

FEMALE LEARNING IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE:
ADVOCATES AND INSTITUTIONS

by

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Abstract

FEMALE LEARNING IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE: ADVOCATES AND INSTITUTIONS

by

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Schooling for girls begins in the early modern West as intellectuals make the case that women possess the same human characteristics as men do; that they are capable of rational thought; and that they can and should be educated. Religious and civil officials, founders of schools, teaching orders, school masters and mistresses accept the new characterization of women, finding girls to be worthy of education and apt pupils. They create day and boarding schools for girls across Europe, announcing them as ideal training grounds for literacy, academic training, domestic skills, and quite importantly, religious and moral training. The founding of the first schools for girls follows after more than a century of discussion of women's worth, carried on in a *querelle des femmes*, a "debate about women," that raised questions about the nature and capacity of women, commonly characterized as the "weaker sex."

In large part, a double-edged fear about endangering female chastity by exposing girls to ideas contained in books and removing them from the home to attend schools was addressed by humanists and other authors to allow for a greater acceptance of female learning, and soon after, girls' schooling. Influential figures, like Juan Luis Vives,

Desiderius Erasmus, Johannes Amos Comenius, and François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon wrote against the traditional view that barred women from learning, strongly advocating education for girls and women highlighting many benefits for the individual and society. Many of the first founders of girls' schools and teachers recognized and credited the earlier advocates for their works and ideas, which they implemented in the classroom.

This dissertation examines both the intellectual tradition of the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries that opens the way to the schooling of women, and the emergence of the first schools, both religious and secular, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It culminates with the examination of the plan for co-education that the late eighteenth-century advocate, Mary Wollstonecraft proposed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which forms a bridge between the early modern and modern conceptions of girls' schooling. Her revolutionary call for equal education as a means to human development and a just society, while unpopular in her day, came to fruition in parts of the West in the decades following her death.

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Introduction

Schooling for girls begins in early modern Europe (1400-1700).¹ Prior to 1400, it virtually did not exist: not in the first Mediterranean civilizations; not in classical Greece, and probably not in Hellenistic Greece; not in Rome, not in China, Japan, or India; and not in Islamic civilization.² Girls schooling begins in the West as intellectuals make the case that women possess the same human characteristics as men do; that they are capable of rational thought; and that they can and should be educated. Religious and civil officials, founders of schools, teaching orders, school masters and mistresses accept the new characterization of women, finding girls to be worthy of education and apt pupils.

¹ Paul F. Grendler in his masterly study, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: 1400-1600*, documents a few girls' schools in Quattrocento northern Italian cities (in Venice, Turin, Verona, Genoa, Florence and Faenza). According to Grendler, these limited and very small schools which catered to girls from artisanal families were exceptions to the rule that Renaissance schooling was for upper- and middle-class males. Grendler's reliable information is largely extracted from school master's and mistresses' tax records. More frequently than in schools, he finds that some girls of the upper- and middle- classes were educated in the home by family members or visiting tutors. Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300 - 1600* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 87, 96. A recent study on schooling in late medieval Germany confirms this pattern: David L. Sheffler, *Schools and Schooling in Late Medieval Germany: Regensburg, 1250-1500* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 71-77. Sheffler finds that girls were excluded from schools run by clerics and the Latin grammar schools. Also, while he does not find an explicit prohibition of girls attending vernacular schools, he finds no record of their admittance either. Instead, he asserts that female learning took place in the home or in convents: Sheffler, *Schooling in Late Medieval Germany*, 73. For the purposes of this study, the origins of girls' schooling as a pan-European phenomenon, starts in the mid-sixteenth century. Schooling for boys existed in most of the world's major ancient civilizations for which manuscript sources exist. Typically, male pupils came from the elite and middling classes, and were not very numerous in proportion to the unschooled masses of boys and girls.

² In all the major world civilizations mentioned here, the model of private lessons in the home prevailed through the ages for girls; the preservation of female chastity and the privileging of male access to certain disciplines like law and theology required segregation of the sexes. There is some evidence regarding the registrations of two girls at third-century gymnasias in Oxyrhynchus (Egypt) and one record of a girl going to school in fifth-century BCE, Rome. See: Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 35-36; Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: from Alexander to Cleopatra* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984). During the Tokugawa (Edo) period, 1600-1868, schools for girls in urban Japan emerged independently and slightly behind the European initiative. The *terakoya* or "temple schools" were urban schools for boys and girls of the merchant class. Girls were excluded from the *han* schools which limited enrollment to the sons of the *samurai* class. In urban and rural areas, elite Japanese girls received lessons in the home. On Japan, see: R.P. Dore, *Tokugawa Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); Tetsuya Kobayashi, "Tokugawa Education as a Foundation of Modern Education in Japan," *Comparative Education Review* 9, no. 3 (1965).

They create day and boarding schools for girls across Europe, announcing them as ideal training grounds for literacy, academic training, domestic skills, and quite importantly, religious and moral training. This dissertation examines both the intellectual tradition of the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries that opens the way to the schooling of women, and the emergence of the first schools, both religious and secular, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

To say that schooling for girls does not exist before the early modern era in Europe does not mean that some girls and women did not acquire an education – even an advanced education.³ Some few did. Well-known are the cases, in antiquity, of the Roman Cornelia, the Chinese Ban Zhao, the Alexandrian Hypatia: all of these were educated by their fathers or in their fathers' learned circles. That pattern continues in the West even into the early modern period studied here: Christine de Pisan, the Italian women humanists, Margaret, the daughter of Thomas More, and many others received their advanced education from fathers, brothers, uncles, or, in a few later cases, tutors

³ Learned women existed in all the world civilizations mentioned above; they were educated in the home by family members, and by private tutors, monks, masters, or husbands. Studies consulted for women's education through history and around the world include: Mary Backus Rankin, "The Emergence of Women at the End of the Ch'ing: The Case of Ch'iu Chin," in *Women in Chinese Society*, ed. Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 39-66; Asma Barlas, *"Believing in Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qu'ran* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Jonathan P. Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period," in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 143-157; T.A. Bolarin, *History of Education in Africa* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Olu-Akin, 1994); S.P. Chaube, *A History of Education in India: A Critical Survey of the Growth and Problems of Indian Education during Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Times* (Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal Beni Madho, 1965); Qijia Guo, *A History of Chinese Educational Thought* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2006); Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, *Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste, and Class in India* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Susan Mann, "Education of Daughters in the Mid-Ch'ing Period," in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 19-49; Julie Leininger Pycior, *The History of Education in Latin America*, vol. 3 (New York: Institute for Research in History and the Haworth Press, 1982).

under the supervision of household elders.⁴ As late as the seventeenth century, in urging the education of girls, the Dutch author Anna Maria van Schurman assumes that such pupils will be educated at home.⁵ The learned woman of this period was a lady of elite society who had leisure and financial means to permit her studies. Her learning was conducted in private, and largely her writing had limited circulation, remaining in private networks. The existence of the learned lady in Antiquity and the medieval period did not rupture ingrained ideas about the inferiority of the female intellect in society. Instead, the female scholar was deemed extraordinary, exceptional, even, other-worldly, far transcending her nature and becoming masculine.

Medieval Christian Europe offered another possibility for women in pursuit of knowledge: the convent, an institution that required obedience to God, rather than obedience to fathers and husbands. Female monasteries from their earliest years offered some few women access to libraries and mentors.⁶ That tradition begins when Saint

⁴ Chapter One of this study describes the education and circumstances of learning for these women and others in late medieval and early modern Europe.

⁵ Female learning in the domestic setting is well-studied. Key works include: Jean Brink, ed., *Female Scholars: a Tradition of Learned Women before 1800* (Montréal: Eden Press Women's Publication, 1980); Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Margaret L. King and Albert Jr. Rabil, trans. and eds., *Her Immaculate Hand: Selected Works by and about the Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy.*, (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1983); Patricia H. Labalme, ed. *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1980); Patricia Ranft, *Women in Western Intellectual Culture, 600-1500*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Phyllis H. Stock, *Better Than Rubies: a History of Women's Education* (New York: Putnam, 1978).

⁶ Studies treating convent life and learning include: Giulia Barone, "Society and Women's Religiosity, 750-1450," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 42-71; Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Joann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Joann McNamara and Suzanne F. Wemple, "Sanctity and Power: Medieval Women," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Wybren Scheepmsma, "Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries: The 'Modern Devotion', The Canonesses

Jerome, the translator of the Bible, guided the studies at the Bethlehem convent with Saint Paula in the late fourth –to early fifth century. He sketched the parameters of convent education in 403CE, in a plan he drew up for Paula’s grand-daughter, who was destined for the convent (she was also named Paula). Jerome described two crucial aspects of this new spiritual and feminine education: the cloister to preserve her chastity, and literacy in Greek and Latin to read the “manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures.”⁷ This “cloistered” course he offered as the best preparative for a handmaid of Christ to ascend the “heavenly throne.”⁸ In his letter written ten years later to a young girl Pacatula, on the subject of “feminine training,” Jerome revisits the idea of separation, admonishing that “females should only mix with their own sex.”⁹ Only a small number of medieval female religious were able to achieve Latinity because of limited access to tutors; meanwhile, knowledge of Greek in the West reached a nadir, with neither men nor women retaining any proficiency in the ancient language. Jerome’s core plan would experience a revived legacy in early modern Europe. After approximately 1100 years, his texts dealing with female learning were consulted and expanded by Christian humanists, especially by Juan Luis Vives, who, along with Sir Thomas More and

of Windesheim, and Their Writings," (Boydell Press, 2004); available from <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip049/2003021874.html>; Sheffler, *Schooling in Late Medieval Germany*, 71-77; Valerie Spear, *Leadership in Medieval English Nunneries* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2005); Sharon T. Strocchia, "Learning the Virtues: Convent Schools and Female Culture in Renaissance Florence," in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500 - 1800*, ed. Barbara Whitehead (New York: Garland Publishers, 1999), 3-46; Susan Mosher Stuard, ed., *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973); Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Park Press, 2004).

⁷ Saint Jerome, "To Laeta," in *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. and ed. F.A. Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 339-371, 365-367.

⁸ Jerome, "To Laeta," 371.

⁹ Saint Jerome, "To Pacatula," in *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. and ed. F.A. Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 467-481, 475.

Erasmus Desiderius, found literary education in classical and patristic texts fitting for secular girls.

Returning to the medieval West, in spite of the circumstances described above, a few women in convents well-furnished with books were able to become real scholars. These included the tenth-century canoness Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim (a niece of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I), who wrote historical chronicles in Latin and was the first female playwright.¹⁰ More famous still is the twelfth-century Hildegard of Bingen, who made significant contributions in the fields of science, theology, mysticism, and music.¹¹ From the middle of the thirteenth century, three nuns of the convent of Helfta in northern Saxony instructed novices in the seven liberal arts-- grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.¹² Two of the nuns produced major works: Getrude of Helfta wrote *Legatus divinae pietatis* (The Messenger of God's Loving Kindness), and Mechilde of Hackeborn, *Liber specialis gratiae* (Book of Special Grace). These learned nuns were exceptional; most medieval convents did not approach such intellectual heights.

Outside the convent, but within religious circles, the informal spiritual communities known as beguinages flourished in the thirteenth century in the Low

¹⁰ Phyllis Rugg Brown, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Anne Lyon Haight, *Hroswitha of Gandersheim: Her Life, Times, and Works, and a Comprehensive Bibliography* (New York: Hroswitha Club, 1965).

¹¹ Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, eds. and trans., *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford Press, 1994); Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Fiona Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Barbara Newman, *Voice of the Living Light Hildegard of Bingen and Her World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

¹² Mary Jeremy Finnegan, *The Women of Helfta* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 9; Diane Watt, *Medieval Women in Their Communities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Margaret Winkworth, *Gertrude of Helfta: the Herald of Divine Love* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

Countries, Germany, and northern France.¹³ Elementary education to boys and girls was offered.¹⁴ Children, ages five to sixteen, often lived with the beguines during the years of their education.¹⁵ The curriculum consisted of religious training and instruction in reading and music, and the children were expected to do chores around the beguinage in return for their lessons.¹⁶ Morals and manners were also taught by the lay sisters. The growth of these informal lay communities occurred without rules or administration, or any motion for recognition or special status within the Church. In 1216, Pope Honorius III recognized the beguines as members of the Church, deeming their life style to be uncontroversial and upright.¹⁷ In 1311 at the Council of Vienne, however, the beguinages were condemned for their association with heresy.¹⁸ Specifically, the decrees against the beguines pointed to the lack of a Rule, and their unorthodox beliefs on the Trinity and the nature of God.¹⁹ Seven years later, Pope John XXII changed the ruling, and welcomed the beguines back into the Church, with the condition that they not

¹³ For the beguines: Fiona Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality: Mystical Writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg, Beatrice of Nazareth, and Hadewijch of Brabant*, ed. and trans. Oliver Davies (New York: Crossroad, 1990); Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969); Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

¹⁴ The instruction provided by the beguines is largely passed over in the literature on late medieval and early modern women and education. Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978; reprint, 1956); Craig A. Monson, ed., *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Ranft, *Women in Western Intellectual Culture, 600-1500*; Barbara J. Whitehead, ed., *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500-1800* (New York: Garland Pub., 1999); William Harrison Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965). Phyllis Stock and Merry E. Wiesner each include one paragraph on the beguines, briefly mentioning their instruction of secular girls. Stock, *Better Than Rubies*, 60; Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 217-218.

¹⁵ Simons, *Beguine Communities*, 6. Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 26.

¹⁶ Simons, *Beguine Communities*, 80-81.

¹⁷ Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 17.

¹⁸ Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 20.

¹⁹ Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe, 1200-1500* (New York: Longman, 2002), 184.

“adhere to heresies.”²⁰ Yet this action failed to reinvigorate the beguine communities which were waning. One notable exception is the Great Beguinage in Louvain (Belgium); it survived and grew steadily from 90 beguines at the end of the sixteenth century to approximately 300 beguines a century later.²¹ Instead, though, the typical pattern that the beguinages followed was that of closure, or transformation into enclosed traditional convents of existing and approved female religious orders.²² Educating secular girls alongside future nuns, the beguines represent a novel, if fleeting, attempt to educate secular girls of the urban middle class, gentry, and poorest segments of the population.²³

Again, to say that schooling for girls did not exist does not mean that some women did not attain literacy in vernacular languages sufficient for casual reading, letter-writing, and the keeping of household accounts and chronicles. Literacy at this level did not require schooling, but exposure to others who possessed these skills – an exposure available in mercantile society. By the fourteenth century, female vernacular literacy was rising in urban Europe (London, Paris, the Low Countries, some German towns, and northern Italy) by the thirteenth century, although it always lagged behind male literacy.²⁴

²⁰ Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 36.

²¹ Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 25.

²² Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe*, 185-186.

²³ Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*, 25.

²⁴ On female vernacular literacy, see: Judith Bryce, "Les Livres des Florentines: Reconsidering Women's Literacy in Quattrocento Florence," in *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy*, ed. Stephen J. Milner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) 133-161; Carlo Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969); David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Grendler, *Schooling*; R.A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern England: Culture and Education 1500 -1800* (London and New York: Longman, 1988); Matthew Innes, "Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society," *Past and Present*, no. 158 (1998); Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); James Westfall

Before the early modern era, therefore, some few privileged women did acquire a serious education in their households or in convent or other spiritual communities; and a larger number of girls and women attained basic literacy. While literacy entails learning to read a vernacular language, a program of schooling, quite differently, entails not only a curriculum of academic subjects, but also a pervading ethos about the purpose of education. Nonetheless, there were as yet no schools: no institutions that existed to teach secular girls of different social origins.

In understanding the circumstances surrounding the emergence of girls' schools, it is helpful to think about when secular schooling for boys begins in the West. Starting in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, due to growing urban economies and political states, boys who were intended for lay professions, begin to attend school. Girls' secular schooling coming in the sixteenth century lags behind because of inherited attitudes towards women, assessment of women's worth and capacity, and fear about female chastity which was linked to family honor. Especially, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries many advocates for women challenged and neutralized these inherited assumptions, paving the way for the emergence of girls' schools. Indeed, the founding of the first schools for girls follows after more than a century of discussion of women's worth, carried on in a *querelle des femmes*, a "debate about women," that raised questions about the nature and capacity of women, commonly characterized as the "weaker sex."²⁵

Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963); Wiesner, *Women and Gender*.

²⁵ Consulted works on the medieval and early modern misogyny and the *querelle des femmes* include: McNamara and Wemple, "Sanctity and Power: Medieval Women." The following study deals in part with ecclesiastical conceptions of the "weaker sex" in the medieval period: Robert Archer, *The Problem of Woman in Late-Medieval Hispanic Literature* (Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2005); Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees, *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Gloria K. Fiero, Wendy Pfeffer, and Mathé Allain, eds., *Three Medieval Views of Women: La Contenance des Femmes; Le Bien des Femmes; Le Blasme des Femmes* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

First male writers, then, with de Pisan's works, female writers responded to written attacks on women that circulated among literate men. These first advocates of women's worth aimed to rescue women from such damaging and erroneous characterizations. Generally, in these early defenses of women's worth, Christian virtue is upheld, and the Virgin Mary as redeemer is presented to counter charges that all women embody the wicked Eve. *Querelle* texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries greatly expanded on this medieval base, and demanded much more than a restored reputation for the sex. Several early modern advocates of women's worth claimed that the feminine intellect was equal or superior to the masculine, and decried the obstacles barring women from education and schools.²⁶

In the sixteenth century, the discussions of the *querelle des femmes* paralleled, and to some extent merged with, discussions about the advisability of education for women. The key figures at this turning point are Desiderius Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives: interestingly, Erasmus was the editor of Jerome's *Letters*, and Vives, his friend and correspondent, was an avid and close reader of patristic authors, including Jerome specifically on the topic of female education. Both of these leading humanists, together with Sir Thomas More and Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, wrote against

1989); Ekaterina V. Haskins, "A Woman's Inventive Response to the Seventeenth-century *Querelle des Femmes*," in *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 288-301; Ann Rosalind Jones, Anne M. Haselkorn, and Betty S. Travitsky, *Counterattacks on 'the Bayter of Women': Three Pamphleteers of the Early Seventeenth Century* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990); Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610 - 1652* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society* (London: Arnold Press, 1995). The following study deals in part with ecclesiastical conceptions of the "weaker sex" in the medieval period: McNamara and Wemple, "Sanctity and Power: Medieval Women," 92-118.

²⁶ Section One of Chapter One explores this important development.

the traditional view that barred women from learning, strongly advocating education for girls and women, highlighting many benefits for the individual and society.²⁷

Vives' contribution is crucial: because it is he who confronts face on the misogynistic notion that the education of women was a threat to their chastity and, therefore, to the honor of their male kin.²⁸ In his widely read and well-received, *De institutione foeminae christianae* (The Instruction of a Christian Woman), published in 1524, Vives responds that young women properly educated will be better equipped to preserve their virginity. Beyond that, he argues, they will develop the virtues that will make them better Christians who in their roles as wives and mothers will contribute to the moral redemption of society.

With Vives' foundational work, as intellectuals began not only to defend the worth of women, but also to advocate their schooling, they offered the argument that well-educated women will become better mothers and guardians of social traditions. At the same time, some of the same advocates began to challenge aspects of the existing patriarchy. Late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century female authors, Moderata Fonte,

²⁷ Section Two of Chapter One presents the contributions of these and other humanist advocates.

²⁸ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Margaret Sommerville offers an extensive treatment of the mainstream misogyny of early modern European society that was inherited from the ancient and medieval periods: Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society*. See also the Editors' Introduction to each volume in the series, the *Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, providing a succinct and thorough account of the transmission of misogynistic ideas in the West: for example in Moderata Fonte, *The Worth of Women: Wherein is Clearly Revealed Their Nobility and their Superiority to Men*, ed. and trans. Virginia Cox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Studies investigating the importance of female chastity in the medieval and early modern periods include: Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985); Bornstein and Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion*; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992); Franca Ela Consolino, "Female Asceticism and Monasticism in Italy from the Fourth to the Eight Centuries," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 8-30; Karen Swallow Prior, "Chastity," in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Love, Courtship, and Sexuality Through History: The Early Modern Period*, ed. Victoria L. Mondelli and Cherrie A. Gottsleben (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 43-45.

Lucrezia Marinella, Arcangela Tarabotti, and Marie le Jars de Gournay especially decried the severely limited access girls and women had to learning and schools. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Johannes Amos Comenius, Bathsua Makin, François Poullain de la Barre, François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, and Mary Astell argued most powerfully for girls' schooling. Addressing the educational needs of more than a handful of elites, these advocates and pedagogues paved the way for the eventual arrival of mass education.

Meanwhile, not long after Vives wrote his *De institutione foeminae christianae*, (The Instruction of a Christian Woman) schooling for girls begins. The institutional contexts for the first schools were various: asylum, orphanage, hospital, court, and convent. Some of these existing places for female refuge or service became “hybrid” institutions by also becoming schools. This trend begins in northern Italy as an outgrowth of the extraordinarily rich religious life of the fourteenth and fifteenth century which featured the much-admired activity of formal and informal communities of holy women and the practice of sending young girls to convents for their protection and socialization. On this basis, with the Brescian saint, Angela Merici, as key agent, there developed the first Ursuline schools, which soon spread from Italy to France and even the

New World.²⁹ Other schools similar to the Ursulines developed in France, and were imitated even in Russia.³⁰

Even as the Ursuline schools were first spreading in Italy, girls' schools were launched in Protestant England, sponsored by civic institutions and individual philanthropists. In 1552, as part of an unprecedented charitable initiative, King Edward VI partnered with London's municipal government to endow five institutions for the city. The five institutions were: St. Thomas', Bethlehem (Bedlam), St. Bartholomew's, Bridewell and Christ's Hospital. Among them, Christ's Hospital was formed in order to shelter, clothe, feed, and school the city's poorest boys and girls, including orphans and foundlings.³¹ Throughout sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, numerous bequests were made for the founding of charitable girls' schools, catering to the lower and middling classes. Elite boarding schools for girls also emerged during this time.³²

²⁹ Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2007); Marie Madeleine Hachard and Emily Clark, *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007); Marie de Saint Jean Martin, Mother, *Ursuline Method of Education* (Rahway, NJ: Quinn & Boden Company, 1946); Anna B. Montreuil, *Three Came with Gifts: The Story of the First Hospital, The First School and The First Cloister in Canada and Their Heroic Founders* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1955); Elizabeth Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister: Daily Life in the Teaching Monasteries of the Old Regime* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

³⁰ Howard Clive Barnard, *The Little Schools of Port-Royal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913); Isabel De Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Nicholas Hammond, *Fragmentary Voices: Memory and Education at Port-Royal* (Tübingen: Narr, 2004); Carolyn C. Lougee, "Noblesse, Domesticity, and Social Reform: The Education of Girls by Fénelon and Saint-Cyr," *History of Education Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1974); Madame de Maintenon, *Madame de Maintenon: Dialogues and Addresses*, ed. and trans. John J. Conley (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Carol S. Nash, "Educating New Mothers: Women and the Enlightenment in Russia," *History of Education Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1981); Virginia Simmons Nyabongo, "Madame de Maintenon and Her Contribution to Education," *The French Review* 22, no. 3 (1949); Jacqueline Pascal, *A Rule for Children and Other Writing*, ed. and trans. John J. Conley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); F. Ellen Weaver, *The Evolution of the Reform of Port-Royal: From the Rule of Cîteaux to Jansenism* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1978).

³¹ William. Lempriere, *A History of the Girls' School of Christ's Hospital, London, Hoddesdon, and Hertford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924); Carol Kazmierczak Manzione, *Christ's Hospital of London, 1552 - 1598: "a passing deed of pity"* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1995).

³² Mary C. Borer, *Willingly to School: A History of Women's Education* (Guilford: Lutterworth Press, 1976); Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England* (New York:

It is worth noting that there was little difference in the way that Protestants and Catholics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries embraced the notion of girls' schooling.

Primarily, since plans and arguments for the schooling of girls were rooted in the pre-Reformation era, new and diverse Christian sects benefited from the on-going re-evaluation of women's worth and intellectual capacity.

From England, as well, radiated the remarkable network of schools founded by Mary Ward. Begun in 1609, Ward imagined that her Institute of Mary might become a female version of the Society of Jesus, directly under papal authority with an educational and missionary vocation. However, despite winning important supporters, Ward's initiative was almost wholly suppressed, and ultimately limited to girls' schooling. A rigorous academic program, with Latin as its centerpiece, was offered at Ward's day schools and boarding schools, which stretched from secret operations in England to include formal and sanctioned schools in Saint-Omer, Liège, Rome, Naples, Perugia, Munich, Vienna, and Pressburg. After Ward's death in 1645, the Institute expanded the number of its schools in Europe and abroad. Ward's system of schooling, the Ursuline schools and other European models for girls' schooling were exported globally to colonized lands and imperial dominions beginning in 1639. The French Ursulines, for example, were the first to open a school for girls outside of Europe: in Quebec in 1639.

In the same sixteenth century that saw the origin of the Ursuline schools and their offspring, and the secular and religious English schools, a remarkable project for the education for girls was undertaken in Germany: one that failed in its original mission, but is nonetheless remarkable in its vision. The schools for girls were modest in their aim,

Routledge, 1999); Kenneth Charlton, "Women and Education," in *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 1-21.

existing to teach basic literacy only, a task completed in a matter of months or one or two years, so that girls spent very little time at school. As early as the mid-1520s, Luther's vision for girls' education shrank from teaching girls to read the Bible to just imparting enough literacy for their basic comprehension of his *Short Catechism* in German.³³ This shrinkage reflected a general disappointment about instituting schooling in general, for boys too. Despite initial enthusiasm for a new Lutheran system of education, the cost of the project proved a major obstacle to its success.³⁴ Also, the lack of schools and schoolmasters often meant that community pastors taught reading and writing only to boys.³⁵ When girls did attend, they acquired a "smattering of simple writing and reading along with their required drill in the catechism."³⁶ The new type of girls' schooling made very slow gains; meanwhile, the traditional convent schools had been dismantled.³⁷

Since Gerald Strauss and Susan Karant-Nunn have thoroughly investigated Luther's schools, finding them to be essentially programs of basic literacy for girls, this study omits further examination. In Reformation Germany, a commitment to increase girls' literacy is clear; each girl, no matter her family background or means, was to attend school for an hour a day, until a basic level of literacy was reached, then she returned home.³⁸ Beyond that, there was little movement to further girls' schooling. Female learning on how to behave in different settings, to sew, cook, and do all manner of domestic work, was conducted at home within the family under maternal supervision. Fathers and the Church ministers were responsible for religious education, and their

³³ Frederick Eby, *The Development of Modern Education* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1957), 75.

³⁴ Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 5-6.

³⁵ Strauss, *House of Learning*, 20.

³⁶ Strauss, *House of Learning*, 22.

³⁷ Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, 121.

³⁸ Eby, *The Development of Modern Education*, 75.

lessons on Christian virtue were added to by other family and community members.

Thus, Luther's schools for girls were not meant to teach multiple or advanced subjects, or to be sites of acculturation in place of the family, the reformed church, or the community.

However, the new schools gave all classes of girls' basic literacy, a skill that would

become increasingly useful in their changing society (not only in religion). While,

Luther's schools failed academically, they did introduce the notion of mass compulsory

education, only fulfilled in the nineteenth century. This study turns its sights to advocates

for girls' education and the schooling of girls, in the fullest sense.

Overview of Chapters

The major issues pertaining to the origins of girls' schooling are now introduced; presented here, before the literature review, is an overview of the chapter structure. Chapter One, *Women's Worth and the Schooling of Girls*, begins by forging an all-important link between the question of a woman's worth, including her moral and intellectual capacity, to the prospect of her education and schooling. Section One of the chapter's three sections, entitled *Origins of the Great Women's Debate*, analyzes the first defenses of women's worth in late medieval treatises, literature, and poetry. Here, advocates like Christine de Pisan responded to anti-female tracts permeating learned circles throughout Europe and created a new literary form to debate the many questions pertaining to female virtue and vice, as well as the condition of women's souls, minds, and bodies.

Section Two, *Humanists Affirm Female Education*, explains in what manner select humanists, especially the sixteenth-century Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, advocated for increased female education while directly attending to the fear about female chastity. The humanist contribution, in first advocating for advanced literary studies for elite Christian women, and soon after extending that program for girls of all classes, is identified as a pivotal maneuver in the advocacy for female learning and the advent of girls' schooling in early modern Europe.

Section Three, *The Call for the Schooling of Girls*, presents a variety of arguments from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that insisted that girls were worthy of education (as the humanists maintained) and entitled to schools (as the humanists stopped short of saying). The first chapter presents the intellectual context and

conceptual framework that prepared early modern Europe to become the first site in the world that was hospitable to schooling for secular girls.

Chapter Two, *Schools of Church and State in Italy, France, Quebec, and Russia*, examines the first major girls' schooling initiative, spearheaded by the Ursuline Order in conjunction with the Catholic Church, and noteworthy imitators under ecclesiastical and state control. The Ursuline day schools and boarding schools were identified by the Church as ideal centers for promulgating Counter-Reformation piety and obedience, seeing the new female pupils as the ones likely to stave off heresy in the home and "bring virtue into their families."³⁹ Establishing themselves in urban and rural locations, the Ursuline Order expanded to the New World in 1639. First exported to Quebec in New France, the Ursuline schools in the French colony took on the responsibility of missionary education among the indigenous Naskapi-Montagnais people, while also instructing the daughters of the French colonists.

Alongside the Ursuline girls' schools grew up other teaching orders in France, and traditional convent education continued. At the Port-Royal convent schools and Saint-Cyr (a private royal academy run by the Dames of Saint-Louis), French girls were trained in differing ways to mould them into righteous and loyal Christian subjects. The suppression of Port-Royal illustrates the increased concern for religious and political orthodoxy for French girls, and girls' crucial role in keeping France from heresy.

Regarding the noble girls schooled at Saint-Cyr, the King looked to them to endear their class to the monarch through greater dependency and affection. In the 1760's, the model of Saint-Cyr appealed to Catherine II, empress of Russia. Upon

³⁹ Mère de Pommereu Ursuline, *Les Chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines recueillies pour l'usage des religieuses du mesme ordre par Mère de Pommereu Ursuline*, vol. 1 (Paris: Jean Henault, Impr. Libraire Juré, 1673), 105.

establishing an imperial system of schools, she adapted the model of Saint-Cyr to suit her needs of State: the result was the Smolnyi Institute, twice the size of Saint-Cyr, with an additional bourgeois division. The circumstances of the emergence of these schools, together with the factors that brought success or failure upon them, demonstrate the high value placed upon the schools by ecclesiastical and civil governments in fashioning orthodox and loyal female subjects. The girl, properly schooled, was recognized as a bolster to the political and moral order.

Chapter Three, *English Schools and Mary Ward's Institute*, has as its subject the charity, day, and boarding schools for girls that were founded in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century urban and rural England. Class difference determined the student populations of these new institutions, yet an important commonality about the purpose of girls' schooling was claimed for all classes of English girls. Philanthropic and entrepreneurial school founders identified their institutions for girls as a remedy for idleness, vanity, immorality, and vice in society. The driving forces of religious obligation and civic responsibility caused the founders to rely upon girls, whom they acknowledged as being capable of learning, to bring about a reformation of manners and virtue.

