

Love and Madness: A Forgery Too True

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Abstract

This article moves from an account of the crime of the Reverend James Hackman, who in 1779 murdered Martha Ray, the mistress of Lord Sandwich, and was subsequently executed for his deed, to the publishing history of the volumes to which his crime gave rise. It then looks in more specific detail at one of these volumes, *Love and Madness: A Story Too True* (1780), which purported to be the authentic correspondence of the murderer and his victim but which was actually an epistolary novel written by an exact contemporary of the young assassin. *Love and Madness* was from the start a "bestseller" but, also from the start, its ambiguous nature was recognized: the literary reviews of the day almost immediately evoked doubts concerning the book's authenticity. Soon, Herbert Croft admitted responsibility for the biographical material on the literary forger Thomas Chatterton that made up one of the letters in the volume. He was, in fact, the author of the entire correspondence, as internal evidence is quick to reveal. Indeed, a study of the novel shows it to have been a self-conscious unveiling of the techniques of forgery in a work that blurred the lines between the authentic and the fraudulent. In so doing, it raised the question of the status of literary forgery, a "genre" that was rife in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. *Love and Madness* mounts a defense, through a complex game of mirrors, of forgery as an art form. Croft calls attention to literary technique and uses a network of intertextual references to structure a reflection on the literary artifact. He has "Hackman" pass in review the major forgeries, literary and otherwise, of the century as well as exhibit a Werther-like despair that finds expression in a morbid catalogue of crimes of passion, suicides and executions. A sort of apogee is reached when Hackman attends the execution of William Dodd, the celebrated forger of a financial bond, an event that allows Croft to extend his system of echoes to yet another *cause célèbre*. Croft's self-reflexive text

seems to use the Chatterton material to announce its own status, while playfully punishing itself with the hanging of Dodd. In an age that saw the flowering of the literary professional, Croft was one of many hack writers working the ground of the profitable spin-off from a sensational public event. Although his novel delves sensitively into the psychological make-up of a young man fascinated with violence and death, it also displays a professional's flair for what will sell. The reactions to his text indicate that by the latter part of the century, artistic merit was establishing itself as a criterion of evaluation that could be separated from factuality. The claims of historicity that had often been used to increase the appeal of purely fictional endeavors and to which Croft has his erudite young clergyman frequently allude seem to be made, in *Love and Madness*, the better to subvert them.

In Which James Hackman Fails to Conclude His Life as Planned

On 7 April 1779, Martha Ray, the mistress of Lord Sandwich, was leaving Covent Garden in the company of her music teacher and companion, Catherine Rinni Galli, when a twenty-six-year-old clergyman of the Church of England approached her from behind, drew a pistol and shot her in the head. He then turned his second pistol on himself, this time only causing a superficial scalp wound. Falling to the ground beside his victim, who had died instantly, he began to beat himself about the head with the butt-end of the firearm, inflicting greater injuries on himself in this way than he had by pulling the trigger.

The assailant's name was James Hackman. Four years earlier, as a young army officer on recruiting service near Lord Sandwich's estate at Hinchingsbrooke, he had been invited by the Earl to dine and had thus made the acquaintance of Miss Ray who for many years had presided over his lordship's household and had borne Earl Sandwich — at this period Lord of the Admiralty — nine children, five of whom survived.

Hackman had fallen — fatally, as it turned out — in love. Although his regiment was soon sent to Ireland and his stay in the region lasted only a few weeks, he found the time to propose marriage to Miss Ray and was refused. Eventually, in the hope of becoming more acceptable to her, he left the army and took orders. He was ordained in February 1779 and granted the living of a church in Norfolk whereupon he once again proposed marriage to Miss Ray and was once again rebuffed. Presumably driven mad with frustrated passion, he then took the terrible step that ended in Martha Ray's death and that led to his own imprisonment and execution.

As may be imagined, Hackman's desperate act excited the interest and commentary of his contemporaries. The newspapers eagerly reported the story of Ray's final hours, tracing the fateful movements of her murderer in thrilling detail. The pathos of Lord Sandwich's reaction to the violent end of the young woman whom he had discovered, educated, and protected for some seventeen years, since she was a mere girl of sixteen, was embroidered upon for the greater delectation of a shocked and sentimentally aroused readership. Hackman's suicide note to his brother-in-law, which he carried in his pocket, seemed to indicate that his original intention had been only to take his own life in full view of the woman who had spurned him. He was to explain his shooting of Miss Ray as a sudden irresistible impulse, behavior bound to receive a great deal of fascinated and often sympathetic analysis in view of the fashionably Werther-like despair that had apparently driven an attractive and promis-

ing young man to the commission of so frenzied and irreparable a deed.

