



Can We Teach the “Deep Intersubjectivity” of Richardson’s *Clarissa*?

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This essay brings together two recent explorations in eighteenth-century pedagogy and critical theory—Jocelyn Harris’s essay “Clarissa Lives! Reading Richardson through Re-writings” and George Butte’s study in poststructuralist phenomenology, entitled *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from Moll Flanders to Marnie*—to reflect on a particular experience of teaching Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*. In what follows, I suggest that the classroom strategy of approaching *Clarissa* through a range of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary works illuminates important aspects of Richardson’s innovative representation of finely nuanced interpersonal consciousness.

First, a bit of a background. During the last three years, I have had the good fortune to co-edit with Jocelyn Harris a collection of articles, *Teaching the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, in the MLA “Approaches to Teaching” series. As a co-editor, I was privileged to see early her own essay for the volume, in which she describes a graduate seminar whose participants approach *Clarissa* by discovering “how later writers have re-visioned Richardson’s masterpiece.”¹ Shortly after reading that essay, I started teaching an undergraduate seminar on *Clarissa*, and very soon found myself adapting some of the techniques that worked so well for Jocelyn’s students in New Zealand.

Those students, as she reports, had an option of complementing their reading of *Clarissa* with a novel from a list, which included, among other works, Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*, Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*. Although I could not follow Jocelyn’s example and add any more novels to my syllabus—my class being geared primarily toward sophomores and juniors who had had no previous exposure to eighteenth-century literature—half a dozen students happened to be taking at the same time (or had taken previously) my course on the novel as a genre, in which they had indeed read the works of Austen, Woolf, and McEwan. Of course, I encouraged those students to consider the relationship between *Clarissa* and these later texts. As the semester went on, their increasingly probing thinking about the



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evolution of the fictional treatment of interpersonal subjectivity from *Clarissa* to *Atonement* repeatedly focussed the attention of the rest of the class on Richardson's experimentation with representing minds as represented (and certainly misrepresented!) by other minds. Some of our best discussions centred on the challenges and possibilities of such representation, both in the eighteenth century and today.

If our commitment to rediscovering *Clarissa* through Austen, Woolf, and McEwan was indebted to Jocelyn's essay, our use of such concepts as "interpersonal consciousness" and "interpersonal subjectivity" originated with Butte's *I Know That You Know ...* In this compelling reintroduction of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's discourse on phenomenology into contemporary literary and film studies, Butte argues that "the way stories portray consciousness of consciousness—intersubjectivity—changed fundamentally around the time of Jane Austen."² In the early years of the nineteenth century, English writers began to portray a multiply-layered, mutually-reflecting, deeply dynamic subjectivity—"deep intersubjectivity"—a "change so subtle and fundamental that it has been difficult to conceive and describe" (25), particularly as today we take its impact for granted in the prose of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Henry James, Woolf, Vladimir Nabokov, McEwan, and others.

Focussing on the dynamic, dialogic (in the Bakhtinian sense) nature of deep intersubjectivity, Butte defines it as

the web of partially interpenetrating consciousnesses that exists wherever perceiving subjects, that is, human beings, collect. [T]he process begins when a self perceives the gestures, either of body or word, of another consciousness, and it continues when the self can perceive in those gestures an awareness of her or his own gestures. Subsequently the self, upon revealing a consciousness of the other's response, perceives yet another gesture responding to its response, so that out of this conversation of symbolic behaviours emerges a web woven from elements of mutually exchanged consciousnesses. (27)

As a vivid early example of deep intersubjectivity in the novel, consider the scene in Austen's *Persuasion* in which Anne Elliot observes and interprets a silent but poignant communication between her former suitor, Frederick Wentworth, and her sister, Elizabeth, who have met unexpectedly in Molland's bakery shop. As Butte puts it:



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Anne maps a [long] and ... remarkable series of exchanged, blocked, anticipated, and denied acknowledgments. Within her gaze, Wentworth and Elizabeth see each other, and they further recognize the sign in the other of being seen seeing. As if this maze of perceptions were not intricate enough, Austen turns the screw yet again: Anne is “convinced” she tracks a specific negotiation ... To the woman whom his courtship of Anne had offended more than seven years earlier, Wentworth offers a compromise fiction that he is an acquaintance, as he leans forward to be acknowledged, but Elizabeth rejects his offer, breaking the chain of gestures. Austen frames each perception with yet another gaze or gesture, each trumping the previous one. (3)