The Institute of Mary, founded by the Yorkshire recusant, Mary Ward, was created for the spiritual, intellectual and moral benefit of Catholic girls. Ward worked toward making the Institute a tool of the Counter-Reformation, not only with girls' schooling but also with missionary activity in Protestant England (with daring hopes of entering the Ottoman Empire as part of a missionary effort). In pursuing these goals, Ward took on the dangerous task of educating Catholic girls at home in England

(secretly) and abroad (openly), and wanted no less than to create a female order akin to the Society of Jesus. Begun in 1609, her Institute ran counter to the prevailing traditions and laws of the Catholic Church, and yet, still survived. Forbidden to carry on missionary work and from pursuing a Jesuit-like administration, Ward's initiative faced suppression. However, with the aid of Catholic monarchs, especially the Austrian Habsburgs, and ultimately, with compromises reached with the Church, Ward's Institute, though limited to girls' schooling, expanded throughout Europe and then globally to become a premier network of Catholic girls' schools.

Epilogue, Co-education and the Rights of Woman, deals with the conceptual framework for girls' schooling that the late eighteenth-century thinker, Mary Wollstonecraft, proposed in her work, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1791). In the eighteenth century, the early modern models of girls' schooling discussed in Chapters Two and Three, gained wider application, with the establishment and expansion of many more girls' schools in Europe and abroad.⁴⁰ Viewing these institutions, Wollstonecraft was critical of the existing types of girls' schooling. Building on the arguments for girls' education and schooling offered by humanists and other authors discussed in Chapter One, Wollstonecraft became the first advocate to argue for co-education and present a plan for implementation on the national level. She represents an important bridge

⁴⁰ There was an increase in the number of Ursuline schools, Mary Ward's Institute foundations, as well as private day schools and boarding schools for girls in the eighteenth century. In England, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), which was founded in 1698, became a major force in establishing new schools in eighteenth-century England. The Scottish S.P.C.K. (S.S.P.C.K.) operated in Scotland, and the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts was active world-wide, beginning with the American colonies. See: William Osborne Bird Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1898); Hans Jacob Cnattingius, *Bishops and Societies: A Study of Anglican Colonial and Missionary Expansion, 1698-1850* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952); Shawn Comminey, "The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and Black Education in South Carolina, 1702-1764," *The Journal of Negro History* 84, no. 4 (1999): 360-369; Trevor Cooling, : *Reflections on the Theology of Education* (London: SPCK, 1994); Frederick V. Mills, Sr., "The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in British North America, 1730-1775," *Church History* 63, no. 1 (1994): 15-30.

between the early modern and modern conceptions of schooling. Often called England's first feminist, Wollstonecraft has been severed from the pro-feminine tradition that precedes her. By identifying the ideas she inherited from the *querelle* tradition and humanist circles, and separating out the *truly* original ideas and plan for education she devised, Wollstonecraft's contribution is clarified. In the revolutionary spirit of her day, Wollstonecraft claimed that her plan for equal co-education was the only route to a just and virtuous society.

Secondary Literature Consulted

Beginning with general studies on the history of the education of women, this overview looks at the many secondary works on the history of education, religion, and women, as well as some works in literary studies, and political theory, grouped by theme.

Included in the recently published, *The Cambridge University History of Christianity*, edited by Timothy Tackett and Stewart J. Brown, is a superb chapter by historian of education, Dominique Julia, entitled, "Christian Education."⁴¹ Julia's claim that early modern schooling was linked "to the general determination of political, municipal, and ecclesiastical authorities to shape Christian civility and eradicate begging and vagrancy," is well-argued.⁴² His study primarily relates to boys' schools, but as this dissertation shows, his thesis has application in girls' schooling as well. Most useful, his study shows that religious denomination cannot be used in generalizing about the level of education or schooling in different populations. He points out that socio-economic factors are the dominant contributing factors.⁴³ Also, Julia shows that by the latter half of the eighteenth century, the state (specifically, the German and Italian states, and Austria) increasingly controlled education.⁴⁴ These governments, and others, absorbed the Protestant and Catholic clergy as "state administrators" of education, finding that the church was within the state.⁴⁵

Another study by Julia, in *A History of Reading*, entitled, "Reading and the Counter-Reformation," makes important distinctions about which religious texts were

⁴¹ Dominique Julia, "Christian Education," in *The Cambridge University History of Christianity*, ed. Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 147-165.

⁴² Julia, "Christian Education," 152.

⁴³ Julia, "Christian Education," 150-151.

⁴⁴ Julia, "Christian Education," 155.

⁴⁵ Julia, "Christian Education," 155, 162.

restricted to the Catholic clergy in comparison with the reading materials provided for the laity. Specifically, Julia discusses the dissemination of approved vernacular catechisms for the laity, stressing the Church's desire to compete with Protestant booksellers.⁴⁶ It also treats the censored translations of the Bible that Church authorities continued to condemn into the eighteenth century. For the purposes of this dissertation, Julia's point about children memorizing the catechism but likely not comprehending it is important.⁴⁷ The catechism was the center-piece of Catholic (and Protestant) education --the teaching orders and nuns at Port-Royal made their pupils' comprehension of the catechism and religious doctrine the highest priority.

There is but one full-length study, Phyllis Stock's *Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Education* (1978), that investigates girls' schooling in early modern and modern Europe. Stock's pioneering work is a survey of the topic with about one-hundred pages on education from 1400-1800, and an equal number of pages for 1800-1975. For early modern schooling, however, it does not do much more than alert the reader as to where schooling was offered and by whom. For example, the Ursuline Order is afforded but three pages in the work, and unfortunately there is a major error therein. Stock identifies the founder, Angela Merici, and erroneously charges her with beginning the Ursuline Order as a reaction to "the pagan ideals of humanism," which was quite far from Merici's actual mission.⁴⁸ Also, Stock devotes an entire chapter to the learned lady of the Renaissance, who was tutored at home or court. This is certainly not a flaw in the study, as her goal was to provide a survey of women's *education* which includes schools

⁴⁶ Dominique Julia, "Reading and the Counter-Reformation," in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo. Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 235-268.

⁴⁷ Julia, "Reading and the Counter-Reformation," 263.

⁴⁸ Stock, *Better Than Rubies*, 75.

alongside home-teaching and convent learning, but it is pointed out so as to distinguish my project as a new and much needed study. For while separate studies of early modern girls' schools exist (in the case of the Ursuline and Ward initiatives, most have been written by members of those orders or affiliated Jesuits), this dissertation as an examination and explanation for the emergence of schooling initiatives for girls in early modern Europe is the first of its kind.

Furthermore, the lacuna in the field has led at least one scholar to a startling and erroneous conclusion. In her book, *Schooling in Western Europe* (1985), which deals mostly with boys' education from 1500-1900, Mary Jo Maynes claims that until the third quarter of the nineteenth century, "the very idea of higher education for girls, however, remained unexamined."⁴⁹ On the contrary, the issue of higher education and advanced schooling for girls was hotly debated across early modern Europe, with many advocates heralding the benefits it would have in reforming society and founding schools for that end.

A collection of essays, misleadingly titled, *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500-1800* (1999), edited by Barbara Whitehead, while it is a useful resource, does not approach being "A History."⁵⁰ It is comprised of eight essays, each of which contributes meaningfully to a sub-field in the history of (women's) education, and as the editor states, it "does not aspire to be a definitive survey of early modern women's education."⁵¹ Whitehead's introduction provides a short historiography of women's education, which is critical of privileging formal literary studies over other types of female learning (like domestic or vocational training). She raises the point that women's

⁴⁹ Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling in Western Europe: A Social History*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 97.

⁵⁰ Whitehead, ed., *Women's Education*.

⁵¹ Whitehead, ed., *Women's Education*, xiii.

education was informal and formal, literary and vocational, and contends that all forms of female education have “equal validity.”⁵² Given this perspective, Whitehead offers a diverse collection of essays on various types of education and contemporary educational theories for early modern girls. Sharon Strocchia discusses convent schools in Italy. Sharon Michalove looks at aristocratic household education in England. Stacey Shimizu examines the moral education connected to women’s work in needlepoint and lace-making. Catherine Eskin challenges the assumption that women obeyed the commandment to be “chaste, silent, and obedient”; women’s speech, she argues, may have been partially curtailed and directed, but as evidence in pedagogical treatises for girls’ education, it was not silenced. Howard Adelman presents female learning as a male-perceived foil for chastity in early modern Jewish-Italian society. Colleen Fitzgerald reviews the ideas of François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon and Jacques Du Bosc on women’s education and its relation to acceptable social behavior. Carolyn Lougee’s essay on late-seventeenth through early nineteenth-century boarding schools for girls considers the high mortality rates among pupils, and how death and the prospect of death affected pupils and their families’ view of schooling. Lastly, Adrianna Bakos offers an account of why women’s vocational education in midwifery suffered devaluation by the eighteenth century. *Women’s Education* is a rare and valuable collection in the field that highlights the diversity of educational opportunities for girls (which was largely class-based) and brings to the fore important questions about the construction of gender, social control, and male-fear about female chastity and learning.

For the first chapter of this dissertation, “Women’s Worth and Female Learning,” the secondary literature falls into three categories. Section One: *Origins of the Great*

⁵² Whitehead, ed., *Women's Education*, xiii.

Women's Debate, is an examination of the *querelle des femmes* that establishes the relationship between the question of women's worth (including her intellectual capacity) and education. Locating an impulse for female education in the *querelle* is a new and important contribution that this dissertation undertakes; to date there is no other study investigating this topic. However, there is a strong interest in the *querelle* itself as a literary phenomenon, as a space in which questions of sex and gender were articulated and problematized, and as the first pro-feminine movement, that is, the first step toward dismantling misogynistic culture. As such, the secondary literature on the *querelle* is interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary.

Alcuin Blamires' *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (1997) gives the historical circumstances that allowed for a flowering of literary works concerned with female worth and abilities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵³ This work shows that Christine de Pisan, although she was an extraordinary participant in the *querelle*, was not the originator of the genre. For the medieval period, Blamires also identifies common strategies in defending women, such as relying upon the spotless and holy reputation of the Redeemer's mother, the Virgin Mary.

The literature on Christine de Pisan and the *Romance of the Rose* largely casts de Pisan as an extremely able defender of her sex, who relies upon Biblical and mythological archetypes of virtuous and holy women to wreak havoc on the wholesale denunciation of the female sex that the *Rose* suggests.⁵⁴ A very useful anthology edited

⁵³ Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁵⁴ Albrecht Classen, ed., *Discourse on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004); Redfern, Jenny R. "Christine de Pisan and The Treasure of the City of Ladies: a Medieval Rhetorician and Her Rhetoric," in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995) 73-92.

by Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception* (1992) explores how *The Rose* was used in medieval society (surprisingly) as a didactic primer for moral conduct.⁵⁵ Heather M. Arden's book, *The Romance of the Rose* (1987), is instrumental for revealing the widespread popularity of *The Rose* in the thirteenth century, and for accounting for its long popularity which lasted up through the fifteenth century.⁵⁶ Arden also shows *The Rose*'s "enormous influence" on late medieval and early modern French and English writers. Spreading a misogynistic attitude far and wide, *The Rose*'s power in hardening male disdain for the "weaker sex" is stressed.⁵⁷ In this context, then, the urgency of de Pisan's project, in responding to *The Rose* and other pieces like it, comes to the fore. Finally, Pamela Benson's *Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (1992), follows de Pisan's influence into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italian and English literary culture.⁵⁸

The early modern *querelle des femmes* literature has a developing historiography. Lula McDowell Richardson's 1926 study, *The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance from Christine of Pisa to Marie De Gournay*, began a new direction for *querelle* scholarship. Richardson details both advocates' and opponents' viewpoints circulating in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but her conclusion has to be re-evaluated, "The numerous treatises on the merits and demerits of

⁵⁵ Kevin Brownlee, "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pisan and the Romance of the Rose," in *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992) 234-261.

⁵⁶ Heather M. Arden, *The Romance of the Rose* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

⁵⁷ Archer, *The Problem of Woman*; Ann Marie Rasmussen, "Thinking through Gender in Late Medieval German Literature," in *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 97-111.

⁵⁸ Pamela Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

women which were written during the century prove that it was a burning question with its authors. These did not in all probability persuade any one that either side was right if he had not already leaned to that conviction."⁵⁹ This is a burning question, to be sure, but Richardson's conclusion that absolutely no one was persuaded is based on conjecture, not research.

Another contributing *querelle* scholar, Carolyn Lougee, remarks about a fundamental change in the French *querelle* from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. In her book, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (1976), she contends that the sixteenth-century *querelle* texts "focused on disagreement over the moral worth of women," and the seventeenth-century *Querelle* texts "centered on conflicting assessments of the negative or positive influence women exerted on the French social structure in a time of apparent flux."⁶⁰ As Lougee rightly points out, it was not an intellectual question alone, but a social one too.⁶¹

Among other works, Margaret Sommerville's *Sex and Subjugation* (1995), which charts opinions against new ideas about women's worth from writers responding to the advocates in the *querelle*, is a masterly study.⁶² Glenda McLeod's *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (1991) represents an admirable attempt to study a vast and important genre that forms an integral component of the *querelle*.⁶³ The catalog, beginning with Boccaccio and de Pisan became a common form

⁵⁹ Lula McDowell Richardson, *The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance from Christine of Pisa to Marie de Gournay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1929), 163.

⁶⁰ Carolyn C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 5.

⁶¹ Lougee, *Le Paradis*, 5.

⁶² Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society*.

⁶³ McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance*.

of presenting the case for the female sex based on the existence of praiseworthy predecessors in mythology, the Christian tradition, and history.

The scholarly works of Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (1980) and *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610 – 1652* (1977), include the interpretation and contextualization of *querelle* texts.⁶⁴ While Maclean has been negatively reviewed by Natalie Zemon Davis for proposing that there was a “stasis” of ideas regarding the conception of women during the Renaissance, his books do make a contribution. Perhaps unfairly condemning a historian of ideas for not being a social historian, Davis critiques Maclean for dichotomizing “modes of thought in academic disciplines” from the lived experience which of course is fraught with “political, social, and economic factors.”⁶⁵ Still, Maclean’s analysis of texts results in the identification of important themes in the scholarly discourse about women, especially the adoption of the Galenic medical model in distinguishing women from men.

More recently, Roger Archer’s study, *The Problem of Woman in Late-Medieval Hispanic Literature* (2005), provides a much needed examination of the authors and texts heretofore neglected.⁶⁶ Also, other studies on the English *querelle* have enriched the field: “Counterattacks on ‘the Bayter of Women,’” (1990) by Ann Rosalind Jones, and *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght* (1996), edited by Barbara Lewalski.⁶⁷ These works provide an explanatory framework for the English *querelle*, viewing texts

⁶⁴ Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610 - 1652*; Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*.

⁶⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Review of Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1981): 212.

⁶⁶ Archer, *The Problem of Woman*.

⁶⁷ Jones, Haselkorn, and Travitsky, *Counterattacks*; Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, ed., *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght* (New York: Oxford, 1996).

(sometimes anonymously authored) as the popular venue for expressing a wide-range of human emotion regarding conceptions of gender and sexual difference.

In Section Two: *Humanists Affirm Female Education*, scholarship on Italian humanism, female humanism, and northern humanism is consulted. Beginning with the Italian humanists, Craig Kallendorf's "Introduction" to his compilation of *Humanist Educational Treatises* serves as a superb entry point to the revolutionary ideas about education that the humanists put forth.⁶⁸ In terms of relating these ideas to women's education, Margaret King's work, *Women of the Renaissance* (1991), is indispensable.⁶⁹ Her chapter, "Virgo and Virago, Women and High Culture," examines the growing need for elite women to have education, and some of the first female schools erected in Europe. Also, the earlier book King co-edited with Albert Rabil, Jr., *Her Immaculate Hand: Selected Works by and about the Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy* (1983) offers an unprecedented discussion of female humanism.⁷⁰ King's collaborative work with Diana Robin, too, is much relied upon here.⁷¹ Their "Introduction" to Isotta Nogarola's *Complete Writings: Letterbook, Dialogue on Adam and Eve, Orations* contextualizes the source and illuminates the struggle Nogarola had in forging a new intellectual (and secular) path in Quattrocento Italy. While insults and accusations about her chastity and virtue circulated about her, Nogarola's commitment to scholarship did not falter.⁷² Through her life's work (which famously includes the first humanistic

⁶⁸ Craig Kallendorf, ed. and trans., *Humanist Educational Treatises*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶⁹ King, *Women of the Renaissance*.

⁷⁰ King and Rabil, eds., *Her Immaculate Hand*.

⁷¹ Isotta Nogarola, *Complete Writings: Letterbook, Dialogue on Adam and Eve, Orations*, ed. and trans. Margaret L. King and Diana Robin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁷² Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 6.

defense of her sex), Nogarola modeled for the learned women who succeeded her, ways in which to enter male literary circles.

For humanists beyond the Alps, works on Thomas More, Desiderius Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives are instrumental in showing the diffusion of humanism and its ideals throughout Europe. Indeed, there is now a small literature that deals with the troika's various opinions about women, and even women's education, mainly in the form of articles.⁷³ The majority of these studies mischaracterizes the contribution made by these three humanists. Essentially, modern scholars have anachronistic expectations of what these enlightened thinkers ought to have said about women and education. Because More, Erasmus, and Vives do indeed take a huge leap forward in arguing that a literary education is fitting for Christian (secular) girls and women, perhaps to the uncritical modern reader who anticipates public co-educational schooling, their position that education be private, and serve the existing patriarchy and church is somehow disappointing. Such ahistorical judgments cloud the real gains of these three figures for their times and falsely minimize their advocacy for women's education, which was crucial for the movement's development.

The secondary literature for Chapter One's third and final section, "*The Call for the Schooling of Girls*," relies on no full-length study or article, because it is a new area of research. However, in the introductions to the primary texts examined herein, editors

⁷³ Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, and Margaret Mikesell, "Introduction," in *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), xv-xcii; A.D. Cousins, "Humanism, Female Education, and Myth: Erasmus, Vives, and More's *To Candidus*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 2 (2004): 213-250; Charles Fantazzi, "Introduction: Prelude to the Other Voice in Vives," in *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1-42; Alice T. Friedman, "The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England," *History of Education Quarterly* 25, no. 1/2 (1985): 57-70; Gloria Kaufman, "Juan Luis Vives on the Education of Women," *Signs* 3, no. 4 (1978): 891-896; Erika Rummel, ed., *Erasmus on Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); J.K. Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13, no. 4 (1982): 77-89.

and translators offer many keen insights to the texts, the authors, and the audiences. The on-going series published by the University of Chicago Press, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, has given historians and other scholars a rich treasure trove of women's writing, and the introductions included in each volume are unparalleled in their concise and thorough analysis and contextualization.⁷⁴

Chapter Two of the dissertation, "Schools of Church and State: Italy, France, Quebec, and Russia," draws from a wide range of studies on the Order of St. Ursula, the Port-Royalists, Madame de Maintenon and Saint-Cyr, and the educational reforms of Catherine the Great. Since girls' schooling was first born of a religious impulse with the Ursuline Order, the secondary literature examining the phenomena of Holy Women in late medieval and early modern Europe is instrumental in properly contextualizing Angela Merici's vocation. Several stellar works have been consulted, enriching this author's appreciation for Merici's milieu; one deserves special mention: *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (1996), edited by Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi.⁷⁵ The editors have collected key essays on the subject by leading scholars in the history of religion. One of these studies, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century," by Gabriella Zarri discusses the rise of holy women in Italy who combined an active life of teaching and aiding the poor, to a contemplative model that was mystical and ascetic, too. Zarri points to the 1530s and 1540s as a turning point in the popularity of these female living saints; with the

⁷⁴ The editors for the series are Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr. The individual works will be cited in the review of the primary literature.

⁷⁵ Bell, *Holy Anorexia*; King, *Women of the Renaissance*; Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, Daniel Bornstein, and E. Ann Matter, *Dominican Penitent Women* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005); Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri, eds., *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: the Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Reformation, new modes of life for female religious were forged. Presenting Merici's life and mission in this context, as part of a familiar tradition, is one reasonable explanation for the acceptance of a new association of virgins in the world before the renewed emphasis of the cloister beset holy women. The chapters by Antonio Rigon, Mario Sensi, and Anna Benvenuti Papi are also very useful for contextualizing the experience of the early Ursulines because they investigate the *bizzocche* movement, which was comprised of large numbers of lay women living the "mixed" life of remaining in the world and serving God.

Beginning with studies of the Ursuline Order, one finds a combination of works written in a hagiographic tradition, and as the founder, Angela Merici, was sainted and remains an important figure for Catholics today, even recent works on her stress her sanctity and the divine inspiration for her Order. In 1927, Sister M. Monica published, *Angela Merici and Her Teaching Idea*, a study that offers a close reading of the Merician documents to reveal a new approach to training girls in catechism and Christian morality. Monica presents Merici as a blessed teacher, one with compassion and understanding for individual girls, and an urgent desire to safeguard their souls through orthodoxy.

The mid-twentieth-century Prioress General of the Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula, Mother Marie de St. Jean Martin wrote two full-length scholarly books on Merici and the Ursulines: *Ursuline Method of Education* (1946) and *The Spirit of St. Angela* (1950).⁷⁶ Martin's treatment of Angela's mission fits it squarely within the goals of the Counter-Reformation; she writes not hiding her opinion of Protestantism: "the spread of Protestant errors urged her [Merici] to safeguard family life from them, and

⁷⁶ Martin, *Ursuline Method of Education*; Marie de St. Jean Martin, Mother, *The Spirit of St. Angela*, ed. and trans. The Ursulines of Brown County Ohio (N.p.: 1950).

through the family, the city, and through the city, the Church." About the development of the Order after Merici's death in 1540, Martin's account cannot hold. She argues that Angela's original vision of virgins living with their families in the world "harmonized" with a new policy of strict enclosure, and that enclosure in "no way impaired the spirit which had inspired the work of St. Angela."⁷⁷ While a spirit is a hard thing to quantify, other studies show that the Ursuline vocation changed drastically with claustration and had a direct impact on the prominence of education in the Ursuline mission. Martin's second book deals with education specifically, but it is intended as a guide for her Ursuline sisters (daughters) in their role as teachers. She emphasizes the pedagogical assistance that the Jesuits gave to the new seventeenth-century Ursuline foundations of France in crafting their curricula and rules.

In 1968, Sister Teresa Ledóchowska published in French a much different type of study on Merici and the Ursuline Order, based on primary documentation: *Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula: According to the Historical Documents*.⁷⁸ In it, Ledóchowska produced a much more thorough-going historical analysis of the Order, in two volumes, drawing on many of the archival collections in Europe. Chapter Two of this dissertation relies, as do most subsequent studies of the Ursulines, on Ledóchowska's archival findings which she documents fastidiously. Ledóchowska's history draws interesting connections between Angela Merici and Francis of Assisi, stressing their shared understanding of the "grace of vocation" and charity.⁷⁹ Yet, much of the work is colored with Ledóchowska's over-riding belief that the Holy Spirit was the main causal

⁷⁷ Martin, *The Spirit of St. Angela*, 158.

⁷⁸ Teresa Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula: According to the Historical Documents*, trans. Mary Teresa Neylan (Rome: Ancora, 1969).

⁷⁹ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:180.

agent in the history of the Order and of the Counter-Reformation Church. This quotation epitomizes her approach: "But at the precise date the Council of Trent had just opened, and the Church was beginning to shake off her weaknesses under the breath of the Holy Spirit. Far from disconcerting us, events such as we recount make the 'wonderful works of God' shine out in all their splendor."⁸⁰ So, while her narrative is built using documentary evidence, its message is for the faithful and by the faithful.

Among the few unaffiliated accounts of Merici's accomplishment and the development of the Order is Peter Maurice Waters' *The Ursuline Achievement: A Philosophy of Education for Women* (1996).⁸¹ Waters de-emphasizes the charitable impulse of Merici's original plan for the Order, and most of his research relates to French Ursuline commitment to teaching. He explains, "This book presents a description of the development of Ursuline pedagogy, with a concentration on the French tradition, illustrating its consolidation as it provided a distinctive intellectual, moral and religious process of formation for young women, and traces the different kinds of influence that it exerted, especially as it became a model for later educational initiatives within other religious orders of women."⁸² Waters' insight, however, must be wedded to an acknowledgement that the needs of the Church directed the Ursuline project from above and for its purposes. In addition to a well-written historical account, Waters' book includes a number of valuable appendices: Merician documents and school regulations.

A recent contribution is Querciolo Mazzonis' *Spirituality, Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy: Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula (1474-1540)*, (2007).

⁸⁰ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 2:30.

⁸¹ Peter Maurice Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement: A Philosophy of Education for Women*, St. Angela Merici, *The Ursulines and Catholic Education* (North Carlton, Victoria, Australia: Colonna, 1994).

⁸² Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, xi.

Mazzonis emphasizes Merici's understanding of the human relationship to God and religious perfection, arguing that in creating the Ursuline Order, a new model of religious life for women, Merici was attuned to notions of the Renaissance "self" and the needs of her society.⁸³ Yet, Mazzonis' position that Merici's Order was not involved in education is not supported by the documentary evidence. From the beginning, the first Brescian Ursulines taught Christian Doctrine in the schools of Christian Doctrine and the Brescian orphanage. Also, Merici's own writings to the Ursulines described how they should treat the young pupils, whom she called "daughters"--specifically how to bring the girls around to learning if they were resistant.

Overwhelmingly, though, most studies of the Italian and French Ursuline foundations do focus on their schooling of girls. For the Italian Ursulines, the fundamental studies are Danielle Culpepper's "'Our Particular Cloister': Ursulines and Female Education in Seventeenth-Century Parma and Piacenza," (2005), M. Lisinia Faresin's *Le orsoline di Breganze fra l'antico e il nuovo* (1976), and Angelo Turchini's *Sotto l'occhio del padre: società confessionale e istruzione primaria nello Stato di Milano* (1996).⁸⁴ For the French and Quebecoise Ursuline schools, the works of Elizabeth Rapley, Marshall B. Jones, Linda Lierheimer, Joyce Marshall, and Roger Magnuson are especially instructive.⁸⁵ Rapley's studies in particular offer historical and

⁸³ Querciolo Mazzonis, *Spirituality, Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy: Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula (1474-1540)* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

⁸⁴ Danielle Culpepper, "'Our Particular Cloister': Ursulines and Female Education in Seventeenth-Century Parma and Piacenza," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 4 (2005); M. Lisinia Faresin, *Le orsoline di Breganze fra l'antico e il nuovo* (Breganza: n.p., 1976); Angelo Turchini, *Sotto l'occhio del padre: società confessionale e istruzione primaria nello Stato di Milano* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1996).

⁸⁵ Marshall B. Jones and Elizabeth Rapley, "Behavioral Contagion and the Rise of Convent Education in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 4 (2001): 489-521; Linda Lierheimer, "Female Eloquence and Maternal Ministry: the Apostolate of Ursuline Nuns in Seventeenth-century France," (PhD diss., Princeton, 1994); Linda Lierheimer, *The Life of Antoinette Micolon* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004); Roger Magnuson, *Education in New France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press,

sociological analyses of the Ursuline and other French teaching orders.⁸⁶

The next section of Chapter Two investigates the schools of the Port-Royal convent in France. Although Henry Clive Barnard's works on Port-Royal are from the early twentieth century, they are a valuable secondary source because they offer fantastic detail about circumstances for the schools' foundation, and even the social origins of the student population.⁸⁷ More recently, however, studies by F. Ellen Weaver and Nicholas Hammond have been published and are important in bringing the historiography of Port-Royal up to date.⁸⁸

Several able scholars have studied the school at Saint-Cyr for noble girls under Madame de Maintenon.⁸⁹ Carolyn Lougee gets special mention because she is one of the first historians to connect the drive for social control to the educational project of early modern Europe, and she does so with a girls' school. Her article, "Noblesse, Domesticity, and Social Reform: The Education of Girls by Fénelon and Saint-Cyr," (1974) is ground-breaking for identifying the central aspect that social reform Fénelon had for girls' education in his influential work, *Treatise on the Education of Girls*, which he then applied to Saint-Cyr through his alliance with Madame de Maintenon. Lougee sees the role of education at Saint-Cyr as a royal reform for the nobility by means of the indoctrination of noble girls.

1992); *Word from New France: the Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, ed. and trans. Joyce Marshall (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967).

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Elizabeth Rapley, "Women and the Religious Vocation in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (1994): 613-631; Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister*.

⁸⁷ Barnard, *The Little Schools*; Howard Clive Barnard, "Some Sources for French Educational History to 1789," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 2, no. 2 (1954): 166-169; Howard Clive Barnard, ed. and trans., *The Port-Royalists on Education: Extracts from the Educational Writings of the Port-Royalists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918).

⁸⁸ Hammond, *Fragmentary Voices*; Weaver, *The Evolution of the Reform of Port-Royal*.

⁸⁹ Louis L. Auchincloss, *False Dawn: Women in the Age of the Sun King* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1984); Lougee, "Noblesse."; Nyabongo, "Madame de Maintenon."

The final section of Chapter Two, on Catherine the Great's school for noble girls benefits from Carol S. Nash's "Educating New Mothers: Women and the Enlightenment in Russia" (1981), which applies Lougee's model to the Smolnyi Institute, arguing that Catherine used the schooling of girls to effect "... the transformation of Russian society on the assumption that the way to raise the general social level was through women and the family."⁹⁰ J. L. Black's *Citizens of the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (1979), and Gareth Jones' *Nikolay Novikov: Enlightener of Russia* (1984), contextualize educational reform in eighteenth-century imperial Russia by linking it to freemasonry and showing its promotion in the press, besides describing it as a keystone of Catherine's westernizing and modernizing agenda.⁹¹

Much of the secondary literature relating to Chapter Three, "English Schools and Mary Ward's Institute," deals with the "educational revolution" in sixteenth-century England. A few studies pertaining to girls' schooling have been helpful, and monographs, biographies, hagiographical in nature abound on Mary Ward. However, there exist very few scholarly studies without religious affiliation to Ward's congregation or the Society of Jesus. In general, early modern girls' schools have received little treatment in the history of English education, with the few studies that have been conducted dating back to the early twentieth century.⁹² Institutional and other sources are scarce, and until relatively recently, it was assumed that girls received informal training

⁹⁰ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 307.

⁹¹ J.L. Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Eastern Quarterly, Boulder, 1979); W. Gareth Jones, *Nikolay Novikov: Enlightener of Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁹² Dorothy Kempe Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School: a Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929); Lempriere, *A History*; Walter Adam Sampson, *A History of the Red Maids' School* (Bristol: n.p., 1908); Jean Vanes, *Apparelled in Red: the History of the Red Maids' School* (Gloucester: Red Maids' School, 1984).

at home, or none at all.⁹³ Joan Simon's *Education and Society in Tudor England* (1967), to be discussed more fully below, states that there were only two schools for girls in the sixteenth century. In fact, archival documents show that there were others, and we *can* clearly identify important features and functions of these institutions and show how they varied in composition, endowment, affiliation, and curriculum, even with limited records.