Within months of the deaths of the two protagonists — Hackman was hanged twelve days after the murder — a London bookseller, G. Kearsley, published an anonymous account of the affair which traced the history of the relations between Hackman and Ray, portraying the lady in the case as a fickle temptress and Hackman as her victim.¹ It combined an "authentic" account of the guilty relations of the couple with a legal discussion of madness as a criminal defense, adding an explanation of why the judge in the trial, Sir William Blackstone, had been unable to accept Hackman's plea of insanity.²

The pamphlet oddly combined sensational journalism with legal commentary, the constant in both genres being a defense of Hackman as thwarted sentimental hero. Both in the circumstantial (and questionable) unveiling of events leading to the murder and in the judicial remarks that followed, Hackman was presented as a gentle and dutiful young man, whose benevolent and susceptible heart had made him a slave to love and whose persistence in wishing to marry the kept mistress of another man had been sincere, if misguided. Depravity might all be charged to the account of a twice-fallen woman. Like all men of feeling, "[Hackman] had a hand open as day for melting charity and a tear for pity" and was therefore, according to the author of the pamphlet, deserving of the public's compassion and comprehension:³

Were the public to suffer reason to take the place of passion, pity of resentment, and humanity of vengeance, they would judge a fellow creature (however criminally charged) as they themselves would in his case hope to be judged....⁴

The pamphlet ended with an attack that was rather disingenuous under the circumstances, for it accused the press of too avidly seeking to sat-

isfy the populace with hastily collected news of a sort which pandered to the baser instincts and of misinterpreting both the motivations of the accused and the jurisprudence of the judgment brought to bear upon him. The pamphlet, which was, of course, a prime example of just such pandering, was allegedly motivated by the need to set the record straight.

In Which a Hack Makes Free With Hackman's Name

Then, in March 1780, eleven months after the murder, Kearsley brought out another volume based on the same events. Castigating the earlier pamphlet as a "miserable business," the new work, entitled *Love and Madness: A Story Too True*, claimed to have an even stronger hold on the record: indeed, it purported to be the correspondence of the doomed couple.⁵ Here, in a collection of sixty-five letters, beginning in December 1775 and ending in August 1779 with a letter allegedly written by Hackman's brother-in-law consigning the correspondence to the keeping of Hackman's former commanding officer, was an epistolary account of the affair that had ended in murder at the opera house.

The publication proved that public memory of the previous year's sensation had not grown dim. It went through some nine editions before interest in it began to wane.⁶ It is true that within its pages there lay a second tale likely to contribute to its popularity: a one-hundred-and-twenty-page account (Letter LI) of the life and death of Thomas Chatterton, the author of the forged Rowley poems, whose suicide in 1770 at the age of seventeen had triggered a controversy that would only reach its apogee in the following decade. In this long letter, "Hackman" becomes the historian of his exact contemporary Chatterton of whose early death the public had been reminded by the recent publication (February 1777) of the Rowley poems and by the furious controversy

concerning their status as fifteenth-century artifacts that ensued. *Love and Madness*, in fact the brainchild of yet another youthfully impecunious literary neophyte, Herbert Croft, thus cashed in on two widely publicized events: the killing at Covent Garden with its redolence of sex and betrayal in high life and the literary career of that early victim of critical neglect whose works were soon to crystallize the debate on literary authenticity.⁷

Herbert Croft's forged Hackman/Ray correspondence contains within it the fullest account made to date of one of the era's foremost forgeries. Croft has Ray set Hackman the task of investigating Chatterton's career by way of employing him lest his unoccupied passions "flame out and consume [him]."⁸ Assuring his gentle taskmaster that every syllable of the story he is about to tell is true, Hackman pours forth the fruit of a wide-ranging investigation into the Chatterton's Bristol and London life, pronouncing on his *modus operandi* the following judgment in which the ambiguities of the term "forgery" are discussed:

For Chatterton's sake, the English language should add another word to its Dictionary; and should not suffer the same term to signify a crime for which a man suffers the most ignominious punishment, and the deception of ascribing false antiquity of two or three centuries to compositions for which the author's name deserves to live forever. (p. 138)

This bold defense of Chattertonian practice becomes, in view of Croft's own fictitious authenticities, a self-justificatory proclamation. It pleads for a distinction to be made between literary forgery and that of the monetary kind, anticipating in so doing the relative indulgence with which the disputable status of *Love and Madness* was met by contemporary opinion. Some attentive readers certainly suspected that, far from being the legitimate correspondence of the dead couple, the volume might actually be another example of that popular literary genre, the epistolary

novel. Nonetheless, *Love and Madness* enjoyed a friendly and even somewhat laudatory critical reception.

Horace Walpole, finding himself acquitted in the long letter on Chatterton included in *Love and Madness* of the charge that he had hastened the death of the Bristol lad, pointed out the unlikelihood of Hackman's letters to Ray being released for publication by the bereaved (and unflatteringly portrayed) Lord Sandwich who would presumably have been in possession of the correspondence after the death of his mistress. Although this experienced man of letters, connoisseur of medieval architecture and lore, himself founder of the Gothic literary genre, doubts the provenance of the letters, he finds them well-executed and declares that they enter sensitively into the character of the future murderer except insofar as the lengthy investigation of Chatterton is concerned:

... is there a glimpse of probability that a being so frantic should have gone to Bristol and sifted Chatterton's sister and others with as much cool curiosity as Mr Lort [the antiquary] could do? and at such a moment? Besides he murdered Miss Wray, I think, in March; my printed defence was not at all dispersed before the preceding January or February, nor do I conceive that Hackman could ever see it. There are notes by the editor, who has certainly seen it — but I rather imagine that the editor, whoever he is, composed the whole volume.⁹

Walpole was not the only reader to have doubts. The reviewer of *Love and Madness* in the *Gentleman's Magazine* asserted that "in this age of literary fraud we are not surprised that a tale so bloody should give rise to a suppositious correspondence":

The parties, who are the late unhappy Mr Hackman and Miss Ray, it is needless to say, never penned a line of these sixty-five letters, except the fifty-seventh, which was printed in

Sessions-Paper. Yet, granting the imposition, and considering only their contents, they have some intrinsic merit.¹⁰

The *Gentleman's* reviewer, like Walpole, considers the light thrown on the Chatterton case the most interesting part of the book, perspicaciously suggesting that the forger of this correspondence would quite logically endeavor to extenuate Chatterton's analogous misdemeanors. The *Monthly Review* was more circumspect, delivering its judgment of the letters with a certain tell-tale playfulness:

Of their authenticity we can say little; for though we profess ourselves critics, we pretend not to be conjurers. [...] If this be all "borrowed personage," as Mr. Walpole expresses it, it is so ingenious a fiction, that the Author will be praised, perhaps, for his abilities, even by those who may find themselves inclined to impeach his honesty.¹¹

Indeed, doubts concerning the likelihood that "the wretched lunatic," to use Walpole's epithet for Hackman, would devote himself to a study of Chatterton while conducting a passionate epistolary exchange with his beloved were so great that Croft eventually admitted, in an editorial note to the ninth edition, his responsibility for the Chatterton material, although he continued to claim that the other letters were bona fide. His name was henceforward associated with *Love and Madness*, as demonstrated by disapprobatory remarks, made in 1781, by Dr. Johnson concerning Croft's mingling of fact and fiction.¹²

In Which Croft Displays His Craft

Croft's association with the Hackman/Ray correspondence was now established, so that when the letters came to be re-published in 1895 the long and by now recognizably extraneous Chatterton material was removed and confined to an Appendix in order that the love letters might be

read uninterruptedly. Curiously, Gilbert Burgess, the editor of this edition, stands the Croft forgery theory on its head by suggesting that Croft's hints of broader involvement in the creation of *Love and Madness* were an unscrupulous attempt to glean glory from the success of the volume. Burgess praises the letters as a veritable "human document" with all the marks of "a real living correspondence" and explains that he has removed, in two letters previous to number LI, spurious references to Chatterton which Croft introduced in order to give verisimilitude to his assertion that the fifty-first epistle was written by Hackman!¹³