Butte thus sees this “scene in *Persuasion*, about the observation of observations, [as giving] voice to a profound new way of shaping narrative”:

When Anne Elliot watches Wentworth and Elizabeth negotiating complex force fields of memory and protocol, the enabling strategy of her story is a new layering of human consciousness, or a new representation of those subjectivities as layered in a specific way. Deep intersubjectivity has made its appearance in storytelling in modern culture, and it has altered our sense of self and community and the discourses that construct and reflect them. (4)

Eighteenth-century English writers, Butte posits, often came close to but typically stopped short of exploring rich representational possibilities opened by having a character perceiving the reaction of another character to the first character's own mental state (as conveyed by her body language and interpreted—or misinterpreted—by that second character). In Defoe, for example, the interplay of subjectivities never rises beyond one personage observing another's behaviour. Looking at a rather affecting episode in *Moll Flanders*, in which Moll and her new husband, Jemy, “drop their masks” and “confess their mutual schemes to marry well”—an episode ripe with intersubjective possibilities—Butte points out that “never in his or Moll's or Defoe's text, does Jemy reflect on Moll as a subjectivity and much less on her consciousness of *him*” (43). In Fanny Burney's *Evelina*—another novel that hovers on the brink of deep intersubjectivity as its titular heroine imagines anxiously how she is perceived by other people—the “encounter with the other never moves beyond a two-layer exchange to multiple negotiations and perceptions” (59).



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The same remains true of Fielding, and even of Richardson, whose treatment of Pamela is subject to “curious limitations”:

[Pamela] is powerfully aware that she is the target of [Mr. B’s and her parents’] interpretation, but what perceptions, experiences, and tones of feeling give rise to those interpretations in the other? How are they part of the fabric of that consciousness in her parents or Mr. B.? Neither Pamela nor *Pamela* asks these questions of their world. Mr. B. reads Pamela’s letters, but she does not read *his* (in this matter *Clarissa* is a step forward). More important, Pamela does not internalize Mr. B.’s perceptions of her—she deflects them—and does not ask what consciousness those perceptions emerged from and to which her responses could be seen to return, as a thread in what could have been a tapestry of responses. (69)

Although (and perhaps *because*) Butte mentions *Clarissa* only in passing, one is immediately tempted to apply his model of the new interpersonal consciousness to Richardson’s magnum opus. Surely, a novel whose protagonists spend their waking hours trying to plan each other’s emotional reactions and so to deflect, with varying degrees of success, each other’s mental gambits *must* create something of that “field of mutual consciousness” that Butte sees as coming into existence only in the novels of Austen (33). If there is at least one eighteenth-century novel in English that antedates the early nineteenth-century deep intersubjectivity,³ it has to be *Clarissa*!

As it happens, Butte anticipates precisely this kind of retroactive application when he points out that, habituated to the presence of deep subjectivity in the fiction of the last two centuries and in contemporary cinema, we tend to “read backward.” We construct the “‘depth’ of selfhood in *Pamela*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Princess de Clèves* (and even *Odysseus* and *Aeneas*), which is a product of this shift in narrative practices that tells new kinds of stories about the subject in relation to other subjects” (64). In other words, when it comes to *Clarissa*, it might be difficult to separate our by-now-ingrained tendency to import deep intersubjectivity into a work of fiction, from its actual presence in that work as it had been originally written and perceived by its eighteenth-century audience.

But then, reading backward, as Jocelyn has demonstrated, can be a highly effective classroom technique. For example, returning to *Clarissa* after reading a series of later “meditations or variations upon Richardson’s original text” (from *Les Liaisons dangereuses* to *Sense*



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and *Sensibility*, and from *Mrs. Dalloway* to *Atonement*), Jocelyn's students came to appreciate anew—and historicize in more sophisticated ways—Richardson's insistence on a tragic conclusion of his story.⁴ So, even if we accept that, on some level, we may overread and thus overrate Richardson's layering of intersubjective consciousness, looking for the presence of such consciousness in *Clarissa* after exploring the effects of deep intersubjectivity in *Mrs. Dalloway* to *Atonement* leads to lively classroom discussions. One may, of course, alert one's students to the potential anachronism of this approach (and, in fact, pondering the concept of an anachronistic literary interpretation is a useful exercise in itself), but what counts at the end of the day is whether such "reading backward" has contributed to bringing *Clarissa* alive for twenty-first century readers.