As a starting point, Craig R. Thompson's short work, *Schools in Tudor England* (1979), describes the two types of schools in operation for boys-- petty schools which taught students reading in the vernacular and the grammar schools which taught them Latin.⁹⁴ He outlines the master's responsibilities and gives important details on salaries and teaching methods, including classroom discipline.

By contrast, Lawrence Stone's article, "The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640" (1964), offers important theoretical considerations.⁹⁵ Stone's seminal work substantiates earlier claims that educational opportunity expanded very rapidly between 1560 and 1640, and he analyzed the nature of that expansion along class lines, finding the educational system to be fully stratified. Asserting that the landed classes were won over by the arguments of humanists, specifically that a classical education was a marker of worth, more and more sons of gentlemen went to university, and the academy grew as a result. At the same time, sons of professionals and the urban bourgeoisie (clergymen, lawyers, doctors, etc.) were increasingly enrolling at university, so much so that Stone argues that the "revolution" affected this "middle class" as much as it did the gentry.

⁹³ Caroline M. K. Bowden, "Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries in England and Wales: A Study of Attitudes and Practice," (PhD diss., London University, 1996); Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England*.

⁹⁴ Craig R. Thompson, *Schools in Tudor England* (The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1979).

⁹⁵ Lawrence Stone, "The Educational Revolution in England, 1560 - 1640," *Past and Present*, no. 28 (1964): 41-80.

Next, he identifies the enthusiasm of English puritans as a chief factor in the promotion of grammar schools, examining the connection puritans made between education and right moral Christian living. In conclusion, he notes that the intellectual climate and “widespread public participation” in many sophisticated debates, including the Debate on Women, occurs at the same time as the educational revolution, one growing out of the other.

Kenneth Charlton authored the first monograph on the subject, *Education in Renaissance England* (1965).⁹⁶ It covers much ground by examining grammar schools, universities, and the Inns at Court to give a general picture of education for the period. He corrects A. Leach’s portrayal of the Reformation as harming education by showing that many formerly Catholic schools were “continued and improved”; by the late-sixteenth century, many schools were controlled by the middle class who had a keen interest in their success.⁹⁷ The exposition includes a section on informal learning which took place in the home, in the vernacular, and alongside the printing press. Charlton identifies the birth of the vernacular and its wide dissemination by the printing press as the “most important aspect of the history of education.” The output of grammar books, primers, and translations of all sorts, manuals for merchants and tradesmen, and other materials for commercial education increased dramatically into the seventeenth century, allowing for much self-education. It is with the gentry that Charlton detects the most dramatic change during the Renaissance; as they gained a liberal education they became fit to hold governmental positions and become more active in the nation’s course.

⁹⁶ Kenneth Charlton, *Education in Renaissance England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

⁹⁷ Arthur Francis Leach, *English Schools at the Reformation, 1546-8* (Westminster: A. Constable & Co, 1896).

The indispensable work of Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (1967), describes the transition from the medieval model of education to the humanist model that John Colet, the Dean of the early sixteenth-century St. Paul's School in London, and his collaborators orchestrated.⁹⁸ Containing descriptions of teaching materials and children's texts along with an understanding of the new methods of instruction, Simon's work reports the growing demand for lay education which emerged in the fifteenth century and continued in the sixteenth century, in large part to accommodate London merchant families. The Reformation and the growth of vernacular culture expanded the interest in education and schools.

Next, Margaret Spufford's study "Schooling of Peasantry in Cambridgeshire, 1575-1700" (1970) focuses on male schooling and literacy, delineating late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century village educational opportunities.⁹⁹ She found that "interest in education permeated whole villages" and that increased literacy had a role in religious conversion to groups like the Quakers. While the yeoman class could not spare their children for "protracted schooling," they did so for rudimentary lessons in reading, writing, and accounts.¹⁰⁰

David Cressy's "Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England" (1976) considers the many obstacles the poor faced in accessing education.¹⁰¹ He argues that Simon and Stone underestimated the hardship lower class people had in getting an education. Distinguishing between poor children who were the sons of skilled laborers,

⁹⁸ Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

⁹⁹ Margaret Spufford, "Schooling the Peasantry in Cambridgeshire, 1575-1700," in *Land, Church, and People: Essays presented to Professor H.P.R. Finberg*, ed. Joan Thirsk (Reading, Berks.: Museum of English Rural Life, 1970), 112-147, 147.

¹⁰⁰ Spufford, "Schooling the Peasantry in Cambridgeshire, 1575-1700," 112-147, 147.

¹⁰¹ David Cressy, "Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England," *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1976): 301-320.

and the indigent poor who either did not have parents, or whose parents were destitute, Cressy shows that charity schools largely favored the working poor, and that “Free Schools” were not free at all, but had many charges for supplies attached to them. By further exploring the social dimensions of the educational revolution, Cressy contributes a more nuanced understanding of the stratified educational system.

Studies directly dealing with female learning and girls’ schooling in England are rarer. Dorothy Gardiner’s *English Girlhood at School: a Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries* (1929) probes the humanist literature and uncovers a new more hospitable attitude toward educating females.¹⁰² She also discusses religious refugees of the sixteenth century fleeing the continent and running schools in England for girls (foreign and English). In the seventeenth century, Gardiner points to the rise of the boarding-school, where daughters of the nobility and gentry learned dancing, music, embroidery, and writing. A number of charity schools, too, were founded in the seventeenth century, contributing to the diversity of schools in England for girls.

Josephine Kamm’s *Hope Deferred: Girls’ Education in English History* (1965) offers an overview of some of the major features in girls’ education, even if a clear argument for how and why the schools were begun is lacking.¹⁰³ The majority of the book pertains to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with a strong chapter on the charity schools of the eighteenth century. The two chapters that deal with early modern education for girls point to the elite women who achieved mastery of humanistic subjects with the aid of their families and tutors. For example, Kamm has a thorough review of Thomas More’s household. She has also identified the first girls’ schools at Christ’s

¹⁰² Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School*.

¹⁰³ Josephine. Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History* (London: Methuen & Co., 1965).

Hospital and the later seventeenth-century establishments, including some boarding schools in Hackney. Kamm's theoretical framework, however, is problematic. She claims that the Protestant reformers thought education for women was unnecessary because women would remain in the home: "No one would seek to denigrate the momentous results of the Reformation; and yet the theory which the Reformers propounded provided an excuse for another and infinitely more damaging theory, namely, that since women would have no career outside the home, it was pointless and might be harmful to try to cultivate their minds. This theory was to stand in the way of progress in women's education for another century and a half."¹⁰⁴ This statement can no longer be defended. By casting the Reformation as a formidable obstacle to girls' and women's education, Kamm cannot help but contradict herself repeatedly. As she herself notes, so many reformed educators including Richard Mulcaster, Bathsua Makin, and Hannah More worked to offer serious programs of study for girls to enhance their piety and provide them with skills to be utilized both inside and outside the home. Even the most ardent Protestants, like Thomas Becon and Mary Astell, wanted young girls to be educated for spiritual and moral reasons. In fact, the Reformation *encouraged* girls' education in early modern England. While many Catholic girls went to the Continent for studies, Protestant girls learned at home and with tutors, attended day schools and boarding schools with the approval of ministers, parents, and advocates. With the closing of convent schools during the Dissolution, there was the proliferation of new schools for girls that were solidly Anglican.

Pearl Hogrefe's *Tudor Women: Commoners and Queens* (1975) looks at the learned accomplishments of royalty and nobility as well as select "common" women who

¹⁰⁴ Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, 51.

received a humanistic education, especially highlighting the daughters and daughter-in-law of Thomas More.¹⁰⁵ The women she lists were all privileged to have tutors and did not attend schools. Nonetheless, the stories of these sixteenth-century women contribute immensely to the history of female learning for two reasons. First, as is argued in Chapter One of this dissertation, to a doubting world of male critics, they demonstrated that women, indeed, could master advanced subjects like ancient Greek, for example. Also, their high station and good reputations made them extraordinary role models for girls and young women to emulate for generations to come.

While only a small section of Rosemary O'Day's *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (1982) is devoted to female education, O'Day engages in some analysis of institutional records, as well as writings of a few British advocates for girls' education.¹⁰⁶ Finding very few schools in fifteenth-century England, she notes an increase through the year 1800, especially in schools for the orphaned or destitute, and boarding schools for the daughters of the gentry. Calling for more scholarship on the subject, O'Day is perhaps overly cautious when she states that the expansion of education and literacy did not lead to greater vocational opportunities or socio-political equality. Rather, viewed over the *longue durée*, early modern schools were certainly the seedbeds for change. With regard to the charity schools for girls that placed many into apprenticeships and domestic service, one must consider what the young girls' fates may have been like otherwise when assessing the opportunities offered. Death, starvation, homelessness, and a host of other

¹⁰⁵ Pearl Hogrefe, *Tudor Women: Commoners and Queens* (Ames, IA: Iowa State Press, 1975).

¹⁰⁶ Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society 1500 - 1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London: Longman, 1982).

undesirable fates were averted with the introduction of the charity school; any job over beggary and crime should be viewed as a favorable vocation.

Diane Willen's short but valuable article "A Comment on Women's Education in Elizabethan England" (1982) asks about the state of women's education outside of the aristocratic and gentry families, and encourages study across the class spectrum.¹⁰⁷ Acknowledging methodological challenges and the lack of ample records, Willen points to industrial education of sixteenth-century women as an area not yet examined.

Alice Friedman's "The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England" (1985) examines the personal records of pupils, tutors, parents, and guardians to recreate the type of education boys and girls of the upper gentry received at school or with their tutors.¹⁰⁸ First, Friedman emphasizes that even upper gentry girls were not offered a humanist education-- instead, they learned to read English, and sometimes they learned writing, French, music, and household accounts. Boys, though, graduated from their ABCs to read and write Latin and sometimes Greek, attend grammar schools, and higher institutions of learning. Following her descriptive work, Friedman posits a dubious argument that humanism worked to limit severely opportunities for girls and women. Instead of seeing humanism within a patriarchal society, she tries to persuade that humanism caused a stringent patriarchy, a line of argument that cannot hold. Her interpretation of Baldessare Castiglione's *Courtier* and Juan Luis Vives' *The Education of a Christian Woman* is arguably shortsighted, in that she gives both texts the most misogynistic reading possible, and largely ignores the enormously pro-feminine ideas therein. The advent of humanism in sixteenth-century

¹⁰⁷ Diane Willen, "A Comment on Women's Education in Elizabethan England," *Topic 36* (1982): 66-73.

¹⁰⁸ Friedman, "The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England."

England encouraged more, not less, appreciation for learning. While girls were not invited to attend grammar schools teaching the humanist program, certain star humanists like More, Erasmus, Vives, Elyot, and others saw that girls, too, were capable of advanced study and ought to be encouraged to learn privately. It should be acknowledged that the structures and attitudes of English patriarchal society were deeply ingrained before humanist education ever came to England. The development of separate spheres, which hardened in the eighteenth century and relegated upper-class women to the domestic sphere, was in no way dependent on humanism. An intricate combination of political, economic, religious, and social factors was responsible for making the public sphere a male domain.¹⁰⁹

Caroline Bowden's doctoral thesis, "Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries in England and Wales: a Study of Attitudes and Practices" (1996), considers informal domestic education.¹¹⁰ Looking primarily at family papers, Bowden reconstructs the type of education upper-class daughters received, and shows how education was applied when daughters took their places as estate and farm managers, and philanthropists. Among the landed classes, Bowden believes that girls did not attend schools, but rather received their training (character formation, training in housewifely skills and book learning) in the household of their birth family, or another household where their parents had sent them. While she acknowledges that schools were attended by poorer girls, she does not examine this facet of female education.

¹⁰⁹ Pamela Sharpe, *Women's Work: the English Experience, 1650 - 1914* (New York: Arnold, 1998); Robert Brink Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: the Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (New York: Longman, 1998).

¹¹⁰ Bowden, "Female Education."

Kenneth Charlton's *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England* (1999) defines education inclusively to embrace learning at home, at church, at school, in another's service/household, and in the wider world.¹¹¹ In doing so, his study presents a holistic view of how girls and women gained literacy, religious knowledge, and domestic skills both formally and informally. Charlton argues that in early modern England, the responsibility to educate and catechize children rested primarily on the Church's shoulders. Reformed Christians needed access to Scripture in the vernacular, and whether people received the Word through an aural or literal medium, the Church had to provide for this essential religious need. After the Church, responsibility fell to families, and Charlton records how seriously parents took this charge. Moral education and religious instruction took priority and was carried out either first in one's birth family, and often, by age seven or eight, in the household of another, usually a social superior. Charlton also looks at the advent of academies and schools for girls. Although few institutional records survive, letters and account books from gentry families enabled him to create a sizable list of seventeenth-century boarding schools in the suburbs of London and other areas. Also, at the same time, the petty "ABC" schools began welcoming girls to sit alongside boys for their lessons. While finding a precise number of these co-educational institutions would be impossible, Charlton rightly points out that many schools still expressly forbade girls' admission. He also concludes the book by acknowledging the formidable amount of work that remains to be done on girls' schooling.

The literature on Mary Ward's Institute has largely been written by members of Ward's congregation (and friendly Jesuits) in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

¹¹¹ Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England*.

Still, works by Sister Mary Catherine Elizabeth Chambers, Henry James Coleridge, S.J., Sister Mary Wright, Sister Henriette Peters, and others are invaluable for the source material and data interspersed throughout the narratives. Chambers' two-volume tome, *The Life of Mary Ward (1585-1645)* (1882), inaugurated Ward scholarship.¹¹² Chambers was writing especially for fellow Institute members all of whom had been forbidden to recognize their founder since Benedict XIV issued the papal bull, *Quamvis iusto*, in 1749.¹¹³ Admirably relying on the primary documents from many different houses of the Institute, Chambers offered a formidable first history of Ward's "English Ladies." This dissertation benefits greatly from Chambers' archival work, yet offers a different and unaffiliated history of Ward and her Institute.

Serving as Chambers' editor, Father Coleridge was himself author of *St. Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar York (1686-1887)* (1887).¹¹⁴ Coleridge writes of the convent at York as being the headquarters for Catholic families in the North. He casts the members of the Institute as heroines under God's protection doing the important work of securing the Catholic faith in England through girls' education. Father Coleridge is unapologetically telling the story of divine favor for Catholic perseverance during difficult times. Still, leaving questions of divine intervention aside, his thesis that the English Ladies at the Bar (Convent) sustained Catholicism through catechism and lessons taught at their school is persuasive. In truth, the York institute was the *only* place for girls in the north of England to go for a Catholic education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the descriptions he gives of the raids that the city

¹¹² Mary Catharine Elizabeth Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward (1585-1645)*, ed. Henry James Coleridge, vol. 1-2 (London: Burns and Oates, 1882).

¹¹³ Mary Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity* (Sydney: Crossing Press, 1997), 77.

¹¹⁴ Henry James S.J. Coleridge, *St. Mary's Convent, Micklegate Bar, York, (1686-1887)* (London: Burns and Oates, 1887).

officials carried out in order to find hidden priests and items used for Mass are so fully inspired by his faith in their detail of ghostly figures appearing in the sky to stop and awe the raiders, they remind the historian to use caution when reading his account. Two appendices are included in the volume and demonstrate the far reach of the Institute both at York and abroad. Coleridge compiled a list of students attending the school at York from 1710–1886, the records prior to 1710 are not extant. He also enumerates all of the houses of the Institute still in existence in 1886.

More than a century later, Sister Henriette Peters' *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, first published in German (1991), was translated into English in 1994.¹¹⁵ Peters' biography is strongly influenced by the author's membership in the Institute, and it was supervised by the Reverend Mother General Immolata Wetter. It is unfortunate that the wide array of primary texts Peters draws upon is not properly elucidated in her work. Much of the evidence for the Institute is paraphrased and often lacks citations. Still, one can benefit from the fantastic detail that Peters gives regarding Mary Ward's religious vocation and mysticism.

In essence, Peters plausibly casts Mary Ward as a woman who accepted what she believed to be a divine command to found an Institute for women on the model of the Society of Jesus. However, her argument that the mission to convert souls in England was a primary concern that Mary Ward held for her Institute does not fit the evidence of Ward's activity on the continent. Clearly, though, it was important to Ward, and a goal she wished to fulfill, but the wish for an active mission in England pales in comparison with the Institute's success in offering girls' education. Instead, as this dissertation

¹¹⁵ Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, ed. and trans. Helen Butterworth (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishers, 1994).

shows in Chapter Three, offering girls' schooling was the primary focus of the seventeenth-century Institute and was the only aspect of the Institute that secured any measure of acceptance among secular and religious officials. What Peters does offer is a scholarly *Laudatio* based upon her approval and sympathies with Mary Ward. The extensive amount of archival research mounted to understand Ward's difficult task in founding the Institute in a largely hostile environment produces a better informed biography than Chambers' work, which had been the standard biography used in the field since the late nineteenth century. Peters is able to correct Chambers' information and speculative points on several occasions, uncovering that Chambers accepted uncritically points made in the Italian and English *Vitae*. Both of these documents contain exaggerations and erroneous information. Peters offers reliable, if scanty, information regarding the student populations, but is more thorough regarding information for foundation dates, membership in the communities, and benefactors. This dissertation benefits from her research in these areas.

In *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity* (1997), Sister Mary Wright focuses on the history of Mary Ward's Institute after the Papal Bull of Suppression in 1631.¹¹⁶ She explains how the Institute carried on despite its official censure. Beginning in 1666, different surviving houses and new foundations sought informal and formal Episcopal support. Wright's contribution in uncovering the legal and constitutional issues surrounding the Institute's status is unique and much needed in Mary Ward studies. She describes how in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, independent houses were established, so that by the nineteenth century there were three independent Generalates (Roman, Irish, and North American) that were inspired by Mary Ward,

¹¹⁶ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*.

recognizing her as their true founder. Close reading of the *Constitutions* of these later foundations reveals striking departures from Mary Ward's original Plan, but those departures were rewarded with Papal recognition in 1703. Wright appends the following primary documents to her study: the Papal Bull of Suppression (1631), Papal Brief *Inscrutabili* (1703), Apostolic Constitution, *Quamvis iusto* (1749), and the *Decree of Approbation and Confirmation of the IBVM* (1877), as well as a petition to the Sacred Congregation for Religious to allow the IBVM to recognize Mary Ward as their founder (1909).

Sister Margaret Mary Littlehailes' *Mary Ward: Pilgrim and Mystic, 1585-1645* (1998) is the first "popular" volume on Ward.¹¹⁷ So, while it lacks the full scholarly apparatus, it contains several gorgeous glossy reproductions of the paintings in the series called *The Painted Life*, which is a collection of seventeenth-century paintings depicting momentous occasions in Mary Ward's life. A chronology and the addition of key documents regarding the Institute's work and censure signal the "average reader" that there is much to explore about Ward's Institute. Littlehailes aptly characterizes Ward as a talented and inspired mystic. She argues that Ward's work was directed toward creating an apostolic life for women religious, and that her life's work was directed toward gaining approbation for the Institute.

Sister Jennifer J. Cameron's *A Dangerous Innovator: Mary Ward (1585-1645)* (2000) offers a characterization of Mary Ward that is less concerned with mysticism and more concerned with Ward's service to others.¹¹⁸ Interestingly, this may be the only

¹¹⁷ Margaret Mary Littlehailes, *Mary Ward: Pilgrim and Mystic, 1585-1645* (Turnbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1998).

¹¹⁸ Jennifer J. Cameron, *A Dangerous Innovator: Mary Ward (1585-1645)* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Pauls, 2000).

work by an Institute member that is at pains *not* to depict Mary Ward as an exceptional person for her times. Instead, Cameron places her among other similar-minded Catholic women (like Angela Merici, Luisa de Carvajal, et al.) who, although innovative, were not iconoclastic as they set about to do religious and educational work in society.

Cameron's work is also useful for the appendices therein which contain primary sources: Mary Ward's "Verity Speech" (1617), Papal Bull of Suppression of the Institute (1631), and Mary Ward's Declaration to the Holy Office while she was in prison (1631). Lastly, in the *Afterword*, short biographical sketches of Mary Ward's companions describe the seven "English Ladies" who helped to establish the Institute. Besides its important historical content, the inclusion of this *Afterword* aids Cameron's point that Mary Ward was not an oddity for her age; her sisters are shown to have the same recusant background and devotion to the Catholic faith that Ward displayed.

The Epilogue, "Co-education and the Rights of Woman," is concerned with two figures to whom an enormous sum of scholarship has been devoted: Mary Wollstonecraft and the thinker she most directly confronts about women's education, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Most studies about Wollstonecraft, however, do not consider the role of education in women's quest for rights and liberation. So, while much has been written about her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as political theory and nascent feminist theory, her call for national co-education has been neglected. As argued in the Epilogue, for the history of education Wollstonecraft represents "the next big step" for ideas about girls' schooling. Studies on Rousseau, for the purposes of this dissertation, have been limited to those considering his ideas about women's nature and women's education.

Chief among the biographies consulted in order to pinpoint the origins of Wollstonecraft's radicalization are Lyndall Gordon's *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2005), and Janet Todd's *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (2000).¹¹⁹ Fundamentally misreading Wollstonecraft, this dissertation will argue, Todd compares her subject to Thomas Paine, and finds her lacking. She writes: "She could not be straightforwardly revolutionary like Paine, who wanted society transformed through a change in institutions; instead, she sought a basic psychological and personal reform that must come from change in individual attitudes."¹²⁰ In neglecting Wollstonecraft's call and plan for national co-educational schooling, Todd has also missed Wollstonecraft's strategy in achieving rights for women. It is precisely through state-run institutions (co-educational schools) that Wollstonecraft devises a "revolution in manners," psychological reform, and political reform.

Other studies touch on Wollstonecraft's plans for female education more directly. In *Early Feminists and the Education Debates: England, France, Germany (1760-1810)* (2007), Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos presents eight different reformers, among whom is Mary Wollstonecraft. Sotiropoulos discusses the rhetorical strategies employed by Wollstonecraft that were used to overcome "the challenges facing women writing about women."¹²¹ She also ascertains the central role that reason and education play in Wollstonecraft's revolution: "Reason is the key to overturning the miseducation traceable

¹¹⁹ Lyndall Gordon, *Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005); Diane Jacobs, *Her Own Woman: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001); Janet M. Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

¹²⁰ Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 186.

¹²¹ Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos, *Early Feminists and the Education Debates: England, France, Germany 1760-1810* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 153.

to familial upbringing, conduct books, and schools of accomplishment.”¹²² With regard to Wollstonecraft’s plan for education, Sotiropoulos believes Wollstonecraft was emphasizing the “socializing benefits of familiarity” over an academic program.¹²³ Certainly, Wollstonecraft hoped the schools would accomplish a multiplicity of desired ends. As is borne out in the *Vindication*, she hoped the schools would offer girls and boys equal educational opportunity, develop their faculties of reason, and provide a nurturing environment whereby a model of companionate relationships between men and women could come into existence.

Penny A. Weiss’s project in her “Wollstonecraft and Rousseau: The Gendered Fate of Political Theorists” (1996) is to undo the “relative invisibility of Mary Wollstonecraft” in the history of political theory.¹²⁴ She contrasts the reception of Wollstonecraft and Rousseau, finding that “the fate of political theorists is strongly affected by gender.”¹²⁵ Rousseau is always appreciated as a founding theorist, and Wollstonecraft as either a derivative liberal theorist, or as the first feminist (which historically has marginalized her).¹²⁶ This dissertation heartily accepts Weiss’ notion that “To call her [Wollstonecraft] the first is utterly to wipe out the many women writing in favor of women’s emancipation before her.”¹²⁷ Applying this idea to Wollstonecraft’s call for girls’ schooling (and its connection to “women’s emancipation”), is part of the motivation for including Wollstonecraft in the dissertation as the subject of the final

¹²² Sotiropoulos, *Education Debates*, 155.

¹²³ Sotiropoulos, *Education Debates*, 160.

¹²⁴ Penny A. Weiss, “Wollstonecraft and Rousseau: The Gendered Fate of Political Theorists,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Maria J. Falco (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 15-32, 15.

¹²⁵ Weiss, “Wollstonecraft and Rousseau,” 29.

¹²⁶ Weiss, “Wollstonecraft and Rousseau,” 25.

¹²⁷ Weiss, “Wollstonecraft and Rousseau,” 26.

chapter. As a bridge between the early modern and the modern, Wollstonecraft borrowed and reiterated central ideas that earlier advocates of girls' education and schooling generated. From there, she was able to imagine new possibilities.

Mary Seidman Trouille's *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (1997) deals specifically with Rousseau's reception by women in the eighteenth century, and includes Wollstonecraft.¹²⁸ Trouille defines the role Rousseau reserved for women in his alternative or ideal society, pulling from *Julie* and *Émile* the kernels of Rousseau's position on women.¹²⁹ Yet, while her work goes a long way in explaining to the modern reader the appeal of *Julie* to female readers, Trouille finds Rousseau overwhelmingly antagonistic to women.¹³⁰ Moving to the *Émile*, she finds Rousseau more than "paternalistic;" he is "misogynic."¹³¹ (Not surprisingly, most of the studies on Rousseau and women have found him to be so.) The value of Trouille's work is that she analyzes the variety of contemporary (or nearly so) female reactions to Rousseau and his works. Particular attention is paid to Madame de Staël and Wollstonecraft, both of whom admired Rousseau and yet criticized his views of women's nature. Trouille also discusses Wollstonecraft's sharp critique of Staël, whom Wollstonecraft lambasted for condoning the system of male oppression in praising Rousseau, as she saw it, uncritically.¹³² In *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment*, the

¹²⁸ Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

¹²⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, ed. and trans. Barbara Foxley, *The Everyman Library* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or, The New Héloïse*, ed. and trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997).

¹³⁰ Trouille, *Sexual Politics*, 64.

¹³¹ Trouille, *Sexual Politics*, 64.

¹³² Trouille, *Sexual Politics*, 221.

variety of responses Rousseau provoked from women is admirably laid out and interpreted.

The most thorough exegetical work on Rousseau's proposal for women's education is offered in Helen Evans Misenheimer's *Rousseau on the Education of Women* (1981).¹³³ While Misenheimer locates the crux of Rousseau's position on women in his belief that women do not reason, but rather, largely, rely on sentiment and their passions to sway them, Misenheimer does not characterize Rousseau as an enemy of women. Instead, she argues that he helped establish "the importance of woman in her role as a vital force in the post-revolutionary climate."¹³⁴ With skilled close readings of the *Émile*, *Julie* and other lesser known works, it is surprising that Misenheimer does not relate Rousseau's ideas to anything concrete in the history of schooling or in the debate on women.

From the field of education, Bernadette Baker contributes a much needed examination of Rousseau's ascent to the canon for teacher training programs. Specifically, Baker traces the receptivity of Continental, British, and American audiences of Rousseau's *Émile*, in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. She argues that visions of state had much to do with "*Émile*'s undulating fortunes," as they "conferred acceptability or debarred Emile's importance in synoptic views of education."¹³⁵ Highlighting the late-nineteenth-century American case, she finds that a turn to "child-sympathy" in education,

¹³³ Helen Evans Misenheimer, *Rousseau on the Education of Women* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).

¹³⁴ Misenheimer, *On the Education*, 74.

¹³⁵ Bernadette Baker, "Appointing the Canon Rousseau's Emile, Visions of the State, and Education," *Educational Theory* 51, no. 1 (2001): 1.

and to Republican Motherhood as the norm for women's activity in the state contributed to the appropriation of Rousseau in teacher preparation programs.¹³⁶

Since the Epilogue is concerned with Wollstonecraft's response to Rousseau, Edward Duffy's *Rousseau in England* (1979) is an especially relevant work.¹³⁷ Duffy describes Rousseau's immense popularity in England in the early 1760s and his subsequent unpopularity after 1766 on account of his "unattractive personal history" and public quarrel with philosopher David Hume, who had hosted him. Somewhat unsettling, then, is the urgency of Wollstonecraft's denouncement of Rousseau's ideas in the *Vindication*, if he was truly as unpopular as Duffy relates. When Wollstonecraft was writing in 1791, it is possible that the memory of Rousseau "the prophet of the Revolution" was shunned in England, while his ideas on women's nature and education were enshrined. Certainly, in the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft identifies her male English contemporaries who followed Rousseau's lead in regard to women's education and they, like Rousseau, undergo a severe reappraisal.

¹³⁶ Baker, "Appointing the Canon," 27-28.

¹³⁷ Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

Primary Literature Consulted

As Chapter One examines the intellectual history of the debate on women, and how notions of women's worth and their perceived capacity for learning formed an important segment of the debate, the primary source materials drawn upon are key texts in the *querelle des femmes*, humanist letters and treatises, and essays and treatises from seventeenth-century pedagogues. The selected primary texts range in nature from popular to scholarly and from private to public. Key texts from the late medieval period that paved the way for the early modern debate on women, like Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose*, Christine de Pisan's *Book of the City of Ladies*, provide a starting point in considering the woman question.¹³⁸ The fourteenth-century work, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, which deals with the aristocratic education of girls is also discussed in this chapter.¹³⁹

The resource that this chapter relies upon as a cornerstone is the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, published by the University of Chicago Press. Twelve volumes from this ever-expanding series of women's writing form the backbone of primary literature used to understand the arguments and advocacy of women's worth and learning.¹⁴⁰ Mentioned above, in the section on secondary literature, is the

¹³⁸ Giovanni Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*, ed. and trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, ed. and trans. Ann McMillan (Houston: Rice University Press, 1987); Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. Charles W. Dunn, trans. Harry W. Robbins (New York: Dutton, 1962); Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, ed. and trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1982).

¹³⁹ Geoffroy de La Tour, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, ed. M.Y. Offord, trans. William Caxton (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

¹⁴⁰ Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, ed. and trans. Albert Jr. Rabil (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Laura Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, ed. and trans. Diana Robin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Marie le Jars de Gournay, *Apology for Woman Writing and Other Works*, ed. and trans.

acknowledgement of the rich introductory essays contained in each volume, but the scholarly translations of the texts themselves and the accompanying notes make hitherto little-known texts available and accessible.

Added to this core of primary texts are several important English works on the same theme of women's worth and education. Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster*, Thomas Becon's *New Catechism*, John Dury's *The Reformed School*, Bathsua Makin's *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, and Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* shed light upon the new arguments advocating for girls' schooling.¹⁴¹ Letters and treatises from the famous sixteenth-century northern humanists that continued to influence opinion and pedagogical theory into the eighteenth century are also central in this chapter, including: *The Erasmus Reader* and *Erasmus on Women*, translated and edited by Erika Rummel; *Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, edited by Clarence Miller; and *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, edited by Elizabeth Frances Rogers.¹⁴² Lastly, Johannes Amos Comenius' *The Great Didactic* (written between

Richard Hillman and Colette Quesnel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Cassandra Fedele, *Letters and Orations*, ed. and trans. Diana Robin (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000); Fonte, *Worth of Women*; Lucrezia Marinella, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women, and the Defects and Vices of Men*, ed. Anne Dunhill, trans. Letizia Panizza and Anne Dunhill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Olympia Fulvia Morata, *The Complete Writings of an Italian Heretic*, ed. and trans. Holt N. Parker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Nogarola, *Complete Writings*; François Poullain de La Barre, *Three Cartesian Feminist Treatises*, ed. Marcelle Maistre Welch, trans. Vivien Bosley (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002); Arcangela Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, ed. and trans. Letizia Panizza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Anna Maria van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle*, ed. and trans. Joyce E. Irwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Vives, *Education*.