Whether or not Burgess's assertions of genuineness were sincere or, like Croft's before him, a ploy to imbue the text with a thrilling shimmer of factuality, remains open to question. What is clear from internal evidence is that *Love and Madness*, far from seriously attempting to pose as historical chronicle, on the contrary, presents an apology for and a defense of forgery as authentic literature. Throughout his novel, Croft calls attention to the purely literary techniques he employs and, through a network of intertextual references, structures a reflection on the literary construct. The long Chatterton section is only the most obvious thus to consecrate the legitimacy of the artifact. Croft invents a Hackman who is doubly the double: as literary detective, he stands in for the author; as suicide, he intrepidly follows the trail of his hero, Chatterton, into the latter's death chamber where he experiences the "most exquisite sensations":

My visit of devotion was paid in the morning, I remember; but I was not myself again all day. To look round the room; to say to myself, here stood his bed; there the poison was set; in that window he loitered for some hours before he retired to his last rest, envying the meanest passenger, and wishing he could exchange his own feelings and intellects for their manual powers and insensibility. (p. 198)

Of course, Hackman-the-potential-suicide's contemplation of the room in which Chatterton died creates a strong literary motif. As the Romantics were to prove and as Peter Ackroyd in our own century has demonstrated once again, the premature death of the "Marvellous Boy" exercises an irresistible attraction over the literary mind.¹⁴ Croft has Hackman enter into an "exchange" of literary "feelings" with his subject, passing in review not only Chatterton's impositions but the major falsifications, literary and otherwise, of the century, from Psalmanazar to Parnell to the Douglas Cause and to Ossian, thus establishing Chatterton (and collaterally himself) within a tradition of the grandiosely fraudulent.

The Chatterton pages of *Love and Madness* are both journalistic scoop and thematic underpinning. Indeed, Croft would later be attacked for the way in which he obtained and profited from the documentation on which these pages were based.¹⁵ However, by including them in his story he was setting Hackman's itinerary within a clear literary context: Hackman, too, is a poetic soul frustrated by the remoteness of his heart's desire and tempted by self-destruction. From the epigraphs that embellish the title page (Aphra Benn's Oroonoko confessing that "the deed was mine" and Othello's acknowledgment of having loved "not wisely, but too well") to the many texts quoted, referred to or discussed in the course of the epistolary exchange between Hackman and his "Laura," the intertext allows Croft both to pursue thematic development and to keep the issue of forgery before the reader's mind. Hackman sends, for example, the forged Ossian poems to Ray, accompanied by the following commentary:

They abuse Macpherson for calling them translations. If he alone be the author of them, why does he not say so, and claim the prize of fame? I protest I would. They who do not refuse their admiration to the compositions, still think themselves justified to abuse Macpher-

son; for pretending not to be the author of what they still admire. Is this not strange? (p. 27)

More significant still is a discussion of Defoe's use of Alexander Selkirk's true-life experience as the inspiration for *Robinson Crusoe*. Hackman explores the paradox of Selkirk's having been denounced for imitating Defoe when, in fact, it was Defoe who had worked from Selkirk's papers. The Crusoe syndrome has, of course, inspired modern literary theorists.¹⁶ It is therefore interesting to see Croft favoring it as an example of the difficulty of separating experience from creative transformation and history from narration. Inevitably, the reader is led to inquire whether the real James Hackman "owned" his passion or even his death any more than Selkirk "owned" his sequestration on the isle of Juan Fernandez.

Encompassed as they are by a network of literary reference and cross-reference, Croft's Ray and Hackman are textual creatures. They set off their dalliance to the ballad of "Auld Robin Gray" which sings of a dissatisfied young wife chained to an ageing husband and repeat to each other the foreshadowing lyrics of Handel's *Jephtha* ("Some dire event hangs o'er our heads").¹⁷ A number of letters are centered on Hackman's fascination with *Werther* which Ray hesitates to send him in Ireland lest he follow its hero's suicidal example. Paradoxically, she highlights through her reluctance to give him the volume the very influence she wishes to obscure.¹⁸