For one example of such possibly anachronistic but (as my classroom experience shows) fruitful reading, let us turn to an episode from *Clarissa* which comes roughly one-third into the novel and depicts Lovelace and Clarissa in one of their moments of intense mutual reading and misreading.

Here is how Richardson builds up to it: Lovelace has finally tricked Clarissa into leaving her family and eloping with him. He then manipulates her into staying with him in rented apartments in London, at a house that, as he told Clarissa, is owned by a respectable widow of an Army officer, who lets rooms and takes care of her two nieces. In reality, the house is a brothel; the owner, Mrs. Sinclair, is a madam; and her nieces are prostitutes, turned into such by Lovelace, who had earlier seduced and abandoned them. Clarissa is introduced to the inhabitants of the house as Lovelace's wife, when, in fact, both Mrs. Sinclair and her nieces know that Lovelace does not want to marry Clarissa and instead intends to make her his kept mistress. Lovelace explains to Clarissa that since they spend so much time together, they have to pose as a married couple (even though they keep separate bedrooms) in order not to scandalize the (presumably) respectable inhabitants of the house. However, the real reason that he wants Clarissa to address him as a husband in front of Mrs. Sinclair and her "nieces" is that if he then happens to rape Clarissa, he would have the witnesses who could testify in a court of law that Clarissa considered herself married to him and thus cannot possibly complain of any sexual liberties he has taken with his "lawfully wedded" wife.

One evening, Lovelace throws a party, to which he invites four of



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his equally debauched male friends and another former mistress of his, one Miss Partington (now, too, a prostitute), who is presented to Clarissa as a young lady of good family, wealth, and virtue. Miserable as she is about perpetuating the lie about her marriage, Clarissa is prevailed on to continue posing as “Mrs. Lovelace” in front of his friends, not knowing that they are all apprised of the true state of affairs and of Lovelace’s motives for making Clarissa believe that they all think that she is married to him. Later that night, Clarissa is asked if Miss Partington can stay in her room for the night, for Mrs. Sinclair has presumably run out of beds to accommodate her illustrious guests. Although, on the surface of it, there is nothing strange about such an application, particularly as Miss Partington is supposed to be a woman of good birth and virtue, the over-cautious Clarissa, not even knowing exactly what she is afraid of, but mindful of the house full of intoxicated “gentlemen of free manners,”⁵ turns the request down. As readers soon find out (Lovelace explains it all in his letter to his confidant, Mr. Belford), Clarissa was correct in her fears. Lovelace planned to use Miss Partington to open Clarissa’s door at night and let him into her bedroom, after which, had he raped her, she would have had even fewer chances to sue him later, since now, not only Mrs. Sinclair and her “nieces,” but also four of Lovelace’s friends could testify that she went by the name of his wife.

On the morning after the failed Miss Partington scheme, Lovelace asks Clarissa what it was that Miss Partington and Mrs. Sinclair wanted from her last night. He then reports in his letter to Belford that Clarissa “*artfully* made lighter of her denial of Miss for a bedfellow than she *thought* of it, I could see that; for it was plain she supposed there was room for me to think she had been either *over-nice*, or *over-cautious*” (552, emphasis in the original).

Lovelace thus recognises that Clarissa did not want him to think that she, in fact, suspected that he had some ulterior motives in having Miss Partington spend a night in her room. This is a fairly complex passage, embedding several very plausible and yet potentially fallible mutual explications. If read over quickly, its complexity registers only superficially. (That is, students may note that it is “confusing,” especially due to the final forking of the presumed meaning of Clarissa’s behaviour: if Clarissa thinks that she has been “over-nice,” Lovelace may appear to her in a more amiable light than if she thinks that she has been “over-cautious.” Moreover, since both of these possible interpretations come to us through a highly interested interpreter, Lovelace, there is also room



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for doubting both.) If, however, we are reading *Clarissa* with Butte's model in mind, this passage forces us to pause and to reconsider its play of mutually affecting consciousnesses. To put it in the most practical terms, students stop short in their racing through a 1,500-page novel to reread slowly and closely a sentence that seems to fit Butte's definition of deep intersubjectivity.