¹⁴¹ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968); Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True & Greatest Interests* (New York: Source Book Press, 1970); Thomas Becon, *Newe Catechisme* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1968; reprint, 1968); John Dury, *The Reformed School and the Reformed Library Keeper* (Menston, Yorks: Scholar Press, 1972); Bathsua Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (Los Angeles: William Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1980).

¹⁴² Desiderius Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," in *The Erasmus Reader*, ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990) 65-100; St. Thomas More Project, ed., *Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 3, Part II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Elizabeth Frances Rogers, ed., *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Rummel, ed., *Erasmus on Women*.

1628-1632, and published in 1657) represents the first call for universal schooling and is featured prominently in the chapter as well.¹⁴³

The primary literature that informs Chapter Two is quite different from the above; largely, it is institutional in character. School records, especially rules, curricula, mission statements, and decrees have been assembled and analyzed to offer a picture of what schooling looked like under the Ursuline (Italian and French), Port-Royalist, Dames of Saint-Louis, and Catherine the Great's direction. For the Order of St. Ursula, the founding documents dictated by Angela Merici are used in understanding the early mission of this northern Italian innovative association of female religious. All quotations and reference to Merici's *Rule*, *Counsels*, and *Testament* are from the earliest extant manuscript, the Trivulzian Codex (1545/6), which is printed as an appendix in Waters' book, *The Ursuline Achievement*.¹⁴⁴ Waters offers the text in its original Italian and in English translation.

These three documents were addressed to different groups of people based on their function within the Order or in association with the Order. The *Regola*, composed of ten short chapters, was for the governance of the Order, and speaks primarily to Merici's "daughters and sisters," although the final chapter deals in part with the election of outside protectors and protectresses: four mature men and four mature widows. The tone of the work combines a maternal love and urgency for faith with spiritual consolation in the face of real danger. The *Arricordi*, in nine sections and addressed to the *colonelle* (district leaders) of the Order, shares this maternal and urgent tone, but because Merici gives advice on how to care for the members of the Order and the

¹⁴³ Johannes Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*, ed. and trans. M.W. Keatinge, vol. 2 (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1923).

¹⁴⁴ Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 112-149.

“daughters,” who are secular girls receiving training from the Ursulines, the document also resembles a spiritually infused teacher training manual. Lastly, the *Testamento*, made up of eleven legacies, was addressed to the *Matrone* (Lady Governors), who were not only benefactors of the Order, but also motherly figures for the sisters and daughters; it has a less authoritative tone because Merici was enlisting the support of noble ladies and begging them to safeguard the new community and each and every individual within its care.

Additionally, Danielle Culpepper’s translation of “Aggiunta per le Sig.re Dozinanti,” from *Libro degli Ordini* (1659), written by Bridiga di Gesu, has been consulted for the Italian Ursuline foundation in Piacenza, Italy.¹⁴⁵ This document announces the dual goal of achieving religious perfection as individual souls, and serving one’s neighbors “not only with prayers” but with instruction in virtue and piety. For the female pupils entrusted to them, the Ursulines would also teach academic subjects: “reading, writing, accounting, drawing, embroidery, and any other work [for] which they have an aptitude.” Culpepper obtained this document in the Archivio delle Orsoline di Maria Immacolata, of Piacenza, Italy.

Materials from the Archives and Special Collections at the Gill Memorial Library of the Ursuline College of New Rochelle (NY) have contributed greatly to this study.¹⁴⁶ It is the only collection in the United States that contains rare seventeenth-century volumes for the Order. As the review of the secondary literature shows, most studies of the Ursulines have been by members of the Order. By using the materials described

¹⁴⁵ The translation was provided by Danielle Culpepper, Mary Washington University, to attendees of the *Attending to Early Modern Women and Men* conference at the University of Maryland (November, 2006).

¹⁴⁶ A debt of gratitude is owed to Martha Counihan, O.S.U., archivist at the College of New Rochelle, who although partially immobilized with an injury, was able to guide me through the collection.

below, Chapter Two represents a new and unaffiliated history of the Order, with an emphasis on the perceived utility the Order had for early modern society and the Counter-Reformation Church. The message of societal reformation through Ursuline education of boarders and day students was articulated in 1617 by Paul V. In promulgating the *Bull*, the Pope adopted the new understanding of female worth and abilities for the purposes of education and religion. The *Bull* itself can be seen as the guiding principle of the Order (post-1617) and serves to reinforce this dissertation's thesis about the acceptance of a new characterization of the female sex and its connection to education and schools. A more detailed description of the document follows below.

The *Vita della Sante Madre Angela Merici*, written by Filippo Maria Salvatori, titled for the main document it contains, the *Vita*, also contains Paul V's *Bull* (1617) introduced above.¹⁴⁷ While the *Vita* itself is less important to the history of girls' schooling, the *Bull* is an essential document in reckoning the mass proliferation of Ursuline schools in France. The Pope gives several key reasons for supporting the Ursuline mission, which since Merici death's had been cloistered and transformed into a teaching vocation. Above all, the Pope's message is that the Ursulines would affect a return to orthodoxy for society by educating girls, who in turn spread virtue and morality throughout society. Paul V identifies female students as a conduit to reformation (religious and social). He goes beyond the benefits each pupil receives as an individual to state, ". . . besides benefiting themselves, they would be of no small assistance to others as well; in fact, even their own parents and other older persons are likely to benefit from private family conversation with them and thus learn from them the dogmas of the

¹⁴⁷ Filippo Maria Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V: Sanctioning the Classes of the Cloistered Ursulines Founded by Cardinal de Sourdis of Bordeaux," in *Vita della santa madre Angela Merici*, ed. Ursulines of Brown County (Saint Martin, OH: Ursulines of Brown County, 1970).

Catholic Faith.”¹⁴⁸ With this ruling, the Church identified and relied upon a new group of young Ursuline-educated girls, to spread its word and secure its future.

Additionally, the following primary texts from the Ursuline Collection have been consulted:

Coutumier ou Directoire (Grenoble, 1645) written by a member of the Lyons Congregation, Catherine Ranquet.¹⁴⁹ This printed book is a detailed manual for Ursuline sisters teaching both day student and boarders. To date, I have not read any study of the order that includes it, and it is a valuable source. The *Coutumier* discusses how to go about teaching the girls to read, write, pray, speak, and in the case of the boarders, dress, eat, sleep, play, and attend to their *toilette*. In short, it deals with every aspect of daily life and elementary education. Ranquet provides a list of approved books, so that the teachers will not stray from what is known to be safe and virtuous. The separate regulations given for day students is an especially interesting aspect of this source because it bespeaks an added urgency for right education by the Ursuline teachers, for a student population viewed as more susceptible to damnation because it did not have the benefit of the cloister around the clock. Also, it contains a discussion of disciplinary measures that should be applied to resistant learners.

Similarly, the *Règles et constitutions de l'institut et compagnie des religieuses de Sainte Ursule* (Bordeaux, 1683) is a collection of regulations to be followed for the convents of the Bordeaux congregation.¹⁵⁰ Specifically, a consideration of the following chapters have been incorporated into this study, “Statuts des Soeurs de Sainte Ursule pour

¹⁴⁸ Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V," 206.

¹⁴⁹ Catherine de Jesus Ranquet, *Coutumier ou directoire pour les religieuses de Sainte Ursule* (Grenoble: Chez Pierre Verdier, 1645).

¹⁵⁰ *Règles et constitutions de l'institut et compagnie des religieuses de Sainte Ursule*, (Bordeaux: G. de la Court, 1683).

la direction & instruction des petites filles écolieres & pensionnaires,” and “La charge de la Mere des Pensionnaires” and “Le charge de la Mere des Classes.” To love the day students and boarders equally, though they hail from different social groups, is but one of the charges the teachers heard. Matters of curriculum are also included in these sections. For example, the rules state that learning to read in French and Latin was mandatory for all students, while writing may have only been required in French. The only permitted language for speaking was French. Also, the teaching of Christian Doctrine and other religious observances is specified, and a procedure for receiving visiting parents is announced. The source also contains the *Bull* of Paul V, in both Latin and French, which announced the Bordelaise approbation.

A rich collection of *vitae* for seventeenth-century French Ursulines makes up much of the content of *Les chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines* (Paris, 1673).¹⁵¹ The *Chronicle* begins with the origins of Merici's foundation and proceeds to the earliest French Ursulines who carried the mission (“*une nouvelle maniere de faire la guerre à ennemis*”) into France.¹⁵² It also discusses the “*generosité extraordinaire*” of the French Ursulines who ventured across the Atlantic Ocean with an apostolic mission to instruct the “*Sauvages du Canada*.”¹⁵³ Also included are letters to and from Jesuit fathers who served as confessors to the Ursulines.

Often cited in most works on the Order of St. Ursula is the *Reglemens des Religieuses Ursulines de la Congregation de Paris* (Paris, 1705).¹⁵⁴ This source, made up of three parts, is virtually identical to earlier versions reviewed in *Historical Study of*

¹⁵¹ Ursuline, *Les chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines*.

¹⁵² Ursuline, *Les chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines*, 15.

¹⁵³ Ursuline, *Les chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines*, 379.

¹⁵⁴ *Reglemens des religieuses Ursulines de la congregation de Paris*, (Paris: Chez Louis Josse, 1705).

the Constitutions of the Ursulines of the Congregation of Paris, 1608-1923 (which is also housed at the Gill Memorial Library of the College of New Rochelle).¹⁵⁵ The first part deals with matters of education for the boarding students, the second with the day students, and the third with administrative matters like elections and offices within the Order. Like the Grenoble and Bordelais texts above, it is a comprehensive guide for daily life and teaching in the Parisian foundations. Covering everything from curricular matters to acceptable hairstyles for the boarders, it is a veritable mine of information about France's most popular teaching order.

If *Constitutions et règlements des premières Ursulines de Québec* (ca. 1659-1660, reprint 1974) is a blend of the Parisian and Bordelais rules on account of the "mixed" nature of the mission to Canada, it is also a hybrid document in the sense that it contends with the acculturation of indigenous girls and the management of French colonial girls.¹⁵⁶ The daily schedules are given for boarders and day students, and notably, the "séminaristes sauvages" have different teachers and separate lessons.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, an existence of a type of Sunday school is described, where the Ursulines taught the poor and servants of the area Christian Doctrine, signaling that the former cloistered way of life was dispensed of with the advent of New World duties.

The next schools discussed in Chapter Two are those run by the Port-Royalists: Port-Royal des Champs and Port-Royal de Paris. Agnès Arnauld, one of the seventeenth-century abbesses of the convent wrote the *Constitutions du Monastère de Port-Royal* in 1665. This work is reproduced in Barnard's *The Port-Royalists on Education: Extracts*

¹⁵⁵ The Ursulines of Caldwell Ohio, "Historical Study of the Constitutions of the Ursulines of the Congregation of Paris, 1608 - 1923" (unpublished paper, 1925).

¹⁵⁶ Jerome Lalemant, *Constitutions et règlements des premières Ursulines de Québec* (Québec: N.p., 1974).

¹⁵⁷ Lalemant, *Constitutions*, 105-107.

from the *Educational Writings of the Port-Royalists* (1918), together with other important documents, like Jacqueline Pascal's *Regulations* (1657).¹⁵⁸ The Barnard text has been replaced with a modern critical edition by John J. Conley, *A Rule for Children and Other Writing* (2003), which in addition to Pascal's *Regulations* also contains her poetry and letters.¹⁵⁹

Sources pertaining to Madame de Maintenon's school at Saint-Cyr, the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis, largely come from another of Conley's books, *Madame de Maintenon: Dialogues and Addresses*.¹⁶⁰ This work includes Maintenon's writings and speeches for the teachers, as well as those given directly to the students. Her works detail the novel experiment of schooling noble girls for the good of the French monarchy, explicitly impressing the pupils to feel gratitude for the King and his benevolence, and to follow Maintenon's opinion in all matters, political and religious.

The schools begun by Catherine II, Empress of Russia, are known through the decrees she promulgated and the letters she wrote to her students and select *philosophes*, like Voltaire and Grimm about her educational project. Specifically, her 1767, *Nakaz: Instructions to the Commission for the Composition of a Plan of a New Code of Laws*, includes the reforms she instituted for an imperial system of schools.¹⁶¹ A recent edition of Catherine's correspondence from the early 1770's provides a less institutional glimpse of Catherine's educational agenda not only for girls, although they would be instrumental

¹⁵⁸ Agnès Arnauld, "Constitutions du Monastère de Port-Royal," in *The Port-Royalists on Education: Extracts from the Educational Writings of the Port-Royalists*, ed. and trans. Howard Clive Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918); Barnard, ed., *Port-Royalists*; Pascal, *A Rule*.

¹⁵⁹ Pascal, *A Rule*.

¹⁶⁰ Maintenon, *Dialogues and Addresses*; Katharine Prescott Wormeley, ed., *The Correspondence of Madame, Princess Palatine, Mother of the Regent; of Marie-Adelaide de Savoie, Duchesse de Bourgogne; and of Madame de Maintenon, in Relation to Saint-Cyr* (Boston: Hardy, Pratt, 1899).

¹⁶¹ Catherine, "Nakaz: Instructions to the Commission for the Composition of a Plan of a New Code of Laws," in *Russia Under Catherine the Great*, ed. Paul Dukes (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1767).

in reforming the nobility through what they would learn at the Smolnyi Institute, but, indeed, for a whole new society.¹⁶²

The primary sources used in writing Chapter Three were viewed during a funded research trip to England. Archives and collections in London, Bristol, Warwick, and York were visited in 2006, and materials handled add new evidence for the history of girls' charity schools, boarding schools and Mary Ward's Institute. The sources for these new schools are varied, ranging from foundation bequests, admission registers, orations, petitions, inventories, and school rules to prose works by the benefactors. Documents for Christ's Hospital were accessed at the Guildhall Library, Manuscripts Section in the Christ's Hospital Papers collection. Apart from the documents that attest to the urge to instill adherence to the Anglican Church, combat idleness and depravity among London's poor, and save babies from exposure and starvation in the streets, the admissions roster containing personal information on the sixteenth-century charity school students has been printed.¹⁶³ Often an entry includes the child's name and age at admittance, father's profession, and fate. Where recorded, information about being out to nurse in the country, apprenticeship, adoption, and death makes this source unrivalled in its detail for any population of girls attending school at this time. By extracting information about the female student population from the roster, and doing statistical analysis, this dissertation makes new and important assertions about the class origins of the attendees, the circumstances of their enrollment, the pupils' outcomes, and the school's mission. A series of charts is appended to the dissertation and illuminate various trends for the sample period, 1554-1578.

¹⁶² Robin Bisha et al., trans. and eds., *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression, An Anthology of Sources* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002).

¹⁶³ Christ's Hospital, ed., *Christ's Hospital*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison, 1937).

Also, the writings of the most fervent advocate and philanthropist for the girls' programs at Christ Hospital in the seventeenth century, and his friend's panegyric to him, were viewed at the British Library.¹⁶⁴ Only by consulting these sources can the relationship between the charity school and the nascent workhouse be discerned and understood. Firmin, who wanted poverty, suffering, immorality and ignorance wiped out of England, pioneered new forms of social welfare in education and work programs.

In Bristol, documents regarding the municipal charities that administered the Red Maids' School include the seventeenth-century Treasurer and Receiver's Accounts, as well as the "Address to Maiors Lady of the Citty," which is a description of the duties that the Aldermen's wives had in overseeing matters at the school.¹⁶⁵ Other documents in the Bristol Municipal Charities collection, like parent and student petitions, leases, and letters were viewed and incorporated, as well.

The Warwick archive provided this study with new evidence for girls' schools not previously discussed in the literature. Seventeenth-century papers for Sir Francis Nethersole, George Abbot of Caldecote, Thomas Coton, Esq., and Mr. John Smarte of Rumford, were discovered and reveal a trend in this locale for instituting girls' schools in Warwickshire, York, and Stratford.

For original source material pertaining to the emergent early modern boarding schools in England, three documents have proven especially enlightening. The first is "The Virgins Pattern: in the Exemplary Life, and Lamented Death of Susanna Perwich,"

¹⁶⁴ Gentleman of His Acquaintance, *The Charitable Samaritan; or, A short and Impartial Account of that Eminent and Publick-Spirited Citizen Mr. Tho. Firmin*. . . (London: n.p., 1698); Thomas Firmin, *Some Proposals for the Employing of the Poor, especially in and about London, and for the Prevention of Begging, in a Letter to a Friend*. (London: Brabazon Alymer, 1678); Stephen Nye, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Firmin* (London: A. Baldwin in Warwicklane, 1698).

¹⁶⁵ Address to Maiors Lady of the Citty, 1621-1751, Alderman John Whitson's Charities, Bristol Record Office.

written by Perwich's cousin, John Batchiler.¹⁶⁶ Perwich was a prodigal student at her parents' boarding school in Hackney, and became a teacher there. Her cousin commemorates her life and death, urging girls at school to follow her upright and intellectual model. Second is the preface to Claudius Mauger's *The True Advancement of the French Tongue*, which he presented to the English boarding school set as the avant-garde in French language instruction.¹⁶⁷ On account of his preface, we know now about a school heretofore overlooked, Mrs. Kilvert's school, which educated girls in the 1650s.

Similarly, through a male relative's work, *The Young Ladies' Miscellany: or, Youth's Innocent and Rational Amusement* (1723), two other women's boarding schools come to light. Daniel Bellamy (b. 1687) dedicated this work to his sister, Mrs. Hannah Wood, whom he lists as the "School Mistress of the College-Boarding School in Bury" (Suffolk County).¹⁶⁸ In addition, from him we learn that his wife, Mrs. Bellamy, was the school mistress of a boarding school at Old Boswell-Court in Buckinghamshire. *The Young Ladies' Miscellany* is a collection of short essays on girls' education, and letters to his wife and her pupils. Here Bellamy pays tribute to Fénelon and Erasmus, whom he regards as the sage advocates in girls' education and schooling. Bellamy's writing attests to the significant legacies that both Fénelon and Erasmus left the eighteenth century.

A visit to the Bar Convent Archive in York, England, has made possible a substantial contribution to our knowledge of Mary Ward's Institute. Ward's associate Frances Bedingfield founded the Bar Convent in 1686, today's oldest surviving convent

¹⁶⁶ John Batchiler, *The Virgins Pattern: in the Exemplary Life, and Lamented Death of Susanna Perwich* (London: Printed for Simon Dover, 1661).

¹⁶⁷ Claudius Mauger, *The True Advancement of the French Tongue* (London: Tho. Roycroft for J. Martin and J. Allestrye at the Bell in St. Pauls Church, 1652).

¹⁶⁸ Daniel Bellamy, *The Young Ladies Miscellany: or, Youth's Innocent and Rational Amusement* (London: Printed by E. Say, 1723).

in England. In Bedingfield's time, the house's religious affiliation had to be obscured from the public to avoid suppression in a country hostile to Catholicism. The Ladies at the Bar safeguarded many original documents, as well as copies of manuscripts housed in the Augsburg and Nymphenburgh houses. Documentary sources on Mary Ward's life and efforts to achieve papal approval of the Institute are plentiful and rich in detail. Sources on the schools themselves are more scarce and uneven, so that while documentation on the curriculum, student body, staff, and community may be present in the record for one school, another might lack almost all details. Few bits of institutional records have survived; yet, Ward's own letters to the Superiors at different foundations of the Institute often discuss school matters. Her philosophy of education can be gleaned from her autobiographical fragments, and records of speeches given in community at Saint-Omer, the plans for the Institute, her retreat notes and resolutions. This chapter greatly benefits from the materials consulted at the York archive.¹⁶⁹

The archivist at the Bar Convent, Christina Kenworthy-Browne, C.J., shared with this author a typed unpublished transcript of Ward's "Letters of Instruction." These autobiographical letters were written at the command of Ward's confessor, Father Roger Lee, S.J. The "First Letter of Instruction" written in 1617, is Ward's account of her experiences from birth up through 1606. The "Second Letter" offers a more detailed account of her life from 1600 – 1609, and includes Ward's description of mystical experiences. The "Third Letter" is not a primary source; it is authored by members of the Institute some time after the Second Vatican Council and deals with reckoning their modern Institute with the original vision Ward had for it. The "Fourth Letter" contains

¹⁶⁹ The author greatly appreciates the assistance of the late Sister Gregory Kirkus, as well as the assistance of the archivist at the Bar Convent Christina Kenworthy-Browne, C.J.

Ward's final plan for the Institute, called *Institutum II* (1621). The "Fifth Letter" contains Ward's correspondence to Father Gerard, S.J., alias Tomson, who was one of her confessors, as well as a letter to the Papal Nuncio at Cologne, Antonio Albergati. The "Sixth Letter" contains one document-- a letter addressed to Father Roger Lee, S.J., that deals with Ward's evolving understanding of the Institute's mission. The autobiographical statements and letters are valuable to this study because they recount Ward's thoughts and actions as she embraced a radically different religious vocation which had as its cornerstone schools for girls.

Mary Ward's letters, which are scattered across Europe in various houses of her Institute, many of which have been reproduced in *Till God Will: Mary Ward through Her Writings*, are extremely important in understanding the daily life of Ward, her companions, and the students of her schools.¹⁷⁰ The letters are both a source of information on her institutional affairs and the social experience of educating secular girls in a host of European cities and towns, Ward's letters offer a sometimes business-like account of financial and legal matters and sometimes filial expression of concern for students' progress. This mix of subjects in her letters reflects her commitment to gaining the Institute's approval, side by side with the on-going work of teaching girls.

Written in the years immediately following Ward's death, by founding members of the Institute, Mary Poyntz and Winifred Wigmore, *The Brief Relation of the Holy Life* (also known as the *English Life*) describes Ward's family history, childhood and early adolescence.¹⁷¹ It is written in the style of a hagiography, and highlights Mary Ward's

¹⁷⁰ Mary Ward, *Till God Will: Mary Ward through Her Writings* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985).

¹⁷¹ Mary Poyntz and Winefred Wigmore, ca. 1645 - 1650, *The Brief Relation of Mary Ward's Life*, Bar Convent: Mary Ward Papers, York.

mystical experiences, self-mortifications, as well as her meetings with Popes, Prelates, and other notables. It does not offer any information on the schools.

Three plans for the Institute survive.¹⁷² Drawn up in 1612, the first plan, known as *Schola Beatae Mariae*, was not written by Ward, but it served to partially guide the first school at Saint-Omer. The *Schola* was ultimately rejected by Ward in the early years (prior to 1615) for a host of reasons, foremost among them that the plan included cloistering the Institute. Scholars point to Ward's confessor, Father Lee as its most likely author. It presents the education of girls as the only work of the Institute.

The second plan of 1615 eschewed enclosure and placed the Institute directly under the Pope's authority. It stated the education of girls together with other work to promote the "greater glory of God" as its apostolate, and was presented to Paul V in 1616. Ward ultimately distanced herself from it, and embraced a thoroughly Ignatian plan, known as the *Institutum II*. This third and final plan followed the Jesuit *Instituti Formula* very closely with some adaptations discussed in Chapter Three. The *Institutum* proposed that the Institute would be directly under the Pope's authority as in the plan of 1612, but it called for solemn vows without enclosure so the members could pursue an active apostolate in gaining souls and educating girls, and doing other work appropriate to the times. This was a controversial request since the Council of Trent had stipulated that there were to be no new religious orders and that female religious with solemn vows had to be enclosed. It represents Ward's ideal Institute, and embodied what she believed was the divine imperative. She submitted it as such to Pope Gregory XV in 1621. When

¹⁷² They are the *Schola Beatae Mariae*, 1612, (the first plan for the Institute, rejected by Mary Ward); *Ratio Instituti*, 1616 (the second plan submitted to Pope Paul V); *Institutum II*, 1622 (the plan Ward submitted to Pope Urban VIII). These plans are reproduced in several works on Ward, including Orchard's edited book, *Till God Will*.

the plan was denied and steps were taken to dismantle the Institute, Ward wrote to the Pope asking for another review of the case. Her letter survives and her indefatigable drive to establish the Institute can be seen. The *Institutum* and the documents surrounding the move to suppress the Institute, which are included in *Till God Will: Mary Ward Through Her Writings*, are important for this study in determining how the Institute itself could be suppressed, while select communities continued to run schools in Catholic and Protestant lands.

Most of the primary literature used for the Epilogue, “Co-education and the Rights of Women,” comes from the pens of two great and controversial Enlightenment thinkers: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft. As described above, the chapter is about Wollstonecraft’s conceptualization of co-education as a means to a just society. Since she formed her ideas primarily in response to Rousseau’s understanding of sexual difference and unequal education, he must be presented in his own words and explained before Wollstonecraft’s critique. Mainly, this study limits itself to discussing aspects of *The New Héloïse, or Julie* (1761), and *Émile, On Education* (1762), that make claims about women’s nature and the appropriate education of the female sex.¹⁷³

Although *Rousseau: On Education* (1969), by Leslie F. Claydon, mainly considers Rousseau’s conception of education for boys and men, it has an excellent Introduction that explains Rousseau’s publishing activity alongside the other aspects of his life, besides collecting important excerpts from Rousseau’s writings on education.¹⁷⁴ Another useful work, edited by R.L. Archer, entitled *Jean Jacques Rousseau: His Educational Theories from Emile, Julie, and Other Writings* (1964) mirrors some of Claydon’s pieces,

¹⁷³ Rousseau, *Émile*; Rousseau, *Julie*.

¹⁷⁴ Leslie Claydon, ed., *Rousseau on Education* (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1969).

and contains a letter from Rousseau to the Duke of Wurtemberg regarding the education of his daughter.¹⁷⁵ Here Rousseau addresses the practical implementation of a girls' education to rear girls in Sophie's image.

Most of Wollstonecraft's works written from 1787 to 1791 are dealt with in the chapter.¹⁷⁶ In an effort to understand her growing radicalism and its connection to girl's schooling, there has been a reliance on both her published works and private letters. Beginning with *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), a pedagogical treatise and guide to tutoring girls, it is clear that Wollstonecraft placed a high value on learning.¹⁷⁷ But, in her subsequent works, a newly radicalized voice, one that calls for liberty and equality through reason, education, and merit, sounds--culminating in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and her plan for equal co-education.¹⁷⁸

In four chapters, this dissertation demonstrates that advocates for female worth and learning and founders of girls' schools shared a new and positive conception of the female sex. With this conception of girls as worthy and apt pupils, new institutions were created expressly for them. Schooling for girls emerges in early modern Europe as a vehicle for imparting academic learning, manual skills, and Christian virtue. This combination was trusted to enhance the lives and souls of girls as individuals and the

¹⁷⁵ R.L. Archer, *Jean Jacques Rousseau: His Educational Theories Selected from Emile, Julie and Other Writings* (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1964).

¹⁷⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden*; followed by William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of the Rights of Woman* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1987); Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary: A Fiction* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1974); Mary Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Men," in *A Wollstonecraft Anthology*, ed. Janet M. Todd (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977) 64-83; Mary Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979).

¹⁷⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters," in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet M. Todd and Marilyn Butler (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 1-49.

¹⁷⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988).

greater society as girls took on roles as wives and mothers. Beginning in 1639 in New France, European models of girls' schooling becomes a global export. Colonial and imperial authorities together with the Ursuline Order, members of Mary Ward's Institute, and British missionary societies facilitate the schooling for girls beyond European borders. Global efforts increased in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when numerous schools were established in the Americas, Africa, some Islamic Middle Eastern cities, India, China, Japan, Indonesia and Australia. In these academic institutions, Europeans promoted western and Christian ideals to their female pupils and the wider community.

Chapter One: Women's Worth and the Schooling of Girls

In early modern Europe, for the first time in history, girls began to attend school – girls, that is, whose future was to live respectably in society, neither as religious professionals or courtesans.¹ This major innovation was achieved after an extended debate about women's worth and abilities, as well as the (perceived) threat posed to female chastity by a literary education. The late medieval advocates for women's worth launched what was called the *querelle des femmes* (*the debate about women*), and focused on defending women's honor by demonstrating their value in society. By the fifteenth century, the debates on women's worth escalated, and, within humanist circles, several advocates for women argued persuasively that female intellectual abilities were equal to those of their male counterparts, devising the first arguments for advanced learning for females, so long as they would be taught by tutors in the home.

Serious concerns about female chastity were aired since the fourth century, beginning with St. Jerome's emphasis on celibacy as a vastly superior state in Christian life.² Fear that exposure to ideas and to men would compromise maidenly innocence and virginity was a considerable hurdle for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century advocates for female learning to address and, ultimately, overcome.³ During this time, the debate in print raged on, offering a host of literary and scholarly justifications that circulated

¹ See Introduction (pages 1-7) for an overview of girls' education prior to 1550.

² In addition to his own opinions on chastity and the married state, Jerome used a host of anti-female sentiments from Juvenal, Semonides of Amorgos, and Theophrastus in his *Adversus Iovinianum* (*Against Jovinian*, which was a virulent reply to Jovinian who did not favor celibacy. Edward Kennard Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 126; *Selected Letters of St. Jerome*, ed. and trans. F.A. Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

³ As explained in the Introduction, this study examines the major advocates, and selected schools and institutes for girls in Italy, France, Catholic continental Europe, and England.

widely and gradually won contested ground among policymakers and parents alike. By the seventeenth century, with the religious impulse very much alive, even dominating school foundations, the new Cartesian principles bolstered advocates' arguments for schooling girls in innovative ways. While the debate about girls' schooling was hardly over in seventeenth-century Europe, enormous change regarding the acceptance of women's worth and intellectual capacity had been secured since the fourteenth century. The philosophical groundwork for universal and co-educational school systems was laid.

The three parts of this chapter explore the distinct and sometimes interconnected themes of women's worth and abilities, tutor-led learning for the preservation of chastity, and the call for girls' schools. Section One, *Origins of the Great Women's Debate*, provides a brief background of the few outposts for female learning in the medieval period, as well as the first defenses of women's worth in late medieval treatises, literature, and poetry. The works emerging in the early fifteenth century assumed a defensive posture in response to vitriolic misogynistic tracts that dominated European centers. Christine de Pisan (1364-1430), whose pioneering works sought to rehabilitate women's damaged reputation and image, is a key advocate examined here. Countless other advocates for female worth would follow her lead in the early modern period; only advocates' works that advanced the arguments in new ways are included in this study. However, the multitudinous works that defended woman and praised her talents in the early modern period offer a sign as to how important this theme of women's worth was for European culture.

Section Two, *Humanists Affirm Female Education*, examines how male and female participants in the humanist movement, from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

handled the question of women's worth and intellectual capacity. The willingness of some humanists to recognize the benefits of the *studia humanitatis* for women is wholly without precedent, and the encouragement women received through humanists and parents amenable to female studies is remarkable. Isotta Nogarola produced a scholarly treatise that rescued Eve from primary responsibility for the Fall from grace, while Cassandra Fedele and Laura Cereta asserted women's capacity for advanced learning. By their very existence, female humanists and contemporary learned ladies of the royal and noble courts, offered irrefutable proof of women's intellectual capacity. The fear for female chastity kept these young ladies in their homes to study with tutors individually or among family and kin. Major figures like Thomas More, Desiderius Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives, and, later, Anna Maria Van Schurman expounded the benefits of female learning led by private tutors in the home, offering sophisticated and varied justifications for the humanistic education of Christian girls and women. These prominent humanists popularized among the reading public of Europe the idea that education was appropriate for women.

