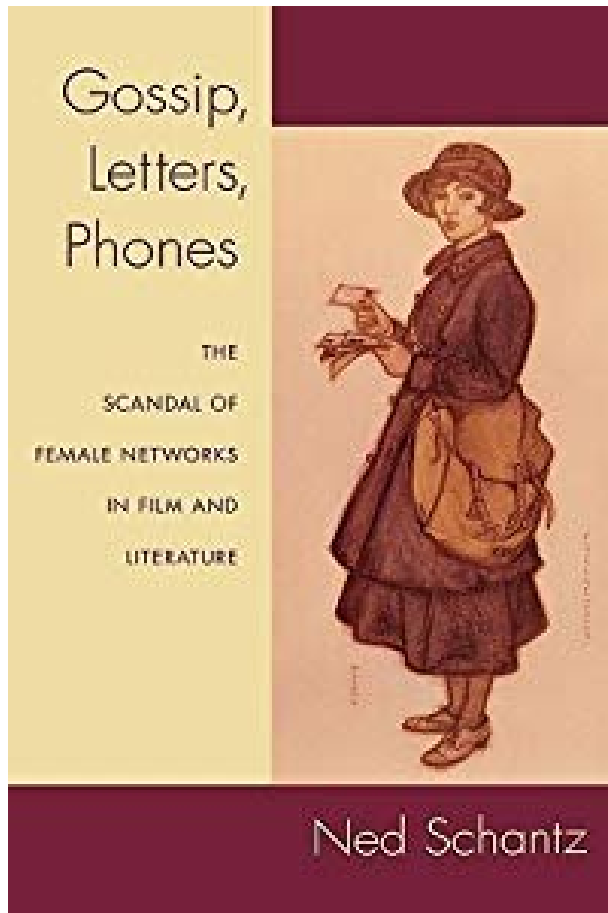


# Gossip, Letters, Phones: The Scandal of Female Networks in Film and Literature



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Although female communication networks abound in many contexts and have received a good measure of critical scrutiny, no study has addressed their unique significance within narrative culture writ large. Filling this conspicuous gap, Ned Schantz presents a lively exploration of the phenomenon, resituating novelistic culture as central even as he ranges across media and the myriad technologies that attend them. Charting the emergence of female networks via the most prominent modes of communication--gossip, letters, and phones--Schantz brings his study to life with unconventional interpretations of classic British novels and popular Hollywood films spanning multiple genres and time periods. With incisive readings of *Clarissa*, *Emma*, and *Evelina*, Schantz shows how gossip both draws sympathy and is repressed by dominant male culture in a recurrent pattern of avowal and disavowal. The epistolary novel added a rhythm to communication that was generative of fantasy, which in turn informed "telephonic film," a development depicted in analyses of movies such as *Sorry, Wrong Number*; *Vertigo*; *Terminator*; and *You've Got Mail*. Schantz highlights the way the telephone works as a structuring device, not merely a prop, one that shapes the plot and suggests provocative formal implications. While this study traverses an uncanny realm of lost messages and false suitors, telepathy and artificial intelligence, locked rooms and time-traveling stalkers, these occult concerns only confirm the importance of female communication at its most basic level. Illuminating and accessible--*Gossip, Letters, Phones* reveals female networks as one of narrative's most supple and persistent elements in literature and cinema.