Clarissa, in this slowed-down reading, is aware that Lovelace will be deducing from her rejection of Miss Partington as a bedfellow her "true" view of him. (That is, unlike Moll Flanders or Evelina in Butte's examples above, Clarissa is fully cognisant of the complexities of Lovelace's subjectivity.) Whatever her true view might be, however—and, confused as she is by Lovelace's contradictory behaviour and her own conflicting emotions, she may not even have such a clearly articulated view—she wants to conceal it from him. *Or so Lovelace thinks*, even if he is not sure whether she wants to conceal it because it would be too humiliating for her to admit that she has been stupid enough to put herself in the power of a dishonourable man; because she does not want to offend him with her, perhaps ungrounded, suspicions; or because she does not want him to think that she has snubbed Miss Partington out of some vaguely perceived superiority over her.

Clarissa's attempt at "artfully" making light "of her denial of Miss for a bedfellow" might have worked well and deceived Lovelace had he not expected something like it after first initiating his "Miss Partington" plot and then witnessing it fail. In interpreting Clarissa's seemingly casual reaction as an "artful" concealment of her true feelings, Lovelace may thus experience himself as trumping her and regaining the upper hand in their ongoing mental struggle: She might have seen through his plot, but now he sees through hers! And, to adapt Butte's description of deep intersubjectivity in Austen's *Persuasion*, "[a]s if this maze of perceptions were not intricate enough, [Richardson] turns the screw yet again." Lovelace's report of his morning exchange with his "goddess" is written for a particular audience: Belford, and, through him, the rest of Lovelace's rakish friends waiting impatiently for the outcome of his latest stratagem aimed at seducing and thus subduing Clarissa. To sustain his authority as their leader, Lovelace has to show them that he still comes out on top in this latest encounter with Clarissa. At the same time, he also wants to remind them that Clarissa deserves all this attention and mental effort, and that she can and does at times prevail in their struggle. For if Lovelace is ever to marry her—and that possibility has



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to be kept alive—he would not want his friends to think that he has married anybody but the one truly exceptional woman. In interpreting his morning encounter with Clarissa, Lovelace thus writes both anticipating his friends' *present* need to respect their leader and responding to their potential *future* objections to his marriage. The imagined/projected subjectivities of these men shape Lovelace's report as much as does the imagined subjectivity of Clarissa.

Another scene from *Clarissa* figuring in our classroom discussions of deep intersubjectivity makes more of the body language of the characters than the "Miss Partington" episode, in which body language is so implicit as to be practically invisible. In this other scene, Lovelace is revisiting his ritual of asking Clarissa to marry him—while couching it in such terms as to make the proposal not quite acceptable for a punctilious young lady—and then withdrawing the proposal under a slight pretence. (At times, this cruel game turns against Lovelace, and he finds himself actually begging for Clarissa to marry him in the most sincere terms, but it does not happen on this particular occasion.)

Faced with the badly timed and ambiguously phrased marriage proposal, Clarissa (according to Lovelace, who reports this conversation to Belford) looks "vexed, disconcerted, teased; [is] at a loss, as [Lovelace thinks], whether to be more angry with herself or [him]" (425). Clarissa, in a letter to *her* confidant, Anna Howe, admits that Lovelace could read her feelings on that occasion well, to a degree: "The man saw I was not angry at his [marriage proposal]. I only blushed up to the ears; that I am sure I did; looked silly, and like a fool ... He looked at me with great confidence; as if ... he would look me through" (423).

What is going on in this scene? Lovelace may interpret Clarissa's blushing in response to his half-hearted proposal as an indication that she both wants and needs to marry him (because she is attracted to him and, at the same time, painfully aware of the terrible precariousness of her present position as a single woman living under the same roof with a rake), but is ashamed to acknowledge this double need and unhappy to be caught acknowledging it *prima facie* by her body language. Clarissa is aware that Lovelace may interpret her "silly" looks in just this unflattering-for-her light, and her embarrassment is deepened by her dawning certainty that he *is* interpreting it thus because his confidence is apparently growing apace as he is gazing at her.