Vives, in particular, made a significant impact with his widely-diffused treatise, *De institutione foeminae christianae* (The Instruction of a Christian Woman), which was published in 1524, and quickly underwent translation into English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. His novel argument that chastity was not endangered when girls were educated, but in fact strengthened, fully embraced the humanist philosophy of education that virtue and good character formation was imparted primarily through education, and most assuredly through the reading of holy and virtuous books. As Vives' contribution for female education has been misunderstood thus far in the history of

education, with modern scholars reading Vives' insistence on chastity as a kind of "fanatical" and "reactionary" position for women's education, this chapter revises Vives' place among early modern advocates for women, showing that his insistence on safeguarding chastity was central to advancing the cause, instrumental in opening up advanced studies to Christian females of every class and condition.

In Section Three, *The Call for the Schooling of Girls*, powerful advocates pushed for access to advanced learning and male schools. In seventeenth-century Europe, amidst the new writings of the vibrant *querelle* tradition, schooling for girls truly gained ground, and some of the first justifications for equal educational institutions are examined. Key advocates, who were often schoolmasters and mistresses, founders and benefactors, continued to voice (Christian and Catholic) humanistic justifications for this major innovation. While many advocates expected that girls' schooling would cater to more well-to-do families, the Czech bishop Johannes Amos Comenius called for the universal education of boys and girls from every stratum of society. Among those calling for establishment of female colleges, academies, and professional schools, the most daring was François Poullain de la Barre, who suggested co-educational societies as more harmonious with Cartesian principles than the established male schools. His more conservative contemporary, François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon was instrumental at Saint-Cyr and beyond, for his program of studies designed specifically for girls' schools.⁴ In England, meanwhile, the conservative Mary Astell, finally, envisioned the founding of a female college where women not yet ready to marry might prepare for their

⁴ Fénelon is discussed in the final section of this chapter for his general contribution to girls' schooling. An examination of the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr forms a segment of Chapter Two.

future roles in society. By the close of the seventeenth century, the notion of female education even to an advanced level was alive and in circulation.

Origins of the Great Women's Debate

Before proceeding to locate the origins of the *querelle des femmes* (women's debate), which established an essential link between the question of female worth and the question of female education, this section describes the limited settings for female learning in medieval Europe. Medieval Europe had few learned women, save the exceptional female religious who, finding books and teachers at hand, learned to read and write in the convent.⁵ Increasingly, from the twelfth century, elite women began to read, write, and engage in intellectual work, privately.⁶

Convents, royal courts, and burgeoning cities of the medieval period were the settings in which some girls and young women became proficient in advanced studies. Supported by religious communities and/or their noble or royal families, some of these women became role models and advocates for female learning. The medieval convent was a space where some women and girls achieved literacy, and even mastery of advanced subjects. The twelfth-century German noblewoman and nun, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), is a towering exemplar of female learning in a conventual setting. Turning her mental talents to writing a medical compendium, the record of her mystical visions, musical dramas, and the instruction of popes and kings, she demonstrated the

⁵ Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Stuard, ed., *Women in Medieval Society*.

⁶ Bornstein and Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion*.

rare height a learned woman could achieve.⁷ Gertrude of Hackeborn (d. 1291), an abbess of St. Mary at Helfta in northern Saxony, ran a convent school which offered grammar, rhetoric, and logic to all the novices, with many progressing to arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The community regularly welcomed Dominican friars who offered academic instruction and sermons. The Helfta convent was highly unusual not only because it is one of the few thirteenth-century examples of advanced studies for religious women, but also for its nearly autonomous administration.⁸

Outside of convent walls, secular girls could receive some instruction. During the Carolingian Renaissance, for example, Saint Liutberg of Halberstadt gathered girls together to teach them the Psalms and sewing.⁹ For the most part, private tutoring among elite secular girls and women was more common than collective study or schooling. A parent's, and most often a father's, prerogative was foremost in deciding whether a daughter should be taught to read, write, and be instructed in other subjects. The infamous twelfth-century love affair between pupil and tutor, Heloise and Abelard, likely dissuaded fathers from inviting tutors into the home. Heloise, who mastered classical Latin, agreed to the cloistered-life on account of Abelard's castration and monastic calling.¹⁰

Royal parents, too, were mindful of potential scandals and selected tutors very carefully. In the mid-thirteenth century, Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1190 – 1264), the

⁷ Baird and Ehrman, eds. and trans., *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*; Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete*; Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age*; Newman, *Voice of the Living Light Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*; Amy Oden, ed., *In Her Own Words: Women's Writing in the History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

⁸ Finnegan, *The Women of Helfta*, 6.

⁹ Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages*, 38-39.

¹⁰ Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Neville Chiavaroli and Constant J. Mews (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Dominican spiritual counselor to the King and Queen of France, dealt with issue of secular training for girls as part of his treatise on the proper education for the royal children, Louis and Isabelle. The treatise was written at the request of their mother Marguerite of Provence, consort of Louis IX.¹¹ Vincent produced the scholastic treatise, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium* (On the Education of Noble Sons and Daughters), which as the editor, Rosemary Tobin, has described, was also akin to a sermon.¹² Written for the royal parents, pupils and tutors, Vincent's message for both Louis' and Isabelle's training required that "letters and morals" be taught for the protection of the children's souls. Both the young boy and girl should be educated by a male tutor and receive lessons in Latin. While Vincent offered a similar curriculum to the siblings, the justification he gives for boys' and girls' education was dissimilar. In Chapter XLII, he explained his rationale, "You have sons? Train them and care for them from boyhood. You have daughters? Watch over their bodies and do not show yourself joyful to them."¹³ Guarding girls' chastity with a seriousness of purpose was a distinguishing factor in female upbringing.

One of Vincent's strategies for keeping girls chaste and preventing them from tempting males was to keep the girls busy with "prayer and action."¹⁴ Being employed in handicrafts and other household work, reading, praying, and singing psalms, would keep girls from idleness which was seen as a doorway to wickedness and ruin. Vincent's plan of education for girls was thus a kind of preventative treatment for female

¹¹ Astrik L. Gabriel, *The Educational Ideas of Vincent of Beauvais* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962); Joseph M. McCarthy, *Humanistic Emphases in the Educational Thought of Vincent of Beauvais* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

¹² Rosemary Barton Tobin, *Vincent of Beauvais' "De eruditione filiorum nobilium": The Education of Women* (New York: P. Lang, 1984), 16.

¹³ Tobin, *Vincent*, 90.

¹⁴ Tobin, *Vincent*, 96.

predisposition to sin. This type of argument would be offered by advocates for girls' learning and founders of schools throughout the early modern period; Vives, in particular, would expand upon the way in which the occupation of study keeps vice at bay.

At the same time, the court offered elite women, young and old, a kind of distraction from education and moral betterment, thus, a short but informative digression on courtly love. The twelfth century saw the codification of courtly love, in large part due to Andreas Capellanus' work *De amore* (The Art of Courtly Love), written between 1174 – 1186, which equalized the prerogatives of lovers, giving women in love just as much privilege as men, and substantial persuasive power. Women, who are loved, performed a civilizing function on their lovers. Rude and uncouth men took pains to refine themselves and to be gracious to all. *De amore* may have reflected real attitudes about love at court just as much as it projected ideals for years to come. Whether or not women or women's reputations fared any better because of the literature and poetry espousing courtly love is debatable. For one thing, the subject (the one who loves) is overwhelmingly male and his transformative process of falling in love and acting honorably toward his beloved is the focus of most of these tales. Women are largely passive, but seemingly possessed power over men.

In France and Germany, courtly genres questioned the worth of women according to their virtues and vices. Works by the very popular twelfth-century author Chrétien de Troyes, as well as Heldris de Cornuälle's *Roman de silence* dealt with a myriad of issues pertaining to the debate on women. In Germany, anonymous texts were the norm and included comic tales, fabliaux, and discourses on love. A fifteenth-century manuscript contained a compilation of these texts: *Schule der Minne* (School of Love),

Streitgespräch zweier Frauen über die Minne (Debate between Two Women about Love), *Frauentreue* (The Fidelity of Women), and *Die treue Magd* (The Faithful Maid), all of which explored the ways of women.¹⁵

Returning to the topic of female education, one notes that while the court was one avenue for elite girls and women to gain an education (in love and letters), only royal and wealthy nobles could afford private tutors like Vincent of Beauvais. Other options for daughters of middle-class and less-wealthy nobles included the convent and the home. In the convent, according to Rosemary Tobin, elite girls “were taught reading, writing and arithmetic, and music in the convents;” a few learned some Latin; many nuns, however, served God without any trace of learning.¹⁶ In private homes, parents and guardians passed on some basic literacy skills, and by the fourteenth century, at least in some urban centers, female vernacular literacy levels rose.¹⁷ Scholars agree that women of the Florentine mercantile classes had achieved functional literacy by this time.¹⁸ Despite being barred from schools and denied tutors, girls and women benefited from reading devotional works, which were allowed. That reading provided them with skills “sufficient for women’s practical, religious, and even entertainment requirements”¹⁹ In short, unless born into an elite family with a rare and favorable disposition toward female learning, a girl would rarely receive formal training in academic subjects. Only in

¹⁵ Rasmussen, “Thinking through Gender in Late Medieval German Literature,” 98.

¹⁶ Tobin, *Vincent*, 39. For later convent schools, see Strocchia, “Learning the Virtues,” 3-46.

¹⁷ Scholars of female literacy in this period cannot offer statistics; there is not enough quantitative data. Instead, by studying letter collections, wills, and library lists, historians speculate on literacy levels. Works dealing with the problematic issue of literacy include: Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West*; Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*; Ferguson, *Dido’s Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France*; Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern England: Culture and Education 1500 -1800*; Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*; Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages*.

¹⁸ Bryce, “Les Livres.”; Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West*; Grendler, *Schooling*; Thompson, *The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages*.

¹⁹ Bryce, “Les Livres,” 133-161, 139.

convents, courtly settings, or flourishing mercantile cities was female education conditionally proffered; learning must be private and chastity must be safeguarded.

Householder treatises of the period display this conditional approval of female education. They discuss a curriculum for chaste girls, recommending that they avoid romance literature and embrace devotional literature such as saints' lives. Thus in his *Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles du Chevalier de La Tour Landry* (The Book of the Knight in the Tower), written around 1371 to 1372 by the minor nobleman Geoffroy IV de la Tour Landry for his daughters, the author warns against such vanities and fables.²⁰ He further discusses female education in Chapter 89. Literacy is meant to save women from sin by reading "holy scrypture," as such writing was not essential. Here the Knight recommends moral works over fables since, he believes, the soul will profit from reading such works. Women in particular can use reading to save their souls, "as for redynge I saye that good and prouffitable is to al wyemen/ For a woman that can rede may better knowe the perils of the sowle and her sauement/ than she that can nought of it/ for it hath be preued."²¹ On the other hand, writing he explicitly bans as it does not have the same spiritual power: "That as for wrytyng it is no force."²² Like Vincent of Beauvais, La Tour Landry's call for female education is for purely religious and moral edification. What is noteworthy is that these two medieval men recognize girls and women as having the capacity to read and reflect, and so know the perils that endanger their souls and what is required for salvation.

²⁰ La Tour, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 122. *The Book of the Knight in the Tower* was subsequently translated in English (1483, by William Caxton, who printed it in 1484) and German (1495).

²¹ La Tour, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 122.

²² La Tour, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 122.

Another householder treatise, which also claimed to be for the good of the woman's soul, stressed domestic management and obedience. Late in the fourteenth century, a husband who was at least sixty years of age wrote a practical handbook for his fifteen-year-old new wife. She had been an orphan from a relatively high station and could receive little training from her relatives who lived quite a distance from Paris to aid her in her new role as wife. *The Goodman of Paris, A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy* (*Ménagier de Paris, traité de morale et d'économie domestique*), written around 1393, instructed her in the major and minor responsibilities she would have in the household. It prescribed her husband's top priorities for the young bride, stating that "the salvation of your soul and the comfort of your husband" should be her supreme concerns.²³

What followed these important duties in the treatise were lessons in household management. As a landowner's wife, her education consisted of knowing her religious duties, ordering the household properly, mastering "divers recipes" and cookery, and overseeing the servants. The author provided legendary stories of wives who betrayed their husbands, as well as those who carried out their duties with fidelity and dignity. Although he intended to include a section on indoor amusements, mathematical riddles, and falconry, he only produced the part on falconry. His intention to include mathematical riddles and counting games suggests that at least a practical mathematical literacy was in place for married women of noble birth. The Goodman's main lesson, though, pertained to obedience and gentleness towards one's husband. Quoting a country proverb, the author admonished his pupil "that there be three things which drive a

²³ *The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy*, trans. Eileen Power (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1928), 4.

Goodman from his home, to wit a leaking roof, a smoky chimney, and a scolding woman.”²⁴ For the Goodman, his wife was to be a source of comfort in the domestic sphere. As one can see, discussion of female training revolved around women’s domestic role, inferior status, fear for her chastity, and circumscribing her speech and writing.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were rife with misogynistic works as a result of the circulating manuscripts containing extracts from Jerome’s treatise *Adversus Iovinianum* (Against Jovinian), which was strongly anti-female and anti-marriage and apparently quite inspirational to male authors of similar opinions.²⁵ A number of contemporary medieval authors responded to and countered such works, writing in defense of women; these advocates are the originators of the *querelle des femmes*, often using the Virgin Mary as a powerful catch-all way to silence their opponents. These writers, choosing to portray women in favorable ways and those defending the feminine sex, went against the cultural grain and succeeded in establishing a popular literary avenue concerned with female worth and abilities.

This dissertation uses the term *advocates* to describe those writers who sought to establish female humanity on par with men, according to Christian principles, through their lived experience, and through legend and myth. Their achievement is reflected in the changes in outlook and production, which contributed to the ascending pattern of women’s participation in intellectual life. In this tradition, the issue of female education has been tied to questions of female worth and personhood. Male and female authors answered, countered, satirized, and tried to disprove a host of chauvinistic attitudes and texts beginning in the medieval period. Christine de Pisan’s work took the debate most

²⁴ Goodman, 172.

²⁵ Blamires, *Medieval Culture*, 9.

seriously and answered the misogyny most fully and creatively. Scholars have labeled these writers as “proto-feminists,” “forerunners of feminists,” “early feminists,” and “feminists.” Such labels are artificial and anachronistic. Instead, the term *advocates* is used for those writers who argued in defense of women, for women’s superiority, and for equality between the sexes. The spectrum for female advocacy was wide, and it was informed by a variety of principles and beliefs about religion, natural philosophy, gender, family, and society at large. Various, too, were the arguments bandied about by *opponents*; I use this term to connote contemporary authors who wrote against the female sex, denied women’s rational capacity, blamed them for a sinful world, or relegated them to a passive reproductive role.

Étienne de Fougères, writing in the 1170’s, produced the poem, *Livre des manières*, which was an extremely able defense of women. Fougères listed wise women from biblical and mythological memory, criticized people who insulted women, highlighted the Virgin Mary and nuns, described wives’ importance in the family and its happiness, and even included a contemporary example of an honorable woman – the Countess of Hereford.²⁶ Like Fougères, other advocates, writing poems, songs, conduct manuals, and treatises from the twelfth through fourteenth centuries relied on the redemptive power of the Virgin Mary, at least in part.

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries several *dits* (light verse which used informal language to mimic casual conversation) served to entertain the elite in France. *La Contenance des Fames* (*The Ways of Women*), *Le Bien des Fames* (*The Virtues of Women*), *Le Blasme des Fames* (*The Faults of Women*) were written by university trained men and contain features of argumentation that later *Querelle* writers

²⁶ Blamires, *Medieval Culture*, 21.

would retain and refine. For example, in *Le Blasme des Fames*, Eve's wickedness is stated to condemn all women; the author goes on to announce female incapacity to behave rationally too.²⁷ On the other hand, *Le Bien des Fames* sings the praise of women through their affiliation with the Virgin Mary. Using Eve and Mary in this way would become standard in the debate texts across Europe, a tactic Christine de Pisan would not be the last to use.

A small sampling of early defenses that offered more nuanced argumentation is included here. Beginning with the *Fior di virtù*, the anonymous author of this work expressed both advocates' and opponents' arguments regarding female learning. Used as a beginner's book for reading, the *Fior* announced a moral code for all of its readers to follow. The work was organized into forty prose chapters that covered a host of virtues and vices. In his *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, Paul Grendler explains that the *Fior* was typically brought to the vernacular schools by boys from their family libraries.²⁸ It was a centerpiece of the "adult vernacular culture."²⁹

It has been suggested that some texts, and, perhaps the *Fior* is a good example, were written primarily to display the author's learning. The argumentation may have been merely a vehicle to showcase one's knowledge of biblical, classical, and medieval

²⁷ Fiero, Pfeffer, and Allain, eds., *Three Medieval Views of Women: La Contenance des Fames; Le Bien des Fames; Le Blasme des Fames*, 59.

²⁸ Grendler, *Schooling*, 276-277.

²⁹ Grendler offers a publishing history for this text in the fifteenth century: "Teachers and parents obviously approved of the combination of stern Christian virtue and mildly prudent social advice on how to live in society found in the *Fior di virtù*, for it exists in a large number of manuscripts and its title frequently appears in inventories of private libraries of the fifteenth century. It first appeared in 1471, and fifty-six incunabular printings, some with vivid woodcuts, followed. At least thirteen sixteenth-century and three seventeenth-century editions have also been found." 279. Also, in terms of its pedagogical uses, Grendler found that in 1587-1588, 43 Veneitan teachers were using the *Fior di virtù* as a beginning reader. Lessing J. Rosenwald, editor of the 1953 edition, found that, "In Florence alone 38 manuscripts have been found. It was translated into Arabic, Armenian, Catalan, English, French, German, Greek, Roumanian, Russian, Serbian, and Spanish." vii. Referring to the *Fior* as a bestseller, he located 66 different editions printed in the fifteenth century, of which 56 were in Italy, eight in Spain and two in France.

sources and information rather than a serious disputation where the author was genuinely committed to one side or the other. Overall, though, the favorable characterization of women in this “schoolboy’s book” is noteworthy. The seventh chapter deals with the issue of female learning and purports to cut “. . . the vile tongue of the perverse talkers as they deserve it.”³⁰ The “perverse talkers” were those who opposed educating girls and women. The author offers a more favorable attitude and attributes the following statement to Solomon: “And if women were to occupy themselves with the arts and sciences of the world as men do, they would achieve great things because of the natural subtleness of their intellect.”³¹ As noted by Grendler, “The *Fior di virtù* strongly defended women against the charge of being an occasion for sin, an unusual stance for medieval virtue and vice literature.”³² The fact that this “unusual” work was likely the standard reader for the vernacular schools and that its moral messages were taught simultaneously with language suggests that parents and teachers (in northern Italy) were open to more favorable representations of women.

Another text which had wide circulation across Europe was a moral treatise written in 1246 by an Italian judge, Albertanus of Brescia. The judge innovatively makes the main female character her own advocate and advocate of her sex. This eloquent woman, Prudentia, ably cites biblical women to demonstrate that while some women are bad, many are good, and some are exceptionally pious and virtuous.³³ Other formal defenses of women included works that pointed to Woman’s role as Mother to protect her against slanderers. For example, *L’Honneur des dames* (13th c.) by Robert of Blois

³⁰ Lessing J. Rosenwald, ed., *The Florentine Fior di virtù of 1491*, trans. Nicholas Forsen (Philadelphia: E. Stern, 1953), 15.

³¹ Rosenwald, ed., *Fior*, 16.

³² Grendler, *Schooling*, 279.

³³ Blamires, *Medieval Culture*, 22-23.

argues in this vein. And, it is at the end of the thirteenth century in the Anglo-Norman poem, *Du bounté des femmes*, that Eve receives her first defense, when Adam is blamed for not instructing her properly. A fourteenth-century poet, Nicole Bozon, writes along the same lines in *De la bonté des femmes*. One Franciscan friar chose female *exempla* from the Bible for a pro-female text, *Miroir des bonnes femmes*, perhaps even using it as part of a sermon.³⁴

A contemporary of Christine de Pisan, Jean LeFèvre, also contributed significantly to women's defense. Although trained as a lawyer, LeFèvre labored much to strengthen the good name of women in his work, *Livre de Leësce (Book of Joy)*, which was an answer to the misogynistic *Lamentations* by Matheolus. LeFèvre had translated Matheolus' work into French from Latin, and perhaps writing the *Livre* was his "penance" for doing so. By having Leësce refute Matheolus with solid theological points, another female character of strength pleads her case. Leësce highlights that in *Genesis*, Eve is created of Adam's body rather than of mud. (Other advocates liked to point out that Eve was made in Paradise, but Adam was not.) Also worth noting about LeFèvre's work is that two examples of academic women are held up as models: Heloise and the daughter of Jehan Andrieu, who became expert in law. Indeed, the strongest move LeFèvre made in challenging misogyny was his deconstruction of Ovid. The misogynistic ideas coming out of Ovid prompted him to attack the classical writer as an embittered impotent with little regard for truth. In the sixteenth century, Vives would renew this declamation.

In other types of fictional literature of the period, only a few works put books into female characters' hands and gave them learned voices. The literary work of Dante

³⁴ Blamires, *Medieval Culture*, 28-29.

Alighieri (1265 – 1321), Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400), and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313 – 1375) rehabilitated the portrayal of women by giving them spiritual, intellectual, and moral worth. Scholarship for this “triumvirate” and their portrayal of women is rich; here, a few generalizations about their approaches must suffice.³⁵ In the *The Divine Comedy*, Dante casts women as the moral equivalent to men. The importance of this literary move revolves around the idea that men and women are spiritual equals. In his characterization of Beatrice, Dante elevates the female as a source of inspiration beyond anything in earlier literary or religious models. With this dramatic move, Dante affirmed the capacity and importance of women in the spiritual realm.

Like Dante, Geoffrey Chaucer depicted women in new and positive ways. In the Wife of Bath’s tale, one of the most famous in his *Canterbury Tales*, which was written in the late fourteenth century, Chaucer has the Wife (Alison) respond in her prologue to St. Jerome’s *Adversus Iovinianum*, which had privileged virginity and all but denounced women and marriage in a defense of the celibate life. The Wife of Bath rescues the institution of marriage, even as she concedes that virginity is a more perfect state, by conducting her own biblical exegesis on the religious duty to marry and multiply. By using Scripture against his argument, and adopting a conciliatory approach, Alison comes across as an articulate, able, and sensible defender of women and marriage.³⁶

Chaucer portrayed women positively in another work as well: in *The Legend of Good Women* (1386), he offered exemplary images of women. *The Legend* tells the

³⁵ Useful critical works on these giants include: Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*; Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio: The Man and His Works* (New York: New York University Press, 1976); Douglas Gray, *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Hollander, *Dante: A Life in Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); John Addington Symonds, *Giovanni Boccaccio: As Man and Author* (Eastbourne, UK: Gardners Books, 2007).

³⁶ Warren S. Smith, "The Wife of Bath and Dorigen Debate Jerome," in *Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage: from Plautus to Chaucer*, ed. Warren S. Smith (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 243-269, 256.

stories of nine women who died for love as heroic martyrs. Chaucer casts these women as virtuous and courageous, suffering in love—telling their tales as one would saints’ lives.³⁷ In this way, Chaucer encouraged the reader to accept the women’s actions as worthy and commendable within this love and honor-bound scheme.

As is well-known, Chaucer was inspired by the Florentine, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1350), who gained fame for his poetry and novellas, especially for the stories of *The Decameron* (1353). Begun around 1361 and completed in 1375, Boccaccio ushered in a new sort of work on women, *De mulieribus claris* (On Famous Women). For the first time, a work looked at the lives of important women in history; as such he is a harbinger of the way the worth of women would be defended henceforth. De Pisan would imitate this style of argument, amassing lists of women from the past, real and imagined. Scholars agree that *On Famous Women* is a seminal work, calling it “the foundation text of Renaissance profeminism.”³⁸ He documented notable women of the past, and at the same time initiated standards for the *querelle des femmes*. Pamela Benson pinpoints the achievement, “. . . it [*De mulieribus claris*] establishes the issues and many of the rhetorical methods of the defense, collects evidence useful for demonstrating the political, social, and personal virtue of women, offers the example of a man daring to speak out in favor of womankind, yet never directly advocates social change.”³⁹

³⁷ Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, 4, 9.

³⁸ Benson, *Invention*, 9. The term *profeminism*, which I find problematic, is meant to describe a feminist beginning, but not a full-fledged feminism with social or political aims. As mentioned, the term *advocates* is offered in this dissertation as an alternative to the terms *profeminists*, *protofeminists*, and *feminists*.

³⁹ Benson, *Invention*, 9.

Having been inspired by Francesco Petrarca, who wrote on famous men in the 1330s, Boccaccio explains his decision to write on famous women.⁴⁰

What surprises me is how little attention women have attracted from writers of this genre, and the absence of any work devoted especially to their memory, even though lengthier histories show clearly that some women have performed acts requiring vigor and courage.⁴¹

Boccaccio enumerated over one hundred examples of notable figures, including some who would be deemed immoral by late medieval Christian standards, almost all classical figures from Greek and Roman mythology. Alongside these morally questionable figures, he listed just a couple of impeccable Christian virgins and devoted wives. He also included women *litteratae* like Sappho the Poet, and Leontium the Epicurean philosopher. With this impressive centuria of women, Boccaccio wrote the female sex into history.

Lest therefore, such women be cheated of their just due I had the idea of honoring their glory by assembling in a single volume the biographies of women whose memory is still green. . . .notable for their boldness, intellectual powers, and perseverance, or for their natural endowments, or for fortune's favor or enmity.⁴²

As he tells the dedicatee, Boccaccio hoped Christian women would not suffer to be outdone in virtue by their pagan predecessors.

Through her literary efforts, Christine de Pisan, Europe's first professional woman writer, took the budding *Querelle des femmes*, or *The Debate about Women*, to a new stage, so that every conceivable aspect of female honor, virtue, and inherent worth was considered. De Pisan has several works that rightfully make her the most important advocate of this period who contributed the most thoughtful, provocative, and thorough

⁴⁰ Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*, 9.

⁴¹ Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*, 9.

⁴² Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*, 9-10.

defense of the sex. Born in Venice in 1364, Christine de Pisan soon traveled to Paris with her father Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano, so that he could begin his position as court astrologer to King Charles V. Growing up at court, de Pisan was encouraged to education by her father and given access to the royal library. When she was married at fifteen years old to Estienne de Castel, a court notary, she was fortunate enough to have gained a husband who esteemed her education and encouraged her to continue. In the coming years, she had three children and became a widow in 1390. Her financial situation was dire, and she turned to writing to earn a living. The first professional female writer of Europe, de Pisan wrote across the genres – poetry, biography, fiction. The work which she is best known for, written in 1405, is *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (Book of the City of Ladies), which was but one of her works that gave voice to her dissatisfaction about the way women were treated in her time. The way de Pisan chose to confront bigotry and prejudice was exceptional. While she used some of the conventions established by earlier advocates, like listing female worthies and holding out the Virgin Mary as an immaculate *exempla*, her creative letters and stories told a reinvigorated tale of feminine value, piety, and smarts, which is shared here.

In response to the widely read thirteenth-century poem, *Roman de la Rose* (Romance of the Rose), which was written in two phases by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun of the University of Paris, de Pisan took up her pen in the cause of women's honor and esteem.⁴³ The *Romance of the Rose* excoriated women, sometimes even putting insults in the mouths of female characters: as one says, "Poor judgment have all women; I was one."⁴⁴ In fact, according to one specialist of French literature, the

⁴³ de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*.

⁴⁴ de Lorris and de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 302.

Romance of the Rose was “the best known work in French from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century; it had a greater influence on medieval European literature than any other work after Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* . . .”⁴⁵ It has been proposed that the *Romance of the Rose* was used for didactic purposes in building moral conduct, of all things.⁴⁶ Perhaps the notion that this anti-female work was being used in education motivated Christine de Pisan to act.

In response to many anti-female insults found in this widely read poem and its fifteenth-century sympathizers, de Pisan squarely confronted the misogynistic attacks of de Meun in the *Romance of the Rose*, as well as similar insults found in *Lamenta* (Les Lamentations de Matheolus, Lamentations of Matheolus) written twenty-five years later.⁴⁷ De Pisan’s works *Le dit de la Rose* (The Song of the Rose, 1402), *Epistres du debat sur le Roman de la Rose* (Letters of Debate on the Romance of the Rose, 1401-1403), and *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* (Letter to the God of Love, 1399) criticized de Meun’s and Mateolus’ characterization of women as being false, ignorant, and mean-spirited.

The *Rose* proclaimed “the inability of women to accept advice or chastisement, however sound,” and Christine answered this and other egregious charges.⁴⁸ In the *Epistre au Dieu d’Amours* (Letter to the God of Love), she lashed out at de Meun personally. Her character, Cupid, hurled the insult:

But truly since he [de Meun] blamed all women in general, I am constrained to believe that he never had acquaintance of, or regular contact with, any honorable or virtuous woman. But by having resort to many dissolute women

⁴⁵ Arden, *The Romance of the Rose*, iii.

⁴⁶ Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11, 141.

⁴⁷ The same work that Jean LeFèvre translated and responded to in his *Book of Joy*.

⁴⁸ Brownlee, "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pisan and the Romance of the Rose," 234-261, 255.

of evil life (as lechers commonly do), he thought, or feigned to know, that all women were of that kind; for he had known no others.⁴⁹

She then tempers these words with a list of living men who are fair to women.

Her conclusion doles out sanctions for the men who have been acting out against women unfairly. She was not alone in decrying such behavior and works, like the *Rose*; several powerful men of France, including Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, were foremost among her allies.⁵⁰

De Pisan's writing portrayed women as active participants in culture and society. In the *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (Book of the City of Ladies, 1405), she listed women of virtue and learning from Biblical, mythological, and historical settings. In this groundbreaking work, de Pisan goes further than writers like Boccaccio, who as we have seen in *De mulieribus claris* (On Famous Women), called for the acknowledgement of women in history by listing famous women of the past. De Pisan does this and more. With the *Book of the City of Ladies*, she opens up imagined space for women to envision alternatives to female persecution which kept them in ignorance and despair. When she pointed out learning in illustrious women, she carefully added that together with the characteristics of chastity, constancy, and virtue, it was part and parcel of ladies' wisdom. The quality of her writing and the content of her message earned her fame and good repute.

The *Book of the City of Ladies* also answers *The Romance of the Rose* directly in several places. In one passage, Christine asks Rectitude why the authors of *The Romance*

⁴⁹ As quoted in Charles Frederick Ward, "The Epistles on the Romance of the Rose and Other Documents in the Debate," (PhD diss, The University of Chicago, 1911), 6.