Indeed, Hackman's preoccupation with murder and suicide forms an intertextual subcategory of conspicuous density. Contemporary readers of *Love and Madness* were aware of the fate of the volume's correspondents (it carried, after all, the subtitle "In a Series of Letters between Parties, whose names would perhaps be mentioned, were they less known, or less lamented") and would be particularly sensitive to the morbid catalogue Hackman was establishing

as his unhappy passion drew closer to a paroxysm of which only he and his beloved remained dramatically unaware. Indeed, the number of references to such events struck the reviewer of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1780: "With some amusing anecdotes this writer has interwoven so many horrid catastrophes (similar to his own) of murders, executions, &c. [...] that great part of the book resembles an ordinary's account, or a Sessions-paper."¹⁹

Interestingly, no distinction is drawn between real crimes of passion and literary ones. Letter XIV tells in loving detail the fictional story of Jerningham's Faldoni and Teresa who committed double suicide in a chapel (the frustrated lovers tied ribbons around the triggers of their pistols and each pulled the ribbon attached to the other's gun), while Letter XXIX recounts the true tale of a Mr. Boardingham of Flamborough who was murdered by his wife and her lover. Letter XXXVIII recounts how a (presumably historical) Mrs. Dixon of Inniskillen poisoned herself because unhappily wed to an older man whom she could not abide, while Letter XLIX memorializes the footman Empson who shot a serving maid who refused his offer of marriage. Most significant is the tale told in Letter XLVIII of the real-life Italian, Ceppi, who forced entry into the bedroom of a Mrs Knightly, the object of his unrequited love, murdering her and then attempting to take his own life. Ceppi later claimed that his plan had not been to harm the lady but to shoot himself before her remorseful eyes. Hackman comments:

It appears, I am afraid, from all the circumstances, that, whatever his despair meant with regard to his own life, he certainly was determined to take away her's [sic]. How unaccountably must Nature have mixed him up! Besides the criminality and brutality of the business, the folly of it strikes *me*. What — because the person on whom I have fixed *my* affections, has robbed me of happiness by withdrawing her's, shall I let her add to the injury,

by depriving me of existence also in this world, and of everything in the next? (p. 119)

Here the contemporary reader would have enjoyed a frisson of recognition as the unsuspecting Hackman piously rejected the plea that he himself would eventually make in court.

Furthermore, this future hangman's fodder is fixated on executions. Letter XLIV displays his curiosity concerning the execution of one Peter Tolosa who murdered the Frenchwoman with whom he lived. Had he been in town at the time, Hackman claims, "I believe I should have attended the last moments of a man who could murder the object of his love" (p. 103). On the other hand, he does not miss the last moments of the celebrated Reverend William Dodd, convicted of having forged a bond and executed, after a tempestuous campaign to save him, in 1777.

In defending himself against the potential charge of morbid fascination, Hackman tries to distance himself from the likes of George Selwyn or James Boswell, well known for their inability to resist macabre spectatorship, but he admits to a powerful, if involuntary, empathy with the wretched prisoner. Indeed, he claims that at the sight of Dodd's sufferings he found himself "in a certain manner accompanying his body with the motion of my own; as you have seen people wreathing and twisting and biassing themselves, after a bowl which they have just delivered" (p. 106).

In his description of Dodd's hanging, while premonitorily identifying with the experience of the condemned man, Hackman expands both upon the general indifference to the solemnity of death and upon those, such as newspapermen, who profit by the suffering of those brought low:

Still less do we at this moment (for the printer always gets the start of the hangman, and many a man has bought his own dying speech

on his return to Newgate by virtue of a reprieve) — still less do we ask ourselves, whether the wretch, who, at the moment we hear this (which ought to strike us an) awful sound, finds the halter of death about his neck, and now takes the longing farewell, and now hears the horses whipped and encouraged to draw from under him forever, the cart which he now, now, now feels depart from his lingering feet — whether this wretch really deserved to die more than we. (p. 107-108)

This is a curious homily delivered by just such a wretch in a work taking just such advantage of just such a fate. But are not the disingenuous denial, the warning against excess that both condemns and entices, the titillating injunction against excitation constants of the sentimental novel to which, after all, *Love and Madness* owes a certain generic allegiance? Indeed, in this regard Croft's novel is exemplary: its two protagonists are partisans of the most rigorous sexual morality but give in to temptation at the first opportunity. Vows of chastity and protestations of duty cannot withstand the opportunity of a snowstorm that strands the visiting Hackman at his noble host's abode, so that a term normally associated with purity ("snow") is ironically turned into a codeword for the erotic encounter. At the same time, Hackman displays all the properties of the Man of Feeling: overweening sensitivity, exacerbated gratitude, plangent regret, demonstrative benevolence, the whole compounded on occasion with a physical delicacy bordering on neurasthenia.

