue of Matilda, nearly replicates Squire Western's rescue of his daughter, Sophia, in *Tom Jones*.

severity of capital punishment for perpetrators of the abduction felony. Perhaps Lord Elmwood's appeal to the justice system illustrates Beattie's findings that late eighteenth-century society had a decreasing toleration for violent crimes and a greater willingness to prosecute offenders. Although the principal abductor / attempted rapist is charged with the crime, the other accomplices, including the female accomplice are not acknowledged. Inchbald chooses to focus the blame on the primary aggressor, releasing the other assistants from criminal culpability.

Inchbald's *A Simple Story* is a popular late eighteenth-century courtship novel that demonstrates the literary shift away from incriminating *femes soles* as violent accomplices to abduction or rape. In this late-century text, the maidservant's role in the crime is greatly diminished, and she is not vilified as callous and ruthless like her female predecessors in *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Fanny Hill*. Because she is not involved in plotting or staging the attempted rape she also does not deflect blame away from the principal male rapist as we witness in *Roxana* and *Pamela*, for example. Inchbald's abduction narrative expresses growing middle-class' intolerance of violent sex crimes—real or fictional-- and an increased sympathy toward female criminals in the justice system. While there was continued cultural resistance to independent women's legal and commercial agency in the public sphere, changing moral and social sensibilities contribute to the disappearance of the violent, dangerous, and sexually deviant *feme sole* who is repeatedly incriminated and othered as a sexual aggressor in earlier eighteenth-century domestic novels.

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Publications:

Journal Article:

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“Women’s Dangerous Occupations: Female Accessories to the Rape of Eighteenth-Century Domestic Servants.” Gender Matters Conference. Governors State University, University Park, Illinois, April 2015

“Implementing the BEAM Model in Research and Interpretive Writing Courses.” UW-Milwaukee Composition Forum on Materializing Critical Interpretation/Inquiry. September 2014

“Female Violence in *Miss Betsy Thoughtless*: A Reflection of Eighteenth-Century Crime.” Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference at the University of Binghamton, New York, June 2014

“Women’s Dangerous Occupations: Female Artifice, Betrayal, and Rape in *Roxana* and *Fanny Hill*.” Midwest Modern Language Association Conference. Milwaukee, WI, November 2013

“Nothing But Violent Methods Will Do”: Women who Complicate the Eighteenth-Century Rape Narrative.” Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, April 2013

“Confounding Scientific Classification and Subverting National Identities: Frankenstein’s Anomalous Body.” Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference at the University of Colorado, Boulder, June 2012

“Planning Your Course: Eighteenth-Century Women Writers Lesson Plans.” University-Wide Orientation and Teaching Conference for New Teaching Assistants and Teaching Academic Staff at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, August 2010

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