⁵⁰ As Ward points out, Gerson denounced de Meun's work on different and more general grounds, finding the *Rose* to be morally dangerous for society. "Christine de Pisan, too, with a much narrower range of thought, assails with singular energy and with courage of her convictions a book which contains so many attacks on her sex." Ward, "The Epistles," 3.

of the Rose claimed to be acting in the common good by warning men about women. Rectitude replies that only if they had also warned women about men would the book be morally righteous.⁵¹ In 1405, then, de Pisan identified and worked to dismantle the double standard, one of the main buttresses of sexism. Her early contribution to the *querelle*, which would consider women's worth for the next three hundred years, provided many arguments through example and reason as to why women ought not to be hated and mistreated. The advocates who came after her often echoed her ideas.

In Spain, many advocates rallied to refute Pedro de la Torrellas' late fifteenth-century poem, *Maldezir de las mugeres*, which portrayed women in the most sinister manner. Juan de Flores' work *Grisel y Mirabella* (ca. 1485) was a long refutation of Torrellas in which the fictive Torrellas receives the ultimate sentence for slandering women, death. The Spanish were major participants in the *querelle*, and one opponent's work in particular is valuable for the encyclopedic cataloguing of anti-female arguments of the day.⁵² Luis de Lucena, while a student at Salamanca sometime in the 1480s, wrote *Repetición de amores* to support Torrellas' position and complain about being rejected by a beautiful married woman. Lucena references a host of misogynistic writers, everyone from Aristotle to Juvenal in the classical world. He also parades "evil" women of Biblical and mythological stories to further his cause in defaming the majority of women in the world. Overwhelmingly, though, Spain produced more works advocating for the worth and dignity of Woman than those defaming her. More late-fifteenth-century defenses came out of Italy and France, too.

⁵¹ de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 187-188.

⁵² Barbara Matulka, *An Anti-Feminist Treatise of Fifteenth Century Spain: Lucena's Repetición de Amores* (New York: Institute of French Studies, 1931), 23.

If Boccaccio was looking for others to append his catalogue, his ploy was successful; some authors closely imitated him and others imbedded an advocacy for women into the catalogues. Likely, they knew of Christine de Pisan's works as well. In 1467, Antonio Cornazzano wrote *De mulieribus admirandis* (On Women Worthy of Admiration); this was followed (c. 1480) by Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Il Libro delle lode e commendazione delle donne* (Book of Praise and Commendation of Women) and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's 1483 *Gynevera de le clare donne* (Gynevera of Famous Women).⁵³ Sabadino's work closely mirrored de Pisan's in at least one important way: the success of women is portrayed apart from any male influence.⁵⁴

By the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, two additional Italian texts moved the genre from the cataloging of women to the construction of serious defenses of their worth and capability. Bartolomeo Goggio produced *De laudibus mulierum* (In Praise of Women, 1487), and Agostino Strozzi produced a *Defensio mulierum* (Defense of Women, c. 1501). Benson identifies an important triumvirate in Sabadino, Strozzi, and Goggio, who together "represent an extremely significant change in the notion of what constitutes positive and socially valuable female behavior." By stressing the moral and intellectual autonomy of women in their treatises, these defenders and advocates for women suggested that the sexes could compete because they had equal capacities.⁵⁵

Others, too, would come, as Margaret King notes: Filippo da Bergamo's (*Of Illustrious Women*), Pierre de Brantôme's (*The Lives of Illustrious Women*), Pierre Le Moyne's (*The Gallerie of Heroic Women*) or Pietro Paolo de Ribera's (*The Immortal*

⁵³ Benson, *Invention*, 34.

⁵⁴ Benson, *Invention*, 34.

⁵⁵ Benson, *Invention*, 34.

Triumphs and Heroic Enterprises of Eight Hundred and Forty-Five Women). As part of these lists, learned women of antiquity and the Christian eras were announced by early modern writers as models for female emulation. While King writes that many of these texts lacked an agenda for social or political change, she identified their importance nonetheless. “Their proliferation is notable, however, in an age nearly obsessed with the task of defining the proper role of women.”⁵⁶ By charting examples of real and imagined brave, heroic, learned, and virtuous women, these late medieval and Renaissance authors began to challenge the deep-seated chauvinism that riddled society on the page and in the flesh.

The door to female learning for religious and secular women was opened in the medieval period. Whether to save one’s soul, order one’s house, or comport oneself at court, women and men acknowledged that education could benefit the female sex. New voices advocating for women’s moral and intellectual abilities sprang up in the face of so many misogynistic utterances. The early modern advocates followed their medieval predecessors working hard to sustain the entrance to literacy and the liberal arts. As the *querelle* unfolded, advocates of female worth answered the rampant misogyny of their opponents with responses varying from exaggerated polemic to poetic composition to utopic dialogue. Some advocates envisioned fictional alternatives to the unfair conditions and insults women experienced, others drew on mythical and historical heroines, as well as contemporary female role models. This discussion turns to the humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the new ways they devised of affirming women’s worth, intellectual capacity, and suitability to advanced learning were devised.

⁵⁶ King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 183.

Humanists Affirm Female Education

The premier intellectual movement of the Renaissance, humanism, maintained the position that virtue was transmitted through engaging in the secular curriculum of the *studia humanitatis*. The great Italian humanists writing on pedagogy in the Quattrocento revolutionized the conception of education while retaining a commitment to Christian morality.⁵⁷ Specifically, three important treatises detailed exactly how a liberal education (for boys) ought to be pursued. Pietro Paolo Vergerio's (1370 – 1444) treatise, *De ingenuis moribus et studiis liberalibus* (On Noble Customs and Liberal Studies) (c. 1404), Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's (1405 – 1464; later Pope Pius II, r. 1458 -- 1464) *De liberorum educatione* (On the Education of Free Men) (1450), and Battista Guarino's *De ordine docendi et studendi* (Concerning the Order and the Method to be Observed in Teaching and in Reading the Classical Authors) (1459), were groundbreaking works.⁵⁸

In these works, the authors considered exactly how a liberal education could benefit male pupils. Their explanations contributed to making humanist studies a successful and increasingly institutionalized educational program in the early modern period. In his treatise, Vergerio ponders the uplifting nature of reading good books and pursuing knowledge: "For if there is anything either in ourselves or our fortune that causes us discomfort, we are easily relieved of it for this reason: that the pursuit of knowledge gives birth to wondrous pleasures in the human mind and in due course bears

⁵⁷ On humanist pedagogy, see: Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe*. (London: Duckworth, 1986); Kallendorf, ed. and trans., *Humanist Educational Treatises*; William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators* (New York: Columbia University, 1963); Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600*. Kallendorf's edition of pedagogical treatises updates and replaces Woodward's *Vittorino da Feltre*.

⁵⁸ Kallendorf includes Bruni's work, *De studiis et litteris* ("The Study of Literature"), which is considered later in this section, with the other three treatises as being the most influential humanist pedagogical works.

the richest fruits, whenever a seed of this kind falls into a good mind that is suited to nurture it.”⁵⁹ In his *De liberorum educatione*, Piccolomini locates the crux of humanist education: “As it is advantageous to lay up necessities for the winter during fine weather, so also good morals ought to be adopted in boyhood as the best provision for a virtuous old age.”⁶⁰ A few years later, Battista Guarino identifies a unique and universal human vocation: “Other animate creatures have powers innate to them, like the power of running in horses and flying in birds, but to mankind has been given the desire to know. . . .”⁶¹ These new maxims and pedagogical foundations for boys defined in these pioneering works would in due course come to be applied to girls and women pursuing advanced studies -- first by a few select contemporary Italian humanists, and, in the sixteenth century, the major humanist scholars beyond the Alps.

While only a small number of male humanists can be termed true advocates of female education, it can be proposed that the humanist project itself challenged medieval intellectual traditions by casting doubt on, or at least not blindly accepting, inherited dogma. This new critical stance on many inherited scholarly traditions included some positive opinions about female roles and capacity by important figures. As King and Rabil found, “Misogyny was so long-established in European culture when the modern era opened that to dismantle it was a monumental labor. The process began as part of a larger cultural movement that entailed the critical reexamination of ideas inherited from the ancient and medieval past. The humanists launched that critical reexamination.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Kallendorf, ed., *Humanist Educational Treatises*, 43.

⁶⁰ Kallendorf, ed., *Humanist Educational Treatises*, 159.

⁶¹ Kallendorf, ed., *Humanist Educational Treatises*, 307.

⁶² Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Declamation*, xvii of the editors' Introduction to the Series, which appears in every "Other Voice in Early Modern Europe" volume.

Almost concurrently with Christine de Pisan, in the fifteenth century, overcoming centuries of misogyny, the humanist project extended itself to a few elite women in Italy, who sought acceptance from male patrons as, bearing ridicule and slander, they ventured forth publicly to gain praise and fame and “build a better city for ladies.”⁶³ In recent years, scholarly monographs and articles have uncovered the attainments and challenges of accomplished female humanists in Italy. Most female humanists began their course of study under the tutelage of a father or guardian. As the pupils progressed in their studies, usually private tutors were hired to offer lessons at the families’ homes. The women, once accomplished, either retired to convents, or if married, placed their studies after the duties of wife and mother. For example, in the case of Costanza Barbaro, daughter of the famous Francesco, Margaret King wrote, “Her devoted father had given her an education in the new humanist program of the study of classical and Christian antiquity. By June 1440, when she could have been no more than twenty years old, Costanza had resolved upon the life of a nun - no doubt, in part, so that she would have the opportunity to continue her studies.”⁶⁴ For all of the internal rewards the scholarly women may have achieved for their learning, they received little praise in the wider secular world. In fact, as King reported, ridicule and denunciation were hurled at them by fellow humanists who were not advocates. Still, the female humanists, while few in number and receiving slight support, had proven a crucial point to the early modern world: girls and women could learn and succeed in the arts and sciences.

In this section, key figures and texts are presented to reveal how humanism affirmed female education. The initial launch pad was in Italy, where several male

⁶³ King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 239.

⁶⁴ King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 96.

thinkers stand out, notably: Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), Maffeo Vegio (1406 – 1458), Ludovico Foscarini (1409 - 1480), Lauro Quirini (c. 1420 – 1475/9) and Angelo Poliziano (1454- 1494). Recognizing value in female learning, they encouraged individual women to the *studia humanitatis* in their writings. The women they coached, admonished, and praised were from noble or wealthy merchant families; they were the daughters of elite and powerful families. The experiences and writings of Isotta Nogarola (1418 – 1466), Cassandra Fedele (1465 – 1558), Laura Cereta (1469 – 1499), and, later in the sixteenth century, Olympia Morata (1526/7 - 1555) are examined here, revealing the nature of their collective contribution to the argument for women’s education. Other women of the period, too, those of princely families who attained mastery in Greek and Latin should also be recognized; their learning was celebrated in wedding orations. Praised for their beauty, nobility, and wealth, courtly wives were also lauded for their advanced learning.⁶⁵

At the dawn of the fifteenth century, Leonardo Bruni wrote his *De studiis et litteris* (The Study of Literature), in the form of a letter to Battista di Montefeltro, daughter of the Count of Urbino and wife of the heir to the lordship of Pesaro, to guide her in her studies. Years earlier, Battista had begun the scholarly enterprise and distinguished herself in poetry and Latin letters. Now, at the approximate age of twenty-one, she received Bruni’s encouragement and counsel. He offered no contemporary female role model to Battista, since he recognized that in his own day “erudition in a woman is a thing utterly unknown,” but instead presented classical figures to his

⁶⁵ Anthony F. D’Elia, “Marriage, Sexual Pleasure, and Learned Brides in the Wedding Orations of Fifteenth-Century Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2002): 414; Anthony F. D’Elia, *The Renaissance of Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

addressee such as Cornelia, daughter of Scipio, Sappho, and Aspasia.⁶⁶ His multi-purpose letter praised Battista, urged her to greater intellectual heights, presented a “fitting” curriculum for a Christian lady, and invited her to participate in the *studia humanitatis* so that her learning would prepare her “for action or for discourse in all subjects.” Bruni did not specify what type of “action” he had in mind, but a conservative interpretation is best maintained, as his letter to Battista stressed studying religion and “approved” poets, historians and orators. For this noble lady, Christian and pagan writers co-mingled in the approved list as models of style and morality. For boys and men, Bruni and his fellow humanists believed that serious study of poetry, rhetoric, grammar, history, and ethics imbued the pupil with a virtuous character and kept vice at bay.

The curriculum Bruni offered to Battista was as rigorous as any humanistic program of study, and, at the same time, it was crafted in a particular way because of her sex. According to Bruni, rhetoric was “unbecoming” and “impractical” for women. He stated unequivocally, “She will, in a word, leave the rough-and-tumble of the forum entirely to men.”⁶⁷ In his discussion of poetry, he excluded comedy and satire from the approved list. He explained: “If somewhere a comic poet has made his theme too explicit, if a satirist excoriates vice a little too frankly, let her avert her gaze and not read them. For these are the plebian poets. The aristocrats of poesy, Vergil, I mean, and Seneca and Statius and the others of their sort, must be read if she is not to do without the greatest ornaments of literature. And without them, she may not hope for glory.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ James Hankins, Gordon Griffiths, and David Thompson, eds. and trans., *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), 240.

⁶⁷ Hankins, Griffiths, and Thompson, eds., *Bruni*, 244.

⁶⁸ Hankins, Griffiths, and Thompson, eds., *Bruni*, 250.

While the content of Bruni's curriculum for Battista was designed with her sex in mind, his argument for her advanced education could have been used for a male pupil of his day. Bruni believed Battista was capable of acquiring fame and good repute through her scholarship. Furthermore, the recurring theme that thorough knowledge and sensitivity to style would make Battista a cultivated person, which brought its own internal reward, as well as the satisfaction gained in conversing with learned people reveals one of Bruni's aims for her education. As he concluded the letter, Bruni stressed the "power of expression" as a most important skill to master for the sole purpose of conveying information and ideas. "Of what advantage is it to know many fine things if one has neither the ability to talk of them with distinction or write of them with praise?"⁶⁹ Bruni's advice to Battista was read by countless others, having been copied at least 127 times and printed in fifteen editions.⁷⁰

Bruni's colleague in the Papal Curia, Maffeo Vegio, also concerned himself with female education. Vegio in his treatise of 1444, *De educatione liberorum et eorum claris moribus* (On Liberal Education and Illustrious Conduct) which scholars have called one of "the most important of the humanist pedagogical treatises," provided a plan of upbringing and study for boys from infancy to university and a few pages of this six-book treatise contained advice for girls.⁷¹ One can see how Vegio and Barbaro shared the belief that children and the family would benefit from educated mothers. Citing Chrysostom, Vegio wrote in Book III that mothers must care for their daughters and

⁶⁹ Kallendorf, ed., *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ix.

⁷⁰ Hankins, Griffiths, and Thompson, eds., *Bruni*, 250.

⁷¹ Maffeo Vegio, *Maphei Vegii Laudensis de educatione liberorum et eorum claris moribus libri sex: A Critical Text of Books I-VI*, eds. Sister Maria Walburg Fanning and Sister Anne Stanislaus Sullivan, trans. Sister Maria Walburg Fanning (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1933), Book III, Chapter XII, 1.

instill in them piety. “If thus you will train them, not only will you preserve them but even the men who are going to marry them; and not only their husbands but their children and grand-children also.”⁷²

Vegio recognized value for the family in female training, and what he described called for home tutors prioritizing religious instruction above all else. Noticeably, mothers are to instruct their daughters in religion and moral behavior. In Book III, Chapter XIII, Vegio provides a role-model for female instruction in Saint Monica, the mother of Augustine. His dedication to her moved beyond literary tributes, of which he wrote several, to include erecting a chapel in her honor in the Church of St. Augustine in Rome.⁷³ Here Vegio credits Monica for her instruction and care of her son, and, reaching back further, Monica’s nurse and teacher for giving Monica her education. He cried, “Therefore, O holy education! O venerable old woman to be extolled beyond all praise!” Holding Monica’s tutor up as a role model, he praised her teaching and saw her as facilitating sanctity, “O how deservedly ought all foster-parents and mothers love, cherish and imitate you, who by your holy instruction gave to the world the mother of Augustine, so outstanding and excellent in sanctity as no one can ever sufficiently admire nor worthily praise.”⁷⁴

For Vegio, the nurse’s practice of curbing a child’s wants and needs with “holy severity” had its reward. He mused that if Monica had been without such a conscientious nurse she would have failed to reach the level of holiness. In Vegio’s estimation, the good Christian woman teaches her charges obedience to all the Church’s precepts. This theme of religious conformity and obedience remained constant throughout the early

⁷² Vegio, *Maphei Vegii*, Book III, Chapter XIII, 2.

⁷³ Fanning, intro. to Vegio, *De educatione liberorum*, xiii.

⁷⁴ Vegio, *Maphei Vegii*, Book III, Chapter XIII, 2.

modern period, with renewed energy in the face of religious reformations in the sixteenth century.

Isotta Nogarola, one of Italy's foremost women humanists, endeavored to pursue a life of learning and remain in the world (rather than the cloister). As documented by Margaret King and Diana Robin, Nogarola and her siblings were encouraged by their illiterate mother, Bianca Borromeo, the recent widow of Leonardo Nogarola.⁷⁵ By placing her daughters, Isotta and Ginevra, under the instruction of Martino Rizzoni, the former student of one of Italy's most accomplished humanists and teachers, Guarino Guarini, Borromeo ensured that the girls would receive the highest level of instruction available. They earned praise from Guarino's circle for their literary accomplishments and learning. Guarino, himself, counseled Isotta to ". . . create a man within the woman," to achieve the fortitude necessary for her chosen path.⁷⁶ While Ginevra married, Isotta did not. Instead, she chose to continue her career as a humanist scholar with her mother and brothers' support, without which she would not have been able to remain unmarried in the secular world, as a scholar.

Even with the family's protection, an anonymous invective aiming to dishonor Isotta's reputation with accusations of sexual misconduct circulated in 1439.⁷⁷ Under the pseudonym Plinio Veronese, a malevolent writer accused Isotta of fornication and incest. He played on the medieval trope that women of learning were unchaste, and lamented that literary studies were sullied by her participation in them.

⁷⁵ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 3.

⁷⁶ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 43.

⁷⁷ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 6.

Alas for God in whom men trust, who does not mingle heaven with earth nor sea with heaven, when she, who sets herself no limit in this filthy lust, dares to engage so deeply in the finest literary studies.⁷⁸

This false accusation was somewhat damaging to Nogarola, but she retained the goodwill of many notables. Although she was defended, Nogarola retreated from the Republic of Letters and corresponded just within a small circle.⁷⁹

Her praises were sung by talented men, among them Ludovico Foscarini, who wrote the following tribute to Nogarola. His choice to compare Nogarola to other learned women rather than the entire pool of male and female scholars is telling. He expressed a sense of wonder and awe at Nogarola's breadth of learning, even hinting that she was at the limit of mortal or natural accomplishments for women. His message was that she was extraordinary -- not an extraordinary person, or scholar, but an extraordinary woman. Implicitly, he suggested that her rare talent could not be emulated by other women.

What woman therefore was ever more learned than you or could be, who from the school of childhood up to this age, by learning and by teaching, have committed more books to memory than many learned men have seen? What kind of liberal learning is there in which you are not versed? Oratory, poetry, philosophy, theology declare that there is nothing that can adorn the mortal mind which you have neglected.⁸⁰

Fortunately for Nogarola, his perspective did not keep him from engaging with her in a correspondence between intellectual "equals." Foscarini was a rare man, who agreed to a scholarly and good-natured duel to determine the relative guilt of Adam and Eve for the first sin, which was read as the guilt of men and women writ large. By writing to Nogarola and participating in this important scholarly exercise, Foscarini confirmed her abilities and welcomed her into the

⁷⁸ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 68-69.

⁷⁹ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 69.

⁸⁰ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 135.

intellectual world, more so than with his words of “praise.” His opinion of her must have been quite high; according to King and Robin, Nogarola resided in the Foscarini household, most likely from 1461 – 1466.⁸¹

The Venetian humanist Lauro Quirini also exchanged letters with Nogarola and guided her studies in the 1440’s and 1450’s. In a letter to Nogarola, Quirini first offers compliments on her letters, “now collected in a volume,” as well as her talented “melodious” style. Seemingly without malice, he claims, “rightly, therefore, should you also, famous Isotta, receive the highest praises, since you have indeed, if I may so speak, overcome your own nature.”⁸² Treating her as a woman who has a man’s spirit, a special case among her sex, Quirini is very pleased to provide further direction for her studies. Boethius, Aristotle, Aquinas, Averroes and Avicenna should all be read, and then he recommends Cicero, “who must be our daily bread.”⁸³ In equal measure, Quirini states that Nogarola’s commitment to both virtue and letters must remain steadfast. He concludes by declaring his love and affection for her with able witticisms. In the Quattrocento, it was dangerous for women of learning to emerge from the household or convent. Isotta, at least, made a formidable debut and earned the respect of several notable male humanists.

On the heels of Nogarola’s achievement emerged another woman humanist, Cassandra Fedele (1465 – 1558). To her, many reputable men of letters sent word of their admiration for her. The famous humanist Angelo Poliziano recorded his opinion about Fedele and female education generally. In 1491, his words offered a revaluation of the entire female sex regarding their intellectual capacity. “We know this, certainly, we

⁸¹ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 8.

⁸² Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 108.

⁸³ Nogarola, *Complete Writings*, 112.

know the [the female sex] was not by nature stupid or condemned to dullness. [. . .] [But] in our age, in which it is rare even for men to excel in letters, you are the only maiden living who handles a book instead of wool, a reed pen instead of make-up, a metal stilus instead of a needle, and who smears not her skin with white lead, but rather paper with ink."⁸⁴ His understanding of female capacity for learning was based both on the natural endowments women possessed as well as the manner in which they employed their time. This dual understanding which gives consideration to a woman's nature and nurture was perhaps the most complex of the times. In the quotation above, Poliziano confirmed Fedele's choice to pursue letters by presenting tools of the textile trade and make-up as inferior to the tools of a scholar: books, stilus, paper and ink. He recognized Fedele's talent and encouraged her iconoclastic pursuit.

Fedele was clear about her decision to study letters and philosophy. Between 1487–1521, she delivered an oration to Doge Agostino Barbarigo and the Venetian Senate in which she described the many personal benefits of the scholarly pursuit. What is fascinating about her speech is that she goes on to make a case for women as a whole. She does not claim education should be pursued for fame, riches, or even the state or the family, but rather for its own pleasure.

And when I meditate on the idea of marching forth in life with the lowly and execrable weapons of the little woman – the needle and the distaff – even if the study of literature offers women no rewards or honors, I believe women must nonetheless pursue and embrace such studies alone for the pleasure and enjoyment they contain ⁸⁵

The oration earned her praise from male attendees, and her reputation for learning and eloquence extended well beyond the Venetian empire.

⁸⁴ King and Rabil, eds., *Her Immaculate Hand*, 127.

⁸⁵ Fedele, *Letters*, 162.

If Fedele publicly acknowledged the pleasure one derives from study, Laura Cereta (1469 – 1499) highlighted the laborious processes of scholarly pursuits. Cereta's oeuvre includes a humanist invective addressed to "Bibolo Semproni" that makes original and poignant observations. After listing some classical examples of learned and virtuous women, Cereta made a bold claim for equality of the sexes. She wrote, "All history is full of such examples. My point is that your mouth has grown foul because you keep it sealed so that no arguments can come out of it that might enable you to admit that nature imparts one freedom to all human beings equally – to learn."⁸⁶ Cereta's point is reminiscent of Guarino's universal human vocation: learning.

Still, this "freedom" is not undertaken lightly. Cereta gives her honest assessment and calls women to pursue education as it suits them. This remarkable woman steered clear of claiming a special feminine subtleness of mind, or special characteristic for her sex. "May we women, then, not be endowed by God the grantor with any giftedness or rare talent through any sanctity of our own." Instead she describes the pursuit of knowledge as a choice that one's own reason can make. "For knowledge is not given as a gift but by study. For a mind free, keen, and unyielding in the face of hard work always rises to the good, and the desire for learning grows in depth and breadth." Human rationality is what motivates study, for both men and women. "Nature has thus granted to all enough of her bounty; she opens to all the gates of choice, and through these gates, reason sends legates to the will, for it is through reason that these legates transmit their desires."⁸⁷ Rationality, too, seems to empower Cereta with authority. She is confident

⁸⁶ Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, 78.

⁸⁷ Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, 79.

relying on reason to incorporate women into the world of letters. Together with personal choice and hard work, reason can assist any woman in advanced learning.

The female humanists discussed above all hailed from Italy, but just as humanism reached out beyond the Italian peninsula, so too did the attendant phenomenon of elite learned women. The very famous late fifteenth-century example of Queen Isabella of Castile and her female companions excelling in Latin and other studies demonstrates that Italy was not the only site amenable to privileged women with scholarly interests.⁸⁸ Isabella summoned Dona Beatrice Galindo from the University of Salamanca, where she had been teaching Latin, to give her personal instruction.⁸⁹ The Catholic Queen's enthusiasm for education was transmitted, most notably to her daughter, Catherine of Aragon. In short time, royal and elite women of England were being trained in the *studia humanitatis* as well. When Catherine of Aragon (1485 – 1536) arrived in England and became Prince Arthur's wife, she carried on her mother Isabella's learned legacy. With Arthur's death, she agreed to marry his brother, King Henry VIII. Amid the vexed marriage and turbulent court life, their daughter, Princess Mary Tudor, received an advanced education from Juan Luis Vives, who is a major figure in advocating education for girls, and will be closely examined in the pages that follow. Mary Tudor's half-sister, the future Queen Elizabeth, especially excelled at her studies, as did Lady Jane Grey.⁹⁰ Both were tutored by Roger Ascham, author of the *Schoolmaster* (1570), and were

⁸⁸ Guida M. Jackson-Laufer, *Women Who Ruled* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1990); Peggy K. Liss, *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁸⁹ Fantazzi, "Introduction," 24.

⁹⁰ Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: Summit Books, 1983); Hogrefe, *Tudor Women: Commoners and Queens*; Mary M. Luke, *The Nine Days Queen: a Portrait of Lady Jane Grey* (New York: W. Morrow, 1986); David Starkey, *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001); Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I* (New York: Ballantine, 1998).

accomplished linguists.⁹¹ Elizabeth's court was dotted with well-educated women, including the four daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke. Key northern humanists portrayed female education in new positive ways, adding much to the foundation their Italian forerunners established.

Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535), Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), and Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) catapulted the movement for female worth and education to much greater acceptance and frequency in their century and the generations immediately following. They publicized impassioned messages about the need for girls' education, each with their own unique emphasis within the topic. More and Vives specified that ignorance of letters was not at all befitting for a Christian girl or woman, and Vives provided the necessary argumentation to mollify the chastity issue. An examination of their texts demonstrates the variety of early modern justifications for female learning, as well as the "appropriate" curriculum and setting for sixteenth-century girls and women. As honored scholars and statesmen regularly publishing across Europe, this coterie of advocates was well-placed to enact a change in society's outlook on girls' education.

Agrippa von Nettesheim was both a humanist and a participating member of the *querelle des femmes*; his *Declamatio de nobilitate et praecellentia foemini sexus* (Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex) was pronounced at the University of Dôle in 1509 and published in 1529. According to Agrippa's editor Albert Rabil, the *Declamation* was as influential in the sixteenth century as Agrippa's famous work *On the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Arts and Sciences*, and sixteenth-century

⁹¹ Ascham, *The Scholemaster*.

translations of the *Declamation* from Latin into French, English, Italian, German, and Polish testify to its wide dispersion among readers.⁹²

The *Declamation* identifies several injustices perpetrated against women by men. At the heart of his argument, Agrippa attributed “the excessive tyranny of men” to their (the male) exclusion of women from educational institutions, and what we would call the “public sphere.” As he lamented,

For as soon as she is born a woman is confined in idleness at home from her earliest years, and, as if incapable of functions more important, she has no other prospect than needle and thread. [. . .] And so these laws (contemporary) compel women to submit to men, as conquered before conquerors, and that without reason or necessity natural or divine, but under the pressure of custom, education, chance, or some occasion favorable to tyranny.⁹³

By uncovering the socio-political reasons for oppression and exclusion, Agrippa provided his readers with a platform upon which to present proposals for change. At once recognizing female capacity and the unfavorable conditions that barred women from “functions more important,” he was the first male humanist to label the status quo a male “tyranny.” Advocates who followed Agrippa and wrote within the *querelle* called for justice, complete with the necessary schoolhouses for girls to keep them from ignorance and degradation.

Sir Thomas More, famous statesman and martyr, came to the issue of female education from a much different angle than his contemporary, Agrippa. A succinct account of his opinion of female learning is given in his poem *To Candidus*,

Happy is the woman whose education permits her to derive from the best of ancient works the principles which confer a blessing on life. Armed with this learning, she would not yield to pride in prosperity, nor to grief in distress-even though misfortune strike her down. For this reason

⁹² Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Declamation*, 3, 27.

⁹³ Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Declamation*, 94-95.

your lifetime companion will be ever agreeable, never a trouble or a burden.⁹⁴

He is the first advocate to consider a woman's own happiness in the pursuit of learning. More delivers a practical justification for a classical education by attesting to its character-strengthening benefits, which women could receive.

Among his many responsibilities, More oversaw his children's education, and took wards into the household to have them tutored.⁹⁵ He was an involved father, and guardian advocating for female learning beyond his household as well, as his words and actions influenced others, including Desiderius Erasmus' position and subsequent writings on the topic.⁹⁶ In a letter to William Gonnell, tutor to his children, More remarks upon the equality of rational capacity in men and women. This enlightened view of female rationality, so elegantly put, fully extended the dignity and excellence of man to woman.

. . . if a woman (and this I desire and hope with you as their teacher for all my daughters) to eminent virtue of mind should add even moderate skill in learning, I think she will gain more real good than if she obtain the riches of Croesus and the beauty of Helen. Not because that learning will be a glory to her, though learning will accompany virtue as a shadow does a body, but because the reward of wisdom is too solid to be lost with riches or to perish with beauty. . . . Nor do I think that the harvest is much affected whether it is a man or a woman who does the sowing. They both have the name of human being whose nature reason differentiates from that of beasts; both, I say, are equally suited for the knowledge of learning by which reason is cultivated, and, like plowed land, germinates a crop when the seeds of good precepts have been sown.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Project, ed., *Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 187.

⁹⁵ Whitehead, ed., *Women's Education*, 120.

⁹⁶ An elaboration of this point is offered in the pages that follow. Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," 83; W.H. Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education* (New York: Bureau of Publications Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964), 149.

⁹⁷ Rogers, ed., *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, 103-105.

In this passage, the benefits of learning are just as “solid” for females as males. More claims that human beings, without excluding one sex from the other, gain abundantly through knowledge and reason. His female children were given what most girls were not: a vote of confidence, or in other words: faith in their potentialities.