Furthermore, Croft's fictionalization of real events amply employs narrative mechanisms associated with authorial control (redundancy of reference, flashback and foreshadowing, suspense and pathos) while carefully creating the illusion of epistolary spontaneity. Croft uses flashback, for example, in Hackman's recollections of his first sight of Ray, while the explosive final encounter of the lovers is extensively foreshadowed: Hackman compares his passions to

gunpowder, while Ray unsuspectingly tells her beloved that she would be content to die at his hand. The future murderer/suicide pathetically (and prophetically) wonders at the beginning of 1776 where he will be in 1777 or 1778 or 1779, concluding, “in Misery or bliss, in life or death, in heaven or hell — wherever *you* are, there may H be also!” (p. 23).

Spontaneity, on the other hand, is suggested by the technique of the lost letter which calls upon a participating readership to reconstruct the content of missing epistles or, in the case of a particularly inflammatory *billet doux* which Hackman instructs Ray to destroy, to supply censored ardor from its own imaginative store. A favorite narrative ploy, sustaining the self-conscious thrust of Croft’s text, is the letter-within-a-letter. This device allows Croft’s correspondents to “eavesdrop” on the correspondence of others, from the humbly forlorn Mrs Dixon of Inniskillen to the equally unhappy but far more august Duchess of Marlborough, just as the reader is “eavesdropping” on theirs. As might be expected, the love complaint and the suicide note are specially favored among these interpolated messages, suggesting strata of infinite regress beneath the surface of the primary text.

In Which We Conclude

In a letter written after his crime, Croft’s Hackman neatly bridges the gap between life and literature. Tracing the events of the fatal evening, his frenzied tracking of Miss Ray at the Admiralty, his shadowing of her to Covent Garden, his access of jealous rage upon seeing her in converse with an unknown gentleman, his fetching of the brace of pistols, his vigil in a tavern hard by the theater, he writes, “At last arrived the end of the play, and the beginning of my tragedy” (p. 276). Martha Ray is about to step out of the theater and into the pages of the book that Herbert Croft has so cunningly prepared for her. Her murderer is about to exchange the sorry bungle

of his biographical end for the happier status of romantic hero. The novel is announced, its genre codified, its imprimatur affixed, its pedigree playfully deposited.

Capitalizing on the contemporary fascination with criminal biographies and, in particular, with the sub-genre of “authentic” confessions emanating from condemned cells, Croft brings Hackman’s voice back from beyond the felon’s grave, endowing his tale with the admonitory power possessed by those who have known the most extreme of human experiences.²⁰ The lone suicide note discovered in the historical Hackman’s pocket in 1779 has engendered an epistolary symphony that has transported his story from the realm of news to that of novel. Teasingly announcing his forgery with the Chatterton interpolation, Croft symbolically punishes it in the scene of William Dodd’s execution, while once again harnessing his narrative to a *cause célèbre* that had captured public attention only three years previously.²¹

If Croft’s use of the murder allowed him to explore with an artist’s sensitivity a young man’s fascination with violence and death, as Maximilian Novak suggests, it also displayed the professional’s flair for the tale that would sell.²² In an age that saw the flowering of the literary professional, Croft was hardly alone in profitably “spinning off” from topical scandal or from transient fame. Indeed, in the period between 1779 and 1780 two separate forgeries purporting to be the work of the late Lord Lyttelton were published in order to capitalize on his lordship’s recent death. Kearsley was involved in one of these publications. The hack writer William Coombe, who produced the other, *Letters of the Late Lord Lyttelton*, for the bookseller Bew, had already written, in 1779, *Letters Supposed to Have Been Written by Yorick and Eliza* at a time when the principals, Lawrence Sterne and Mrs Eliza Draper, were dead but public interest in them was still very much alive.²³ By the 1790’s, it has been suggested, forgery was “not only a recog-

nized kind of event but something which bordered on a literary genre with its own kinds of rules and aspirations."²⁴