The irony of the situation is heightened by the fact that astute as Lovelace's interpretation of Clarissa's feelings may seem, it is still rather



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impoverished. Clarissa is blushing in response to Lovelace's lukewarm proposal, not just because she wants to marry him and knows that he thinks she does—as a matter of fact, she doubts more and more that he would *ever* be able to make a suitable husband for her—but also because she is thinking of Anna's most recent letter, in which Anna pragmatically advises her to take Lovelace up on his first word and wed him out of hand in order to avoid being censured by the world for eloping with a rake. Clarissa's blushing is indicative of a complex amalgam of feelings: she is aware of the truth of Anna's advice, angry with herself for allowing such an ambiguous situation, and half-ashamed at realising that, in spite of everything, she is still attracted to Lovelace. She cannot explain any of it to Lovelace and thus recapture whatever dignity can be recaptured by mentioning that she is not sure she wants to marry him at all.

Thus, for Clarissa, there seems to be no way out of this vicious circle: the more she blushes, the more confidently Lovelace looks “through” her, and the more confidently he looks, the more she blushes. The worst part of the experience seems to be the pointed signalling of the observer that he knows that the object of his gaze knows that he now knows her presumably “true” feelings. That first “I” of Butte's “I know that you know that I know” emerges in Richardson's novel as a potentially threatening and invasive embodied subjectivity.

Note how similar Richardson's depiction of the mutually enforcing cycle of gazing and blushing is to that of Austen's *Mansfield Park*. There, as Butte demonstrates in his study, Fanny Price is made to blush and “feel wretched” by a particular meaning glance and a smile with which Henry Crawford regards the necklace (a gift of Mary Crawford) that she is wearing at a ball. Even though there is “no second glance to disturb her,” and Henry's object seems “then to be only quietly agreeable,” Fanny cannot “get the better of her embarrassment, heightened as it was by the idea of his perceiving it,” and she has “no composure till he [turns] away to some one else.”⁶ In Butte's reading of this episode,

When Henry looks at Fanny, he endangers her in an extraordinary way ... The danger is not only the smile and the arrogance of anticipated possession it probably implies. It is also the residue of that look that Austen traces to decipher a more complex threat in a series of exchanged gestures—exchanged regardless of whether Fanny wants to be part of that commerce. Fanny cannot regain her composure because her embarrassment is extended in the mirror of



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Henry's eye "by the idea of his perceiving it." Glances are exchanged in the heated air of the ballroom, but they are also exchanged in the interior theatre of subjects who embody each other, even against their will or the will of one. (24-25)

It is precisely the fear of being embodied against her will and thus ceding control of the situation that underlies Clarissa's actions on several occasions when Lovelace seems to read her body language too well for her comfort. During their early days of staying together (shortly after leaving her father's house but before moving into Mrs. Sinclair's residence), she observes in a letter to Anna that she and Lovelace "are both great watchers of each other's eyes; and indeed seem to be more than half afraid of each other." Immediately after making this observation (and perhaps to illustrate it), she tells that Lovelace has offered to bring Clarissa's favourite nurse to stay with her, a proposal that she herself calls "grateful," that is, pleasing. Nevertheless, she ends up declining this pleasing proposal. Here is how it happens:

[Lovelace] saw by my eyes, he said, that he had at last been happy in an expedient which would answer both our wishes. Why, says he, did not I think of it before?—and snatching my hand: shall I write, madam? Shall I send? Shall I go ahead and fetch the good woman herself?

After a little consideration, I told him that it was indeed a grateful motion; but that I apprehended it would put her to a difficulty which she would not be able to get over; and as it would make a woman of her known prudence appear to countenance a fugitive daughter in opposition to her parents ... (460).

Why does Clarissa turn down Lovelace's "grateful motion"? The explanation that she gives him shows both her prudence and consideration for the feelings of others, but it covers up the main reason (or so Clarissa hopes) for her refusal, which is much more complicated. To understand it, we have to step back and consider the scene from Lovelace's point of view.