The daughters of Sir Thomas More, contemporaries with Queen Elizabeth, shared her scholarly talents. Margaret (More) Roper (1505 – 1544), the most advanced of the family, translated Erasmus’ Latin treatise on the *Pater Noster*, “A deuout treatise vpon the pater noster tourned in to englisshe by a yong gentyl woman,” and, likely out of humility, asked that her name be left off of the work.⁹⁸ Her tutor, Richard Hyrde (d. 1528), who would later translate Juan Luis Vives’ *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, included the following defense of female learning and surely had his opinions framed by his experiences in the More household. He suggests that jealousy is behind the detractors of female scholars:

I have heard men put great doubt whether it should be expedient and requisite or not, a woman to have learning in books of Latin and Greek. And some utterly affirm that it is not only nother necessary nor profitable, but also very noisome and jeopardous. . . But these men that so say, do in my judgement, either regard but little what they speak in this matter, or else, as they be for the more part unlearned, they envy it and take it sore to he[a]rt, that other[s] should have the precious jewell, which they nother have themselfe, nor can find in their hearts to take the pain to get. . . .⁹⁹

Hyrde proved to be quite able as a tutor; the pains he took with Roper yielded the desired results. Modern scholars recognize her letters to be “as good as” her father’s.

⁹⁸ Rita M. Verbrugge, “Margaret More Roper’s Personal Expression,” in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1985), 30-42, 36.

⁹⁹ As quoted by Catherine R. Eskin in Whitehead, ed., *Women’s Education*, 120.

The family's dedication to learning and More's willingness to extend the benefits of learning to his female children made their family home a virtual school.

Erasmus was a kindred spirit to More, writing that "A proper and conscientious instruction is the well-spring of all moral goodness" in his treatise *On the Education for Children (De pueris instituendis)*.¹⁰⁰ Erasmus had not yet become an advocate for female education when he wrote that piece; his position on female education was formed around observations of More's family, years later.¹⁰¹ After witnessing how learning could be extended to girls without danger, Erasmus came to share the conviction that education for girls was fitting and beneficial, and became a powerful supporter of female learning in his own right. In 1521, he wrote to Guillaume Budé (1467-1540), the famous humanist and statesman, about his "conversion":

It was not always believed that letters are of value to the virtue and general reputation of women. I myself once held this opinion: but More completely converted me. Two things are of the greatest peril to the virtue of young women, idleness and lascivious games, and the love of letters prevents both.¹⁰²

It is noteworthy that Erasmus identified a literary education as an appropriate defense against idleness and dangerous games, two known culprits to female virtue which entailed, of course, unsullied chastity. Advocates for Ursuline schools, whose texts are examined in Chapter Two, as well as many founders of English schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the subject of Chapter Three, would echo this Erasmian

¹⁰⁰ Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 68.

¹⁰¹ Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," 83.

¹⁰² Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," 83-84.

justification. Some of these later pedagogues and founders of schools mentioned Erasmus by name as an inspiration and wise counselor regarding the education of girls.¹⁰³

Several letters and works survive that share his opinions about how and why female learning should take place. Erasmus believed that educated girls and women would strengthen the family and, in turn, strong families would strengthen Christendom. He did not call for schools, and instead pictured the domestic setting as the proper arena for their studies. Free from convents and religious orders, Erasmus envisioned girls and young women from moneyed families pursuing humanistic studies. As one scholar has noted, "In this he is in line with the Italian humanists"¹⁰⁴ Erasmus' letter written in 1529 to the Spanish Humanist Juan Vergara offers positive examples of learned women he had met or corresponded with in Spain, Italy, and Germany. As only the satirical Erasmus can, he simultaneously praises the serious learning of women and jests at the lack of scholars in the monasteries.

I have received a welcome greeting from your sister Elizabeth which I return in the same kind. It is a joy to get fresh examples of the learning of her sex. We have a queen of England who is a famous learned woman and whose daughter Mary writes very good Latin letters. Thomas More's house is a veritable home of the muses. Mary, the emperor's sister, takes delight in books: I recently dedicated my *Vidua christiana* to her. She urgently requested this of me on the recommendation of a favorite preacher of hers. The scheme of human affairs is turned topsy-turvy: monks hate books and women love them!¹⁰⁵

--referencing, no doubt, "The Abbott and the Learned Lady," which was included in his *Colloquies* in 1524. Adjusting to the increase of learning among

¹⁰³ Thomas Salter, in his 1579 tract on girls' upbringing, "A Mirrhor Mete for All Mothers, Matrones, and Maidens," counseled matrons to have their charges read Erasmus' "golden book" of vices and virtues, hoping that the girls will grow to love that which protects them. Daniel Bellamy, co-founder of a girls' boarding school in England, who is treated in Chapter Three, identified Erasmus as a knowledgeable advocate of girls' education.

¹⁰⁴ Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, 153.

¹⁰⁵ As quoted in Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," 81.

women, Erasmus chose to side with the supporters of female education, even finding joy in the new trend. Here he spread the news about the learned Catherine of Aragon, and her daughter, Princess Mary Tudor, and announced his decision to select a female patron for the important dedication of his most recent scholarly work. Despite the prevalence of men condemning female learning, or, perhaps, because of it, the pioneering Erasmus claimed, "Only a man who is himself an ignoramus will affirm that a learned woman is twice a fool."¹⁰⁶

He argued against what he saw as a common error husbands made, in preferring unlearned spouses,

Nor do I see why husbands should fear that their wives would be less obedient if they are learned, unless they are such as would require of their wives what should not be required of proper women. In short, in my judgment, nothing is more intractable than ignorance.¹⁰⁷

Learning, for Erasmus, enhanced valuable characteristics like obedience, because it makes the learner see reasonable commands or requests. Without it, ignorance would reign and make wives less likely to understand or follow husbands' directives, no matter how judicious. Erasmus explained further:

Surely the mind must be trained in the cultivation of studies so that it may understand right reason and see what is proper and what is advantageous. This becomes obvious the moment it is said. To this end, since the pleasure and durability of a marriage depend more on the pleasure of minds than the love of bodies, they are bound by much stronger chains who are linked in the devotion of their minds.¹⁰⁸

A happy and pleasurable union is achieved in the marriage when like minds and "right reason" are shared by both husband and wife. A wife without learning is more likely to be disobedient, and worse, she will set a damaging example for the children: "A woman's

¹⁰⁶ As quoted in Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, 150.

¹⁰⁷ Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," 83.

¹⁰⁸ Sowards, "Erasmus and the Education of Women," 84.

spirit is necessary to hold a family together, to form and fashion the habits of children which of all things is most satisfying to a husband.”¹⁰⁹ A women’s primary role in the upbringing of children was not only the opportunity to teach the children by example, but also to reinforce the affinity of minds between a husband and wife.

In his treatise *Christiani matrimonii institutio* (*The Institution of Marriage*, 1526), Erasmus launched a new paradigm for married couples to adopt, one based on companionship. He counseled couples to use “conversation to establish, confirm and maintain friendship.”¹¹⁰ Years earlier, in 1518, his view of the marital relationship was centered on the psychological benefits of the union. “In times of prosperity, happiness is doubled; in adversity there will be someone to console and assist you, to show her devotion, to wish your misfortune hers. Do you think there is any pleasure to be compared with so close a union?”¹¹¹

Erasmus was on common ground in stating that a Christian woman as a wife and mother ought to be virtuous, knowledgeable, and busy, yet he was a pioneer in recommending a literary education as an apt pursuit for her. “Common sense dictates that girls be instructed in letters for nothing is more conducive to a good mind or more useful to the preservation of virtue.”¹¹² Erasmus considered the humanities as the best “occupation” for girls of high birth and free time:

What is more, once she begins to enjoy study, it will sharpen and stimulate her mind more than any other occupation; others [other occupations] may discourage idleness, but study has the advantage that the more you do the greater pleasure you obtain, and it will keep you occupied even into old age. Finally, reading good books not only forestalls idleness

¹⁰⁹ Desiderius Erasmus, “The Institution of Marriage,” in *Erasmus on Women*, ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 79-130, 100.

¹¹⁰ Erasmus, “On Christian Marriage,” 70.

¹¹¹ Sowards, “Erasmus and the Education of Women,” 86.

¹¹² Erasmus, “On Christian Marriage,” 85.

but also fills girls' minds with the best principles and inculcates virtue . .
¹¹³

He goes on to discuss female education as a kind of molding or forming of a potential bride and future keeper of the family. He acknowledges that men often choose "untutored" brides and then set about molding, educating, and tutoring the young women themselves.

Thus a man who chooses a well-favoured but untutored bride will try, if he is a good craftsman, to fashion himself a wife to suit his own temper, and will succeed, with God's aid, so long as his own character reflects the moral code. Conversely, a man who wants to escape the drudgery of educating her, which is a long and not always successful job, may prefer a widow who is already broken in and formed.¹¹⁴

This excerpt demonstrates that Erasmus, while favoring female learning, saw it as a service to the existing social hierarchy. In other words, for secular women, female learning ought to serve the husband, and by extension, the family. Erika Rummel states in her introduction to *Erasmus on Women* that "Erasmus' thought on women and learning is liberal, measured by the standards of his time."¹¹⁵ Her assessment that Erasmus is not a "feminist" by modern standards is certainly correct. Yet, in the sixteenth century, his advocacy for women's learning was pioneering.

Erasmus' fellow humanist Juan Luis Vives, who was also known to Sir Thomas More, forms the third of a remarkable troika of northern humanists who thought deeply on the subject of girls' education in the 1520s. With More and Erasmus, Vives shared the belief that a sound education would better prepare girls and women for their lives as Christian mothers and wives, safeguarding their virtue. Renowned for his vast learning

¹¹³ Erasmus, "On Christian Marriage," 85.

¹¹⁴ Cousins, "Erasmus, Vives, and More," 221.

¹¹⁵ Rummel, ed., *Erasmus on Women*, 9.

and writings, Vives was an international figure of import.¹¹⁶ His widely printed manual, originally written in Latin, *De institutione feminae Christianae* (The Education of a Christian Woman), offered society clear directives about how and why females should be trained. At the request of Catherine of Aragon (1485 – 1536), the first wife of king Henry VIII of England, Vives wrote on the subject in 1523 and it appeared in print January 1524, dedicated to this learned queen.¹¹⁷ During this time, Vives was the Princess Mary's tutor; later in life he would educate another noble woman, Doña Mencía de Mendoza, who was the wife of the Duke of Nassau, residing in North Brabant.¹¹⁸

The fifteen-chapter *Education of a Christian Woman* represents the first attempt in human history to offer sustained arguments for universal education, regardless of class or intelligence. Yet Vives has been misjudged by historians of education, being labeled an “ambiguous” type of advocate, or worse, a “fanatic” over the issue of chastity, and a chauvinist for his characterization of women by reputable scholars.¹¹⁹ This examination of Vives' contribution shows that, on the contrary, Vives was the greatest champion for women's education of his day specifically because he met the challenge of chastity head on and squarely defeated it. This feat served as the necessary groundwork for the

¹¹⁶ Carlos G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970); *Selected Works of J. L. Vives*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi, Constantinus Matheussen, and Edward George (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987); Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600*, 180-210.

¹¹⁷ Vives, *Education*, 50.

¹¹⁸ Vives, *Education*, 8-9.

¹¹⁹ Beauchamp, Hageman, and Mikesell, "Introduction."; Cousins, "Erasmus, Vives, and More."; Fantazzi, "Introduction."; Kaufman, "Vives." These four works offer a flawed conception of Vives, in their tendency to judge the man by twentieth-century standards and minimize the hegemonic Christian culture in which Vives was immersed.

schooling of girls, and the first schools for girls did indeed open their doors in the decades that followed Vives' immensely popular treatise.¹²⁰

After giving the necessary information about the publication of the work, its structure, and its message, a re-evaluation of Vives' contribution is offered. Before the end of the sixteenth century, *The Education of a Christian Woman* appeared in over forty editions and numerous translations.¹²¹ Scholars agree that this manual was "the most influential in shaping opinion on the conduct of women in Western Europe" at a time when conduct manuals were a best-selling genre.¹²² As Vives was the tutor of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's eldest daughter, Princess Mary, his prescription for learning would have been emulated among the highest circles in Europe. As mentioned, Richard Hyrde brought Vives into the English language, and with the following line demonstrates his sympathy with one of Vives' main points. Hyrde asks rhetorically, "[W]hat is more frutefull than the good education and ordre of women, the one halfe of all mankynd?"¹²³ The conflation of good education and good "ordre" reflects the humanist faith in cultivating "ordre" and virtue through learning. The Hyrde translation, which was originally published in London at Fleet Street in 1529, went through numerous reprints in London (1531, 1541, 1547, 1557, 1567, 1585, and 1592).¹²⁴

The work is divided into three books which follow the typical female's life course, where from maidenhood she moves to her role as wife and mother, and lastly and

¹²⁰ Besides Luther's schools that taught religion and basic literacy to girls on a part-time basis, the Ursuline Order formed their first schools beginning in the 1540s. In London, too, the first school expressly for girls was opened in 1552. See Chapter Three of this dissertation: English Schools and Mary Ward's Institute.

¹²¹ Axel Erdmann, *My Gracious Silence: Women in the Mirror of Sixteenth-Century Printing in Western Europe* (Luzern: Gilhofer & Ranschburg, 1999), 19. Henceforth, references to *The Education of a Christian Woman* appear in parentheses within the text as (*Education*, 00).

¹²² Erdmann, *My Gracious Silence*, 19.

¹²³ As quoted by Catherine R. Eskin in Whitehead, ed., *Women's Education*, 121.

¹²⁴ Beauchamp, Hageman, and Mikesell, "Introduction," lxxvii.

commonly spends the last segment of her life as a widow. The manual's scope transcends the topic of female education, but Vives' position on female education is what makes this work a foundational text in the history of girls' education.

In the *Prefatory Letter* to Queen Catherine, Vives advocates for female learning because he sees it as crucial to the moral order and the well-ordered state. (*Education*, 45.) He explains to Catherine that his book not only sings the praises of chastity, as the patristic fathers' works do, but his work offers practical rules for life, so that girls and women may find "the pleasure and satisfaction that virtue brings with it." (*Education*, 48.) Vives calls himself "a teacher of chastity" and identifies this virtue as all-important for females: "A woman's only care is chastity; therefore when this has been thoroughly elucidated, she may be considered to have received sufficient instruction." (*Education*, 47.) This quotation, often severed from its contextual meaning has menaced modern scholars in their assessment of Vives on women. As the program of studies Vives offers is presented and explained below, the role of chastity and its connection to learning emerges not as a deterrent from education, but a strong benefit of it. Vives oversimplifies his position on the role of chastity in a woman's life (in the statement above), whereas in Book One, he fleshes out the exact nature and function of female chastity as it relates to education.

Like the Italian humanists that came before him, Vives trusts that a classical education, together with Christian instruction, will necessarily mold the pupil into a virtuous scholar. In *Chapter Four of Book I: Which Treats of Unmarried Young Women*, Vives claims, "The woman who has learned to make these and similar reflections either through instinctive virtue, innate intelligence, or through her reading will never bring

herself to commit any vile act, for her mind will have been strengthened and imbued with holy counsels.” (*Education*, 65.) Reading the right materials aids the female as much as any “instinctive virtue” or “innate intelligence.” Indeed, reading and education should serve the same purpose as virtue and intelligence. Vives is especially clear on this point, “. . . since in the education of a woman the principal and, I might almost say, the only concern should be the preservation of chastity.” (*Education*, 71.) His concern is for the woman’s honor and that of her family’s, because, as is widely known, society scorned female fornication. When an unmarried girl or young woman became sexually active, or when a married woman had extra-marital relations, her actions were not only sinful, but vilified and unforgivable. In order to protect girls and women from this potential danger, Vives stressed the need for chastity. What is remarkable about Vives is that he does not recommend a sequestered existence and enforced ignorance upon the female sex, instead, he trusts in their intellectual powers, their rationality and self-discipline, prescribing a rigorous academic course, to strengthen them and keep them from possibly becoming social anathemas.

Vives relied heavily upon the patristic fathers’ writings, especially Jerome’s works. Jerome approved of advanced education for Christian women, as evidenced in his letter to Laeta, *On a Girl’s Education* (403CE).¹²⁵ In the safety of a convent, Jerome encouraged upper-class Christian girls destined to become nuns to study Latin, Greek, and Hebrew letters.¹²⁶ He limited female learning in the convent to morally and spiritually edifying works; in fact, in the letter to Laeta, he specified that “she love the manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures,” and beyond the Holy Word, he recommended only

¹²⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, see page 4.

¹²⁶ Jerome, “To Laeta,” 367, 489.

the works of Cyprian, Athanasius and Hilary.¹²⁷ He warns, “If she reads others, let it be as a critic rather than as a disciple.”¹²⁸ In Jerome’s warning was the affirmative assumption that girls and women were capable of critical thought and intellectual discernment.

Vives shared this opinion and was the first to adapt Jerome’s educational program for nuns into a program for secular Christian girls. Vives builds his own argument that learning and virtue go hand in hand by relying on the existence of learned women in the patristics’ circle: “In Jerome’s time all holy women were very learned. [. . .] Jerome writes to Paula, Laeta, Eustochium, Fabiola, Marcellam Furia, Demetrias, Salvina, Herontia. Ambrose, Augustine, and Fulgentius write to other women, all of them admirable for their talent, literary learning, and exemplary life.” (*Education*, 69). In order for the “adaptation” to be successful, Vives had to address the chastity issue directly.

In a remarkable passage, Vives carefully describes how the function of learning, i.e. the “study of literature,” aids chastity, having these effects on the pupil:

First, it occupies a person’s whole attention; second, it lifts the mind to the contemplation of beautiful things and rids it of lowly thoughts; and if any such thoughts creep in, the mind, fortified by precepts and counsels of good living, either dispels them immediately or does not lend an ear to vile and base things, since it has other pure, substantial, and noble pleasures to aspire after. (*Education*, 70.)

This idea of lifting the mind and of perpetual fortitude against “base things” harkens back to the arguments that Vergerio made in his early fifteenth-century treatise, *On Noble Customs and Liberal Studies*. Vives extends the power, first identified by Vergerio for

¹²⁷ Jerome, “To Laeta,” 365-367.

¹²⁸ Jerome, “To Laeta,” 367.

men, to women. He then goes on to comment on the silly type of amusements in which newly empowered young girls will no longer waste their time:

Not only does the mind dedicated to wisdom shrink from lust, that is, something innocent and immaculate from filth and defilement, but likewise from those trivial and foolish pastimes that tempt the fickle minds of girls, like dancing, singing, and frivolous and insipid amusements of that sort. (*Education*, 71.)

In doing so, Vives pays a *bona fide* compliment to the female sex, finding girls and women to be capable of the intellectual work and receptive to fortifying nature of liberal studies. Too many modern scholars, perhaps saddened to see Vives criticize dancing and singing, pass harsh judgment upon him, as no friend to women. But, to find such a confident and articulate advocate in the cause of female education in 1523/4, was a great boon for women, and to have that advocate eradicate class barriers to learning in the same book was, perhaps, astounding. He entered uncharted territory in uttering his plea for universal education: “The learning that I should wish to be made available to the whole human race is sober and chaste; it forms our character and renders us better.” (*Education*, 64.)

Vives’ recommendation of the *studia humanitatis* to females was remarkable because it was for *all* Christian girls. *The Education of a Christian Woman* advocates for female learning within the careful confines of a supervised course. All girls needed education to be good Christians rather than, as Vives saw it, to remain untutored and contribute to the decadence of public morality. Education, Vives expounded, is the mechanism by which girls can be protected, molded, and sanitized from any “natural inclination toward evil” and ignorance. This reasoning applied to all girls, and its

justification would be echoed throughout the rest of the early modern period by many diverse groups.

Vives prescribed a curriculum that was to be guided by able parents or tutors. He did not call for schools; neither did he prohibit them, but he admonished that women should be private teachers of girls, and not run schools: “. . . it is not fitting that a woman be in charge of schools or have dealings with or speak to men, and, while teaching others, detract from her modesty and decorum either is whole or in great measure, and eventually lose these qualities little by little.” (*Education*, 72.) Intact virtue of the teacher was as important as that of the pupil(s). Added to the literary education, Vives promoted lessons in cooking, working wool and flax, and frugality, so that girls could ably manage the household. (*Education*, 58-61.) He offered that cooking, especially, was an art. “Let no one despise the notion of cooking, for it is an art of great necessity, without which the sick cannot get well and we cannot continue in good health.” (*Education*, 61.) Between the lines, Vives hints that culinary skills keep a family intact, because when women do not offer wholesome and good tasting food in the home, their men “seek elsewhere what they do not find there [in their homes].” (*Education*, 62.) A girl’s education was not only for the preservation of her chastity and for the sake of her soul, but, also, Vives hoped, for the well-being of the family.

The precision with which Vives enumerated approved academic subjects and books speaks to the seriousness of his project, and he led individual girls to the most challenging of academic subjects and authors. In the midst of discussing the curriculum itself, and in an effort to prevent women from “rashly” drawing up their own booklists for study, Vives discusses what the pupil’s own educational goal should be. Not

surprisingly, the pupil's goal mirrors his own: "Her whole motivation for learning should be to live a more upright life, and she should be careful in her judgment." (*Education*, 78.) If she follows his prescribed program, the female pupil would be on safe ground. Choosing appropriate tutors, Vives explained, was an important related task. The best type of person was a "pious learned woman," followed by a "man of advanced years" who has a wife "who is not unattractive and who is dear to him." (*Education*, 71.) Under no circumstance should girls be taught by bachelors because of sexual attraction that would endanger a girl's chastity and undermine the entire project.

First, Vives' female pupil should read books and practice writing from books of high moral content, such as the Scriptures, writings of the Church Fathers, and classical works such as those by Plato, Cicero, Seneca and others. He suggested the following Latin Christian poets, as they posed no threat to the reader's chaste innocence: Prudentius, Arator, Prosper, Juvencus, and Paulinus. While it is not stated explicitly, Vives intended for all reading and writing to be done in Latin. His praise of the accomplished women of the Spanish royal line and others, like More's daughters, who mastered Latin attests to his intention. (*Education*, 69-70.)

The list of prohibited materials is much longer than those he recommended, and should a girl take up a dubious book it "should be wrested from her hands, but if she shows unwillingness to peruse better books, her parents or friends should see to it that she read no books at all" (*Education*, 78.) In cases of girls reading love stories, Vives had stronger words, "For such girls it would have been preferable not only that they had never learned literature but that they had also lost their eyes so that they could not read, and their ears so that they could not hear." (*Education*, 74.) In his estimation, such

stories and “bawdy” songs were a mortal danger and not only responsible for corrupting girls’ souls, but also for corrupting “the public morals of youth.” (*Education*, 74.) The titles of “pernicious books” include the most popular Spanish and French romances, as well as Italian works like Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. He scathed, “all of these books were written by idle, unoccupied, ignorant men, the slaves of vice and filth.” (*Education*, 75.) His condemnation of certain classical poets was no less damning, Ovid most heatedly for his *Art of Love*. The curriculum, then, was a bowdlerized form of a rigorous humanist program. Vives rejected the contemporary romantic novels and rowdier classical poets from his reading list for girls because he believed they were immoral, on top of lacking true literary merit.

At his most revolutionary in the text, Vives counseled that less gifted pupils deserved attention, suggesting alternative methods of education. “I am not unaware that certain women just as certain men are ill-adapted to the learning of literature. The education of such women must not be neglected.” (*Education*, 72.) He explained how this might be accomplished: “You must make known to her by word of mouth what you cannot do through the written word. She may also learn from other learned women of her own age, either when they read to her or recount the things they have read.” (*Education*, 72.) In this passage, small groups of women meeting for educational purposes are condoned. He encouraged female pupils at all levels to work collaboratively in the pursuit of a literary education.

Vives also thought of marriage as a collaborative partnership. Like Erasmus on the topic of marriage, Vives was innovative in his thinking: “For marriage was instituted not so much for the production of offspring as for community of life and indissoluble

companionship.” (*Education*, 175.) This conception of the bond between husband and wife required a high opinion of woman.

The Education of a Christian Woman announced that women were unquestionably capable and fit for advanced study. Vives argued that only through a proper academic course would an “integrity of mind” be gained, “free of all corruption and contamination,” allowing for an admirable Christian life. (*Education*, 80.) In the Epilogue of this study, which discusses English schools, Vives’ sentiments are writ large, where the founders of girls’ schools in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries paraphrase his treatise in their own calls for female education. Perhaps they even owned a well-used copy of *The Education of a Christian Woman*.

Modern scholars have not sufficiently recognized the degree to which More, Erasmus, and, especially, Vives are courageous advocates for women’s education. First, looking at Vives alone, he has been erroneously called a misogynist, possessed of “misogynistic rage.”¹²⁹ Fantazzi faults Vives for lapsing “into a rhetorical outburst that is blatantly misogynistic in *Book One, Chapter Fifteen: On Seeking a Spouse*, but the passage Fantazzi cites does not pertain to all women, but only to women who “chose the vilest and most foul-smelling of the males” (*Education*, 161.) Vives wishes that young women would scorn “dirty, drunk, wrathful, stupid, imprudent, idiotic, cruel, and bloodthirsty” young men, rather than reward them with love and affection. He believes that women can turn around the whole of society if they collectively hold their suitors to a higher standard. The passage that Fantazzi refers to is certainly not representative of

¹²⁹ As quoted in Beauchamp, Hageman, and Mikesell, “Introduction,” xxiv. As pointed out, in this section, Fantazzi refers to Vives as “blatantly misogynistic” in his *Introduction*, 19-20.

misogyny, although it is full of austere opinions; it heaps insult on a certain type of young man and the woman who is attracted to him for all of his sinful ways.

Beauchamp, Hageman, and Mikesell engage in spurious logic when they imagine that Vives' sensual temptations in Bruges made him have a "compulsive insistence on preserving virginity and chastity."¹³⁰ Worse, they consider his tone "hysterical," clearly showing that they have failed to understand the religious atmosphere of the early sixteenth century and the central place of female chastity in the social and religious order of Christian Europe. Vives should be recognized as the benevolent reformer he was in terms of the cultural assumptions of *his* day, and not judged by anachronistic modern standards of conduct and sexual politics.

Despite conjecture over Vives' religious affiliation, whose *converso* family had been persecuted by the Inquisition for "judaizing," ostensibly, *The Education of a Christian Woman* was written from an ultraorthodox Catholic perspective, by a voice trumpeting the traditional Christian virtues for *both* sexes. (Vives' family was converted to Christianity in the late fourteenth century.) Vives spoke of the world as being almost wholly infiltrated by Satan, and wanted to aid young people especially in living righteously:

So powerful is the kingdom of Satan in this world here below, so great is the conspiracy for evil that thrives in it, so obstinately do the common people defend their own vices that no one can venture forth into to public without his soul being assailed immediately through all his senses by things pernicious to virtue and piety. (*Education*, 110.)

This is the world that Vives saw around him, not a world filled with hateful women.

¹³⁰ Beauchamp, Hageman, and Mikesell, "Introduction," xxiv.

Vives, also, an avid reader of the patristic fathers' writings, especially Jerome, applies the "wisdom" of this father of the Church, but liberalizes it concerning girls' education in a far-reaching way. Whereas Jerome only concerned himself with the education of a girl "consecrated to Christ," Vives extended education to all females, not just nuns.¹³¹ Tellingly, Vives adopted Jerome's precept that girls should learn about that which "pertains to the fear of God," *especially* if they were to remain in the world besieged by temptation with sin all around them.¹³² Nothing could protect them from eternal damnation like reading religious works and emulating the saintly behavior of virtuous Christians and the martyrs.

In her article, "Juan Luis Vives on the Education of Women," Gloria Kaufman calls Vives an "ambivalent" "middle-of-the-roader" because she thinks he displays both "feminist" and "antifeminist" elements. This characterization is fraught with difficulties. As evidenced in his work, Vives was anything but ambivalent on the topic of women's education. Troubled because Vives does not fit into an invented dichotomy of feminist or antifeminist thinkers, Kaufman opted instead to portray him as conflicted, which he clearly was not. Others, too, have fallen into this trap; for example, Vives' position on women has been called "ambiguous at best" by Cousins.¹³³ Fantazzi goes further, labeling Vives "misogynist," when, in fact, Vives gave women more credit for their abilities (moral and intellectual) and, therefore, more trust in the suitability of learning than any other advocate of the day.

Nor have More and Erasmus escaped misinterpretation by scholars. It seems that in judging sixteenth-century Christian humanists by their twentieth-century lights,

¹³¹ Jerome, "To Laeta," 343; Vives, *Education*, 73.

¹³² Here Vives quotes Jerome's *Letter to Laeta*: Cousins, "Erasmus, Vives, and More," 230.

¹³³ Cousins, "Erasmus, Vives, and More," 230.

scholars have repeatedly missed the mark. This reading needs to be re-evaluated.

Cousins' argument is based on a close reading, and by our modern standards, seems well-reasoned as textual exegesis, but when one considers the historical moment in which More, Vives, and Erasmus lived, their contributions must be evaluated more positively. Like the few Italian humanists before them who had promoted humanist studies for women, but at much greater length and with a more active practical involvement, these three Christian humanists – one Dutch, one Iberian, one English – are path-breaking in their claims for women's education. There are no earlier nor more forceful – “unambiguous” – advocates than these.

Cousins' reading diminishes the real gains that Vives, Erasmus, and More secured for women and society. Their recognition of female capacity and praise of female accomplishments not only encouraged the women of their day, but expressed a positive opinion about women that their male peers had heretofore never uttered. Being who they were, men of enormous reputation, morality, and learning, they were advocates in a way that the average man could not be. They were prominent in the emerging Republic of Letters, and they were known across Europe by the literate and powerful classes.

Cousins errs when he fails to set these three men squarely in the humanist tradition. Their seemingly “ambiguous” or conservative positions were actually innovative and one might even say daring. In considering “the good,” Vives, Erasmus, and More, as humanists of the sixteenth century, were writing to promote Christian ethics, an orderly household, and a secure state. To the extent that education would make a woman less ignorant and/or weak in morality, and the humanists argued similarly for boys and men, they saw female education as a safe and sure way of protecting society's

microcosm: the household. Humanist education prized character formation and the reward that one presumably gets from "the good." Vives, Erasmus and More were remarkable in that they applied this male means of strength to females. If they placed caveats upon the curriculum, and made omissions in the case of rhetoric/eloquence, these restrictions did not undermine the great boon their support was to the issue of female education in general.

These three humanists worked within society's complicated framework of male and female identity and were among the first to articulate justifications of female learning in a way that did not challenge, frighten, or undermine society's hierarchy. Their proposals for slow and steady evolution, as opposed to other advocates' proposals for fast and furious overthrows, like Agrippa, spread a positive opinion about the benefits of women's education. For these reasons, Cousins' charge of an "ambiguous" contribution to female education is an erroneous characterization of the humanists' positions and intentions. Furthermore, it inaccurately cuts them off from their historical legacy. Instead, an apt characterization of their advocacy is best understood through metaphor. We can credit their work as a bridge which carried the humanist educational program to the wider human population. By bringing the new learning to women, and sanctioning their pursuit of advanced studies, these three men gave the often called "weaker sex" a powerful tool to strengthen their positions. In short time, not only was private education accepted, but schooling for girls was established.