Croft, in 1780, seems boldly to have penned an apologia for this species of writing. He understood that "to forge" is to make, to invent, to produce, to create, as Nick Groom has it, a hybrid form of representation that is at once true and false.²⁵ Thus his novel spans the gap between the lived and the imagined, the verifiable and the fabricated or, rather, it challenges the separation of what authority condones and what art conceives. In 1755, Samuel Johnson had defined "forger" firstly as "one who makes or forms" and secondly as "one who counterfeits any thing; a falsifier." Croft amalgamates these two functions in *Love and Madness*, his self-reflexive text advertising as it admonishes the transgression of generic frontiers. He lived, after all, in what may have been the Age of Forgery, and he brandished his adherence to the forgers' brotherhood with a combination of playfulness and insolence, inspiration and nonchalance, that in itself was a meas-

ure of the aptness of his belonging to it.

Croft's text speaks out of a time when the concept of property was beginning to be applied not only to the material product of a literary enterprise but also to its immaterial content, its ideas and artistic worth. It was a moment when the notion of intrinsic merit was gradually separating itself from that of authority, although it would take the Romantics to elevate fully the prerogatives of genius over those of mere factuality.²⁶ Claims of historical authenticity by authors of literary texts, which had served to maintain the ambiguous status of fictional forms from Defoe through the forgery-condemning Walpole himself, were flourished by Croft the better to be dispensed with. In *Love and Madness*, he subverts authenticity while pretending to assert it, as if Chatterton's unsent protest to Walpole had actually fallen into Croft's forging hands:

*thou mayst call me Cheat —
Say, didst thou ne'er indulge in such Deceit?
Who wrote Otranto?*²⁷

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NOTES

1. *The Case and Memoirs of the Late Rev. Mr James Hackman, and of his Acquaintance with the Late Miss Martha Reay*, London: G. Kearsley, 1779. In a "Dedication" to Lord Sandwich, the author of the pamphlet claims to be motivated by a desire "to prevent imposition by any spurious edition of the case" and to have heard the story of the murderer's relations with Miss Ray from his own mouth while he was in prison.
2. Hackman admitted that he had wished to commit self-murder. The commentator, manifestly of the legal profession, explains that any death incurred in the act of intentional self-murder must also be considered murder. Hackman's having taken up a brace of pistols posed a particular problem: he claimed that he had done so only as a means of making certain of his own death should his first shot miss. However, at the moment that he used one of the two pistols against Miss Ray, it had to be considered that he intended, if only momentarily, to harm her. The contention made in this pamphlet that Ray actually encouraged Hackman in his amorous pursuit and that she entertained sexual relations with him remains unproven and is deemed extremely unlikely by Lord Sandwich's biographer, George Martelli in *Jemmy Twitcher: A Life of the Fourth Earl of Sandwich, 1718-1792*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1962. Martelli bases his argument against a putative love affair on the brevity and the public circumstances of the acquaintanceship that existed between Hackman and Ray.
3. *The Case*, p. 17.
4. *The Case*, p. vii.
5. [Sir Herbert Croft], *Love and Madness: A Story Too True (In a Series of Letters between Parties, whose Names would perhaps be mentioned, were they less known, or less lamented)*, London: G. Kearsley, 1780.
6. John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 5, London: Nichols and Bentley, 1817, p. 204, mentions seven editions. The ninth edition is referred to by Gilbert Burgess, the editor of a nineteenth-century re-publication of the letters. By 1809, the letters had made their way to France where they appeared under the title *Les Fureurs de l'Amour*, Paris: Anne-Denise Petit, 1809.