In spite of what he says, Lovelace does not really want Clarissa's faithful nurse on her side because, to advance his scheme of seduction, he has to keep her friendless and surrounded by his agents. Thus, he has to couch his proposal in such terms that Clarissa would turn it down herself. To accomplish this, he begins by telling her that he can see "by [her] eyes" that she is pleased with his idea. Note that this verbal



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communication is pointedly redundant, for Lovelace could have just *looked* content by seeing that Clarissa likes his offer. That, however, would have meant relying on body language to convey one's feelings, and body language can be misunderstood or just plain overlooked. Lovelace cannot afford any misunderstanding: he needs to let Clarissa know in the most uncertain terms that he has read her thoughts ("you *shall* know that I know that you know"). Once he has *said* it, he proceeds to demonstrate the immediate consequences of having guessed correctly her state of mind. He "snatches" her hand: just the kind of close physical contact, implying impending erotic closeness, that Clarissa is guarding against. He enthusiastically offers to send for the "good woman" right away, nay, to "fetch" her himself—Clarissa's hand still in his ardent grip, a fair indication of what kind of gratitude he would expect in return for his good-will and efficiency.

Lovelace's behaviour is thus precisely calculated to elicit a negative response from Clarissa. He has judged correctly that she would be miserable at the idea of having him, first, reading her thoughts correctly by watching the expression of her eyes, and then presuming on that correct reading to achieve a greater intimacy with her. Of course she says no to the proposal and invents a reason for saying no that is supposed to show Lovelace that she has thoughts and considerations *not* accessible to him. The fear of being read correctly by a man whom she does not trust—of being embodied by the subjectivity of the other against her will—lands her in the trap that Lovelace has carefully prepared.

Lovelace and Clarissa's mental games are thus characterised—not always, but very frequently—by a certain asymmetry. At any given point, one of the players seems to have a much better perspective on the subjectivity of the other, and, even then, that better perspective rarely translates into actually understanding that person. It could be that this see-saw pattern of representing fictional consciousness made Butte reluctant to consider *Clarissa* a strong example of pre-Austenian deep intersubjectivity. Butte implies that for Clarissa, at least, Lovelace's inner world is "'over there,' on the other side of a space across which she [exposes] herself, wittingly or not" (203); and one has to admit that Richardson's novel does convey a strong impression of the ultimate inaccessibility of the subjectivity of the other *in spite* of the abundance of observations about that person's social behaviour and body language.

But, whether one comes strongly on the side of considering *Clarissa* a "deeply intersubjective" novel or not, there is good news in all of this



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for those of us committed to teaching it. Observing the treatment of interpersonal consciousness in Austen and post-Austenian fiction—especially in the novels that have been conceived as “rewritings” (Harris) of *Clarissa*—and then returning to *Clarissa* to figure out if the deep intersubjectivity had been there all along or if we are reading it into the novel emerges as a productive classroom strategy. Deep intersubjectivity is a complex and potentially controversial issue. Let our students argue it out.

Endnotes

- 1 Jocelyn Harris, “Clarissa Lives: Reading Richardson through Re-writings,” in *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Lisa Zunshine and Jocelyn Harris (New York: MLA, forthcoming in 2005).
- 2 George Butte, *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from Moll Flanders to Marnie* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004) vii.
- 3 Butte emphasises that his argument about the lack of deep intersubjectivity in the eighteenth-century novel applies primarily to English literature. This is an important specification because deep intersubjectivity seems to be strongly present in Rousseau’s *Émile* (1762). Fittingly characterised by Allan Bloom as “*Phenomenology of the Mind* posing as Dr. Spock” (introduction, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile or On Education* [New York: Basic Books, 1979] 3), *Émile* contains passages such as the one in which Émile’s tutor, Jean-Jacques, aware both of his pupil’s attraction to Sophie and his embarrassment at thinking that others may be aware of it too, observes Émile sitting at Sophie’s parents’ table unable to look up at the people surrounding him: “Confused, embarrassed, fearful, he no longer dares to look around him for fear of seeing that he is being looked at. Ashamed to let others see through him, he would like to make himself invisible to everyone in order to sate himself with contemplating her without being observed. Sophie, on the contrary, is reassured by Émile’s fear” (415).
- 4 As Harris puts it, her students are “startled to discover that the only author brave enough to press on to a tragic conclusion is the original progenitor of the story, Samuel Richardson. Everybody else wants *Clarissa* to marry Lovelace. Nobody wants them to die . . . So eager are [the later writers] to erase his tragedy that they write whole new books to wrench his authorial authority away. Considering why this might be so opens up larger discussions among the students about tragedy and comedy, the authority of the author, reader response, and differing horizons of expectation over time” (in press).
- 5 Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa or The History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (London: Penguin, 1986) 546.
- 6 Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 248.