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7. Chatterton was born in 1750, Hackman in 1752 and Herbert Croft in 1751. Hence, *Love and Madness* is the work of a man not yet thirty.
8. Croft, p. 125. Further page references to *Love and Madness* will be made in the text.
9. Horace Walpole in a letter to the Reverend William Cole, 13 March 1780 in *Correspondence*, ed. W.S.Lewis, vol. 2, London: Oxford University Press, 1937, 155-156. The "defence" referred to by Walpole was his own against charges that he contributed to Chatterton's death by contumacious statements concerning him. Variations in the spelling of Martha Ray's name such as those found here and elsewhere are unsurprising in an eighteenth-century context.
10. *Gentleman's Magazine* (June 1780), 287-288. Letter LVII was Hackman's suicide note to his brother-in-law Charles Booth.
11. *Monthly Review* (April 1780), p. 326.
12. In a conversation with the poet Young about *Love and Madness* recorded in Boswell's diary for 2 June 1781, Johnson claimed that, "fiction should not be introduced where there is a basis of truth." Both Boswell and Young agreed with this principle. James Boswell, *Laird of Auchinleck: 1778-1782*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993, 373.
13. Gilbert Burgess (ed), "Introduction," *The Love-Letters of Mr H & Miss R: 1775-1779*, London: William Heinemann, 1895, p. xvi.
14. Peter Ackroyd not only takes his reader into Chatterton's death chamber but takes him into the dying Chatterton's mind in his 1986 novel *Chatterton*. Nick Groom, in *The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature*, London: Picador, 2003, conducts an in-depth investigation into the nature of the fascination exercised by Chatterton over the Romantics and disputes, as Ackroyd did before him, his status as a suicide.
15. The attack was led by Robert Southey in the *Monthly Review* for November 1799. Southey accused Croft of having obtained material from Chatterton's mother and sister under false pretenses, of having printed it without their permission and of having enjoyed large profits while the family remained unremunerated. Croft also stood accused of having kept the material for twenty-one years. Southey himself later published three volumes of Chatterton's work and gave the profits to Chatterton's sister. See the article on Croft in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1888 ed., p. 109.
16. See Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. See also Ian Haywood, *Faking It: Art and the Politics of Forgery*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987.
17. Lord Sandwich was many years the senior of his mistress. Hinchbrooke was known for its amateur musical events, and Handel's oratorio was among Ray's favorites. She was a talented singer and harpsichordist. His lordship, during these private entertainments, was known to take the kettledrums.
18. The *Werther* model is examined in Maximilian E. Novak, "The Sensibility of Sir Herbert Croft in *Love and Madness* and the 'Life of Edward Young'" in *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*, ed. Paul Korshin, vol. 8, New York: AMS Press, 1977. Novak sees Croft's text as an important "exercise in abnormal psychology bordering on madness" (p. 190) and analyses the plethora of literary allusions in the letters as part of the presentation of Hackman as "a person who sees his world through examples, both literary and real...", p. 193.

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19. *Gentleman's*, p. 288.
20. See the chapter entitled "Criminality and the Double Discourse" in Davis, *Factual Fictions*: "It is through the moment of execution that the ordinary felon becomes transformed into a speaker of truth," 126. Contemporary criminal biographies include: *Memoirs of James Bolland* (1772), *Genuine Memoirs of the Life of Joshua Compton* (1778), *Genuine Memoirs of the Lives of George and Joseph Weston* (1782), *Authentic Memoirs of William Wynne Ryland* (1784), *Genuine and Impartial Memoirs of Francis Fonton* (1790), as listed in Paul Baines, *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, 128ff.
21. In a study that takes as its point of origin the chronological convergence, in February 1777, of the publication of Chatterton's poems and the conviction of the Reverend Dodd (executed the following June), Paul Baines has shown how literary and criminal forgery criss-crossed each other at this period of history. He demonstrates how at a period in which the notion of literary property was of growing significance, because of the professionalization of the world of letters, fraudulent claims of authorship might well be analogously compared to financial malversation. Paul Baines, "The Macaroni Parson and the Marvellous Boy," in *Angelaki* 1:2 (Winter 93/94). Baines points out that Dodd's falsified bond came to involve literary activity, in particular the unacknowledged sermon and letters that Dr Johnson provided for Dodd. Chatterton's literary forgery involved the marketing of false relics and papers from the Rowley "find."
22. Novak, p. 190.
23. Harlan W Hamilton, *Doctor Syntax: A Silhouette of William Coombe, Esq.* Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1969.
24. Baines, *House of Forgery*, p. 4.
25. Groom, 15. The same author points out the double acceptance of "forger" in Johnson's *Dictionary*, p. 48.
26. Ian Haywood, *Faking It: Art and the Politics of Forgery*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987, p. 56.
27. Haywood points out that *The Castle of Otranto* was presented as the translation of an Italian manuscript dating from 1529 and "discovered in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England." He quotes Chatterton's undelivered jibe, 58-59. Nick Groom adds an ultimate twist to the story: he claims that the dead Chatterton was himself the victim of a forger who hoped to turn his tragically early death to profit: he claims that the lines by Chatterton quoted above were actually the work of his biographer, John Dix. Groom, p. 157.

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