Two distinguished women who continued the work of the great humanists who were humanists in their own right were Olympia Fulvia Morata (1526/7 – 1555) and Anna Maria van Schurman (1607 – 1678). Morata dedicated her life to scholarship and

religion, and, in the short time she was alive, taught a few children, including her younger brother, Greek; it was remarkable at this time that a woman knew Greek, and even more remarkable that she taught it to at least two young men. Van Schurman offered a manifesto for female learning that centered on God's greater glory, a text that circulated throughout Europe (in the original Latin and various translations) and influenced how people conceived of women's education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³⁴

In the sixteenth century, amidst the wars of religion, Italian-born Morata obtained a humanistic education. As a child, Morata's knowledgeable father instructed her, and as a young woman, she was educated alongside the eldest daughter of Renée of France, Anna, at the court of Ferrara. Morata's superior abilities in Latin and Greek were known throughout Europe, and although many of her works have been lost, the small sampling that survives shows the high quality of her mind. A female scholar at court, Morata was somewhat of a public figure. Her modern editor Holt Parker offers a feasible interpretation of this role:

The court served as a central location for the noble families to display both their women and the resources that they had to lavish on these women. The display of the *learned* women, in particular, allowed the city to boast that it had the power not merely to educate its sons but its daughters as well. Morata's public exhibitions were part of this pattern of "conspicuous consumption," which is perhaps better understood under the Renaissance's own idea, and ideal, of 'magnificence': the stunning expenditure of capital, cultural and otherwise.¹³⁵

Although Morata was born just a few years before the death of Baldesar Castiglione (1487- 1529), his famous work *Libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) enjoyed tremendous success all through the sixteenth century, and a short digression on its message about learned women at court is not out of place.

¹³⁴ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 16.

¹³⁵ Morata, *Complete Writings*, 17.

In the *Courtier*, Castiglione who had spent many years in service to the Montefeltro family at the Court of Urbino, dealt with the question of female capacity for learning, and had one of his main characters, The Magnifico, Guiliano de Medici, fashion the ideal Court Lady. The dialogue in the book that ensued about this Lady voiced opinions from “opponents” and “advocates” with regard to her learning. The Magnifico, however, is the most outspoken advocate when he claims, “. . . I say that everything men can understand, women can too; and where a man's intellect can penetrate, so along with it can a woman's.”¹³⁶ In giving this position to the most illustrious male present at the imaginary court, Castiglione wanted the reader to take seriously The Magnifico's statement. Castiglione scholars have noted the transparent crossover between Castiglione's real life experience at court and the advice he gives in the *The Book of the Courtier*. His advocacy for female learning, set off as a discussion in an imaginary scene, would have been non-confrontational and compelling to readers coming from the mouth of a well-respected nobleman. Indeed, as Peter Burke's *The Fortunes of the Courtier* has shown, the book itself was a fantastic hit. The study reports that 20 European centers published the book, translating it into six different languages by the end of the sixteenth century.¹³⁷ Burke's argument that Castiglione had a tremendous influence and grand reception across Europe on self-conduct and self-fashioning is especially cogent. For both male and female courtiers, Castiglione set the gold standard for Europe.

Returning to the discussion of Morata, her conversion to Protestantism and marriage in 1549 to the Protestant medical doctor, Andreas Grunthler, took her from

¹³⁶ Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. and trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 2003), 218.

¹³⁷ Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: the European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

Ferrara into Germany, where she had a great deal of freedom to pursue her scholarly interests. First, the pair went to Schweinfurt, Bavaria, a Protestant town, and Morata entered into a life of piety, learning, and some teaching. In this setting they were able to practice their faith openly, and Grunthler encouraged his wife in her studies. As Morata recounts here, she increasingly devoted herself to Biblical studies: “As soon as I left the idolatry of Italy through the singular kindness of God, and went to Germany as the bride of Dr. Andreas Grunthler, God changed my soul wondrously, so I who previously for so long had shied away from divine letters now delight in them alone.”¹³⁸

During this time, Morata corresponded with such Protestant luminaries as Phillip Melancthon (1497 – 1560). She also began tutoring at least two children in the *studia humanitatis*: her young brother, Emilio, and a young man by the name of Jerome Angenoust.¹³⁹ This short period of teaching and study was interrupted in 1553, when Schweinfurt was besieged by war. Maurice, elector of Saxony revolted against the Emperor Charles V, and the armies devastated the people of Schweinfurt. Morata’s works from this period did not survive the trauma, and she herself contracted a mortal illness that would kill her in fifteen months’ time.¹⁴⁰ Following this difficult period, the couple relocated to Heidelberg and the sickly Morata struggled to keep up her work, but she soon died in 1555. In Morata’s travails, one witnesses a perseverance and commitment to learning in the hardest of times. Throughout her life, Morata was fortunate in having supportive learned men interested in her academic progress,

¹³⁸ Morata, *Complete Writings*, 45.

¹³⁹ Morata, *Complete Writings*, 171. Angenoust wrote to Morata in 1555 about the progress he made in Greek conversation under her direction.

¹⁴⁰ Morata, *Complete Writings*, 29.

especially her father and husband. She dedicated her mind to God, and taught her pupils in his name.

Anna Maria van Schurman, who lived most of her life in Utrecht, Netherlands, shared Morata's conviction that learning was a holy act, and fitting for women who were not fully occupied with familial duties. At an early age, Frederick and Eva van Schurman, Anna's Calvinist parents, had van Schurman tutored with her brothers at home, following Vives' model. As a young woman, she won the respect of Gisbertus Voetius, distinguished Dutch Reformed theologian and rector of the Academy of Utrecht, who devised a way to have van Schurman attend the advanced lectures that were held there. She could not be seen by the male students and was carefully tucked away in a private and secure area (so as not to endanger her chastity or expose her to potential taunts or scowling male faces).¹⁴¹ Using this rare and advanced university education, in 1638 van Schurman wrote the scholarly treatise, *Dissertatio, de ingenii mulieribus ad doctrinam, et meliores litteras aptitudine* (Dissertation on the Aptitude of the Female Mind for Learning and Letters), which advocated female learning in a formal work of logic.¹⁴² For this text and other accomplishments, van Schurman won the admiration of learned and prominent men and women from all across Europe.

In his own right, van Schurman's advocate, Voetius, was also an advocate of women's worth for the entire female sex, as evidenced in his tract *Concerning Women*.¹⁴³ In this work, besides accepting his former pupil's (van Schurman) *Dissertatio*, Voetius

¹⁴¹ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 5.

¹⁴² Katharina M. Wilson and Frank J. Warnke, eds., *Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 72.

¹⁴³ Gisbertus Voetius, "Concerning Women," in *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated?*, trans. and ed. Joyce E. Irwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 97-137, 97. This defense of women was included in his major work, *Politica Ecclesiastica* (Church Politics), which was written between 1663 and 1676.

dismantled the old argument that women were not even human. He argued resolutely that women had both human bodies and human souls, “created in the image of God.”¹⁴⁴ He worked to rescue woman from interpretations of the ancient Greek philosophers that suggested she was less than human and more like animals. He explained how woman was neither an “aberration of nature,” nor a “monster” -- how could she be, he reasoned, returning to Genesis 1:27, when she was created in the image of God?¹⁴⁵ Perhaps Voetius’ most original contribution to the *Woman Question* was his refutation of the still popular Aristotelian notion that women did not contribute seed in the generation of offspring.¹⁴⁶ While his works did not enjoy a large readership outside of Dutch Reformed circles, as a mentor to van Schurman, indeed, as a conduit to university education for her, Voetius distinguished himself as a supporter of female learning bent upon changing maligned opinions about the sex.

With Voetius’ assistance, van Schurman’s expertise soon extended beyond art, music, arithmetic, astronomy, and poetry to include the ancient languages of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Ethiopian, Chaldean, Arabic, and Syriac. She also devoted herself to theology and philosophy, carrying on correspondences with Pierre Gassendi, René Descartes, Marin Mersenne, and Andreas Rivet.¹⁴⁷ She impressed seventeenth-century scholars, rulers, and religious leaders with the intellectual heights a woman could achieve. She also pursued the question of female learning in her correspondence; specifically, van Schurman’s letters to theologian Andreas Rivet reveal the foundations of

¹⁴⁴ Voetius, "Concerning Women," 99. Concerning *human* dignity, Italian humanists had argued from the same premise to counter the common medieval conception that humanity was depraved and miserable. See: Charles Edward Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁴⁵ Voetius, "Concerning Women," 102, 109.

¹⁴⁶ Voetius, "Concerning Women," 104-105.

¹⁴⁷ Wilson and Warnke, eds., *Women Writers*, 69.

her opinions. The letters also show her high opinion of Erasmus' advocacy for girls' education.¹⁴⁸

On the topic of schooling for girls, van Schurman was clear that she did not approve of the imposed limits that kept interested female students from "higher things" compared to "pulling the needle and distaff" which had been seen as "ample enough school for women."¹⁴⁹ She wished that female learning was not a "rare" accomplishment, because wisdom "by right," should "be extended to one and all (as far as, in fact, one's fortune allows) . . ."¹⁵⁰ This "right" was grounded in the humanistic belief (first articulated by Battista Guarino for men, then extended to women by Laura Cereta, and once again advanced here) that as human beings, men and women were endowed with "the desire to know."¹⁵¹

Before van Schurman should get too carried away, Rivet replied to her with words of caution; he redirected her to Vives for a sure path in how a Christian woman ought to be instructed.¹⁵² In essence, Rivet agreed that some women of ample financial means, who are not occupied with familial matters at all times, should, if "called to it by a special instinct," pursue advanced studies, but of course, Vives went much further than this to propose that *all* Christian girls would benefit from a literary education, and the family and society would be better for it.¹⁵³ Diplomatically, van Schurman, genuinely sympathetic to Vives' plan, wrote to Rivet that she deemed Vives' plan to be "most worthy of being applied as closely as possible to the studies of women today."¹⁵⁴ The

¹⁴⁸ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 44.

¹⁴⁹ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 43-44.

¹⁵⁰ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 42.

¹⁵¹ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 45.

¹⁵² van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 51.

¹⁵³ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 50.

¹⁵⁴ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 55.

same year she and Rivet exchanged thoughts (1638), she founded her justification for studies in the *Dissertatio* not on a vague “special instinct,” but rather on women’s status and condition as human beings with a duty to God. Like Vives, she considered the spiritual benefit of education.

The *Dissertatio* recognized a universal aspect of personhood in the Christian community, as identified above, *the desire to know*. However, van Schurman viewed the social and economic constraints upon Christian families and women in particular, and accepted that fortune (or the lack of it) would prevent many from pursuing advanced education. Therefore, in the *Dissertatio*, she limited the pool of women who might enjoy the benefits of education and she directed their knowledge to God’s glory. First, girls and women must have ample financial means to secure tutors and hired help for domestic work, if they want to pursue learning. Second, they should avoid marriage and seek education not for familial reasons, but to glorify and appreciate God. Van Schurman believed that in understanding Arts and Sciences, pupils could “. . . observe and recognize God and divine works at a higher level.”¹⁵⁵ This position harkened back to St. Jerome’s attitude toward female learning and devotion, but the particular way in which van Schurman argued her cause had no precedent.

The *Dissertatio* is a work of formal logic unlike any other work that advocated for women’s education. Because of the religious import that education had in van Schurman’s estimation, she used philosophical proofs to argue that educated Christian women were more capable of recognizing and appreciating God because of the skills imparted in the liberal arts curriculum. Van Schurman presents a self-evident statement as her “major” argument, then derives a “minor” argument from it, and from that a

¹⁵⁵ Wilson and Warnke, eds., *Women Writers*, 72.

concluding statement, to show that the sciences and arts are an appropriate study for women,

Whatever things by their nature contribute to arousing in us greater love and reverence for God are fitting for a Christian woman.

But the sciences and arts contribute by their nature to arousing greater love and reverence for God.

Therefore. . .

The truth of the major is clearer than light since the most perfect love of God is fitting for all people as is the highest reverence, so much so that in this matter no one can sin in excess.

The minor is proved by the following argument: whatever causes us to observe and recognize God and divine works with a greater degree of clarity contributes toward arousing in us a greater love and reverence for God. And certainly sciences and arts cause us to observe and recognize God with a greater degree of clarity.¹⁵⁶

The *Dissertatio* also tackled problems of a more practical nature. Critics of female education pointed to the non-existence of colleges and academies for women as grounds for dismissing the whole project. Van Schurman's reply coolly circumvented this line of reasoning by pointing to the home: "But we deny this consequent for it suffices that they be trained at home under leadership of parents or some private tutor."¹⁵⁷ Looking to the parents of girls and charging them with providing education as their "duty," van Schurman concluded her thesis: "And since it is preferable to imbue the mind with better studies from infancy itself, we think parents themselves should be the first to be urged and seriously admonished concerning their duty." Not only should Christian girls of ample means be educated, but their parents could be judged negligent if suitable lessons were not offered, as an offense to God.

In these early years of her life, before she joined the radical Reformed sect of Jean de Labadie and read only Scripture, van Schurman believed that "lighter" subjects like art

¹⁵⁶ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 30-31.

¹⁵⁷ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 35.

and music were also fitting for females to study, even if they did not glorify God and have the same moral import that more “serious” academic subjects had. When van Schurman retreated from “polite society” into a more spiritual environment, polite society continued to read and be inspired by her achievement and texts. The *Dissertatio* enjoyed a terrific circulation and readership, published first in Paris, then, it was republished in Leiden in 1641, then, translated into French (1646) and English (1659), making it accessible to readers of those vernacular languages.¹⁵⁸ The honor and fame accorded to van Schurman did not lessen in the eighteenth century, as she continued to appear in the catalogues of well-educated and accomplished women.¹⁵⁹ Her work on female education represents a crucial milestone by yet another Christian and humanistic advocate hoping to encourage European society to educate their daughters.

Van Schurman’s continuing influence is seen, for instance, in the work of the early eighteenth-century scholar, Elizabeth Elstob, who wrote in her *Preface to Ælfric's Homily for St. Gregory's Day* (1709) a defense of scholarly women, praising van Schurman’s as a great spokesperson for that cause. As the first professional female Anglo-Saxon scholar, and a schoolmistress for girls in England, Elstob reached back to seventeenth-century precedents to support her own advocacy, finding van Schurman’s example and text appropriate to her early eighteenth-century needs. Her *Preface* counters a question she anticipated from male opponents in their envy of female achievement, “What has a woman to do with learning?”

For if women may be said to have souls, and that their souls are their better part, and that what is best deserves our greatest care for its improvement; furthermore, if good learning be one of the soul’s greatest improvements, we must retort the question. Where is the fault in women’s

¹⁵⁸ Wilson and Warnke, eds., *Women Writers*, 72.

¹⁵⁹ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 16.

seeking after learning? Why are they not valued for acquiring to themselves the noblest ornaments?¹⁶⁰

Elstob, herself, encouraged by family and a network of patrons, lamented the number of critics of female learning that persistently dissuaded girls from academic pursuits. Advocates for female learning were gaining ground, but were still in the minority. Their calls soon became more outspoken and radical.

The Call for the Schooling of Girls

Based on the arguments for women's education inherited especially from Vives and van Schurman, in the seventeenth century, for the first time a call went forth for the schooling of girls. In order to best understand the positions of the advocates for girls' schooling in early modern Europe, a short exposition of the major seventeenth-century *querelle* writers is offered because their popular writings argued for women's worth and abilities in ways that lent credence to the pleas for schooling.

Moderata Fonte (1555-1592), Lucrezia Marinella (1571-1653), Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-1652), and Marie le Jars de Gournay (1565-1645) continued in a new key the arguments for women's equality, or even superiority, first heard from Agrippa, who had identified male tyranny as the main obstacle to female independence and accomplishment. The earlier *querelle* writers had sufficiently handled the questions about whether women were human, had souls, and were rational, enabling this next generation to take on a different set of gender-related issues. Largely, they attacked the exclusionary practices that kept women from realizing autonomy in the political, social,

¹⁶⁰ Elizabeth Elstob, *An Anglo-Saxon Homily on St. Gregory's Day* (London: William Pickering, 1839), xxi.

and economic realms. Certainly, these four writers differed in message and tone, especially de Gournay, who was the most reserved, calling for “mere” equality, rather than superiority, and keeping open hostility out of her writing. Yet, all four elevated the *querelle*, in the sense that they maintained that improved status for women was not just necessary for the sake of female individuals or females as a group, but that women’s status had to be improved for the sake of society *as a whole*. Together, these women writers announced to a broad audience (who read them in the vernacular) that recognition of women’s abilities and worth, as well as enacting changes in the laws and customs that discriminated against women, needed to occur for justice, virtue, and prosperity to take root in European society. Schools for girls, they said, ought to be part of the necessary reforms. Their ideas functioned as a bridge between the question of women’s worth and the new proposals for girls’ education and schooling that would soon be formulated by pedagogical theorists. This final section of Chapter One, then, first discusses the *querelle* texts that the three Venetian women (Marinella, Fonte, and Tarabotti) and de Gournay produced, and then presents the pedagogues who called for girls’ schools, provided “blueprints” for setting up girls’ schools, and, in some cases, even founded or ran girls’ schools.

Lucrezia Marinella first published *La nobiltà et l’eccellenza delle donne, co’ difetti et mancamenti de gli uomini* (*The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men*) in 1599, with revised editions appearing in 1601, 1620, and 1623. This Venetian text relied heavily upon Agrippa’s pioneering work and was written in an effort to nullify Giuseppe Passi’s *The Defects of Women*, which berated

women in thirty-five chapters.¹⁶¹ The range of his insults and reference to classical and legal sources for credibility astounds. According to Letizia Panizza, Marinella's powerful reply led Passi to make at least a partial recantation. (*Nobility*, 16.) The analysis here will necessarily be limited to the topic of female rationality and capacity for learning, skimming the surface of these two rich texts.

To begin with, Passi characterized women as brute animals without the faculty of reason. To this he added that women were innately evil, lacked all morality, and were beyond reform. (*Nobility*, 18.) Through her use of Neoplatonic philosophy, Marinella argued that far from being innately evil, the souls of women were "nobler than men's" since female beauty is superior to male beauty. (*Nobility*, 55.) For Marinella and the many illustrious figures she cites (Plotinus, Ficino, Petrarch, Tasso, et al.) in Part I, Chapter III, ". . . the nobility of the soul can be judged from the excellence of the body – [. . . .] Beauty is without a doubt a ray of light from the soul that pervades the body in which it finds itself" (*Nobility*, 57.) This application of philosophy was accepted by influential contemporaries, including Bronzino, who rejoiced at what was considered airtight refutation of Passi." (*Nobility*, 30.)

With a sarcastic boldness, Marinella identified male fear and tyranny as the blockade to women's learning and military prowess. She located the roots of this exclusionary policy in Aristotle:

But in our times there are few women who apply themselves to study or the military arts, since men, fearing to lose their authority and become women's servants, often forbid them even to learn to read or write. Our good friend Aristotle states that women must obey men everywhere and in everything and not search for anything that takes them

¹⁶¹ See Letizia Panizza's "Introduction to the Translation," 15-19 for a detailed account of Passi's work, in Fonte, *Worth of Women*, 204. Subsequent references to this work appear in text as (*Nobility*, 00.)

outside their houses. A foolish opinion and cruel, pedantic sentence from a fearful, tyrannical man. (*Nobility*, 79.)

In contrast, Marinella then characterizes Plato as a great friend to women:

Plato, however, who was truly great and just, was far from imposing a forced and violent authority. He both desired and ordered women to practice military arts, ride, wrestle, and, in short, to instruct themselves in the needs of the Republic. The truth of this can be read in Laws: ‘The female must share with the male, both in education and in all other things.’ (*Nobility*, 79.)

Using Plato as a springboard, Marinella proposed an experiment to show that girls, if allowed to practice learning and arms, would easily manage and excel in these pursuits. She wrote, “I would like these men to try the experiment of training a good-natured boy and girl of about the same age and intelligence in letters and arms. They would see how much sooner the girl would become expert than the boy and how she would surpass him completely.” (*Nobility*, 80.)

To this empirical challenge, her argument went on to include a lengthy list of examples of learned women in Part V, Section I, mainly to correct ignorant types “possessing little knowledge of history.” (*Nobility*, 83.) She reminds her readers that “if women have the same reasoning souls as men, as I have clearly shown above, and souls that are still nobler, why should they not be even better than men at learning the same arts and sciences?” Her catalogue of learned ladies included classical and contemporary women, as well as the singing praises she compiled from male admirers of those women. Saints and the Muses co-mingle on the list commanding admiration derived from their hagiographies and myths.

The popularity of *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men* reached beyond the Alps to a strong readership in France, and possibly in

the Netherlands. According to Panizza, Marinella's editor, the work continued to be referenced into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by feminist women writers.

(*Nobility*, 32.) Her message, that woman is potentially superior to men in everything, if she is freed from male tyranny and given the chance to develop, was adopted *in part* by many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century advocates for schools; most advocates dropped the notion that women were superior and adopted equal or equivalent in its stead.

Moderata Fonte's work *Il Merito delle Donne: ove chiaramente si scuopre quanto siano elle degne e più perfette de gli uomini* (*The Worth of Women: Wherein Is Clearly Revealed Their Nobility and Superiority to Men*) was written *circa* 1592 and published posthumously in 1600. Like her fellow Venetian Marinella, Fonte described women as superior and laid bare the injustices perpetrated against women in Venetian society, including the prohibition of formal education and entrance to public life. The fictive setting and characters created by Fonte tackle contemporary Venetian sexual politics and provides an encyclopedic compendium that was likely intended to display a real woman's (the author's) learning. Using fictional strategies in her writing, Fonte's critique manages to communicate the lived experience of women in her society, from the perspective of seven different types of women at different points in their life cycles and with different marital statuses. These women ground their commentary on the socio-political practices of early modern Venetian society, and they have many grievances.

In Book II, the character Lenora rouses her companions to see the exclusively male Venetian government not as a caring paternal guardian, but as an unjust tyrant:

Are not all these official functions exercised by men, against our interests? Do they not make claims on us, whether we are obliged to them

or not? Do they not act in their own interests and against ours? Do they not treat us as though we were aliens? Do they not usurp our property?¹⁶²

Elsewhere the companions discuss the dowry system and prostitution, voicing a cacophony of opinions about the practices. The despicable conditions many women were forced into on account of male interests are described and lamented by Cornelia, Corinna, and Lenora in particular. On the subject of marriage and the dowry, Corinna (“*una dimessa*”) complains below. A *dimessa* was an unmarried virgin, who did not become a nun or profess formal vows, but she lived a celibate life and served the community while living in her parents’ household. The description here of how a newly married man can run through his wife’s dowry without repercussion is especially poignant coming from Corinna who has chosen to the single life.

But when she takes a husband, especially if he’s poor, as is often the case, what exactly does she gain from it, except that instead of being her own mistress and the mistress of her own money, she becomes a slave, and loses her liberty and, along with her liberty, her control over her own property, surrendering all she has to the man who has bought her, and putting everything into his hands – so that he can run through the lot in a week? (*Worth*, 113)

Besides conversing about economic injustices, the group has various discussions about female intellectual ability. One discussion of note that drives Cornelia (a young married woman) to suggest overthrowing male dominance, banishing men from their lives, and achieving full equality was begun by Lenora (a young widow). Lenora reiterates the claim that Vives made in *The Education of a Christian Woman*, that learning leads to virtue, not vice:

. . . many men also refuse to allow their women to learn to read and write, on the pretext that learning is the downfall of many women. As though the pursuit of virtue (which is where learning leads) led straight to its contrary, vice! (*Worth*, 236-37.)

¹⁶² Fonte, *Worth of Women*, 204. Subsequent references to this work appear in text as: (*Worth*, 00.)

In a related exchange, Corinna announces that “. . . if we were educated properly as girls (as I’ve already pointed out), we’d outstrip men’s performance in any science or art you care to name.” (*Worth*, 238)¹⁶³ In the end, Fonte’s characters did not rise up and demand schooling, political rights, and economic autonomy, but the work itself served not only as another voice refuting Passi’s *The Defects of Women*, but also as a handbook for women that contained “useful warnings” and words of support in negotiating their way within a rigid patriarchy. (*Worth*, 259.)

The third of this triad of powerful female Venetian voices, Arcangela Tarabotti, demanded change for women in her most controversial book, *Paternal Tyranny*, which was smuggled out of Venice and published in Protestant Amsterdam two years after her death in 1654, carefully bypassing the Church’s *censura*. In her dismal picture of convent life, wherein unwilling girls and women are forced to take religious vows and remain cloistered from the world, Tarabotti rages for freedom and justice. She accuses Church, State, and Men (as heads of households) of committing grave sins in their treatment of women, not the least of which is the male-enforced prohibition of girls attending schools. In the chapter entitled “Women’s Learning is Hampered by Lack of Proper Schooling,” the author addresses herself to men:

Do not scorn the quality of women’s intelligence, you malignant and evil-tongued men! Shut up in their rooms, denied access to books and teachers of any learning whatsoever, or any other grounding in letters, they cannot help being inept in making speeches and foolish in giving advice. [. . .]As soon as you men catch sight of a woman with pen in

¹⁶³ Corinna’s comment is somewhat stronger than Fonte’s message in her earlier work “*Tredici canti del Floridoro*” (1581), which claims equality rather than superiority. As cited in Fonte, 262-263, “If, when a daughter was born to him, a father were to have her engage in the same pursuits as a son, the girl would not prove inferior to her brother in any lofty and glorious enterprise, whether she were placed alongside him in the ranks of an army, or set to learn some liberal art. But because girls are given a different kind of upbringing, their abilities are not rated highly.”

hand, you start ranting and raving; you order them under penalty of death to put aside their scribbling and attend to “feminine” tasks like needlework and spinning. . . .¹⁶⁴

This critique is further politicized and confrontational when Tarabotti adds, “But you do well (in terms of your own political interests) to keep us away from intellectual pursuits, since you realize that once knowledge is added to a woman’s natural lively disposition, she would usurp the honors and earnings you amass by unlawful means” (*Tyranny*, 101.)

Her rebellious text responds to societal norms, values, and laws that she came up against in her lived experience; it also responds to a misogynistic text written by Ferrante Pallavicino entitled *Il corriero svaligiato* (*The Post-Boy Robbed of His Bag*), which was published at Venice in 1641. In brief, Pallavicino criticized women for wide-ranging faults and characterized them as the ruin of men through entrapment. His claim that women lacked all reason and were akin to animals likely angered Tarabotti the most. (*Tyranny*, 158-59.) To Pallavicino, and other opponents who denied female rationality and capacity for learning, she argued for schools and learned teachers for girls to show otherwise.

¹⁶⁴ Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny*, 99. In Spain, a few years later, Maria de Zayas Sotomayor (1590 – 1650) published *The Enchantments of Love* which included a prefatory letter to the reader that shared Tarabotti’s perspective: “How, then, can men presume to be wise and presume that women are not? In my opinion, the only answer to this question is men’s cruelty and tyranny in keeping us cloistered and not giving us teachers. The real reason why women are not learned is not a defect in intelligence but a lack of opportunity. When our parents bring us up if, instead of putting cambric on our sewing cushions and patterns in our embroidery frames, they gave us books and teachers, we would be as fit as men for any job or university professorship. We might even be sharper because we’re of a colder humor, and intelligence partakes of the damp humor.” Maria de Zayas y Sotomayor, *The Enchantments of Love: Amorous and Exemplary Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Subsequent references to Tarabotti’s work appear in text as (*Tyranny*, 00.)

In a vastly different move from Vives in handling the issue of imperiled chastity and learning, Tarabotti shifts the blame to lustful men, rather than tempted women. Citing that the “single protest from all men” is that “. . . women cannot be permitted to study grammar, rhetoric, logic, philosophy, theology, and the other sciences because by attending school they would easily lose their chastity,” is forcefully countered by an adept appeal to a combination of the chivalric code and Christian restraint. (*Tyranny*, 109.) She ridicules the “brave sex” for claiming to be the most virtuous and then weakening in the sight of women. She challenges them to overcome their sexual desires, “You must fight and conquer, therefore, and not blame a woman’s innocent attractions for your cowardice.” (*Tyranny*, 110.) How else will women ever be emancipated and educated?

Contemporary with the last two of the three Venetian women, but in a different social milieu, where she more easily gained an independent way of life, Marie le Jars de Gournay (1565 – 1645) was determined but not as hostile as the Venetians to change societal opinion about women’s status and role in society. Against her widowed mother’s wishes, the unmarried de Gournay pursued and succeeded at making a career as an independent woman of letters. She earned both accolades and ridicule from those who observed her venture into serious scholarship which included writing poetry, essays, a novel, as well as translating classical works and editing the works of Michel de Montaigne, whose “adopted daughter” she was. Two of de Gournay’s own works -- *The Equality of Men and Women* and *The Ladies Complaint* -- explored the question of education for girls and women that she, as a marginalized female scholar, took

personally. She continued to revise and expand on her arguments into her seventies, many of which use theology for their most powerful thrusts.

According to Richard Hillman, who authored the “Introduction” to the *Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* edition of de Gournay’s writing, despite her acceptance as a writer and scholar by people and patrons like Montaigne, Justus Lipsius, and Anne of Austria, de Gournay had a mixed reception in the seventeenth century. “Humorous stories were recounted at her expense; she was the object of practical jokes, the target of satire in print, even caricature on the stage.”¹⁶⁵ Still she had other great admirers, the scholar Anna Maria van Schurman, who has been treated in this section, expressed her approval of de Gournay’s essay in the following verses.

Anna Maria van Schurman congratulates
the great and noble-minded heroine of Gournay
strong defender of the cause of our sex.

You bear the arms of Pallas, bold heroine in battles
and so that you may carry the laurels, you bear the arms of Pallas.

Thus it is fitting for you to make a defense for the innocent sex
and to turn the weapons of harmful men against them.

Lead on, glory of Gournay, we shall follow your standard,
for in you our cause advances, which is mightier than strength.¹⁶⁶

De Gournay’s treatise *The Equality of Men and Women* enveloped the tenets of Christian humanism and an autobiographical essay into one smooth work. The original edition of the *Equality* was published in 1622, with the final edition appearing in 1641. It was dedicated to Anne of Austria, Louis XIII’s queen; in doing so, de Gournay reached for the highest of female patrons, and a pension was issued from the King, and later from Richelieu, duly followed. In this work, her argument for women’s value in society on par with men’s was constructed in an original and brilliant fashion.

¹⁶⁵ de Gournay, *Equality*, 16.

¹⁶⁶ van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 13.

The work is centrally concerned with halting the extremism “in the streets” that characterizes women as stupid and incapable and exalts men as near gods. Instead, de Gournay’s multi-layered argument wants “mere” sober equality primarily on religious grounds to which she adds other reasons. It is in her critique of Salic Law and its use of agnatic primogeniture (which recognizes the closest male relative as sole heir) and in her theological arguments that de Gournay’s advocacy is at once subversive and persuasive. In the case of agnatic primogeniture, she argues that royal women of France were not deprived of the crown because they were lesser creatures, but only because men enjoyed greater physical strength and squeezed them out only to be used as regents in times of necessity.¹⁶⁷ She all but says “tyranny.”

De Gournay’s religious arguments are even more daring. She represents Christ as the “unity of the two sexes,” and citing Saint Basil, she claims that “the virtue of man and woman are the same thing, since God bestowed on them the same creation and the same honor.” (*Equality*, 87.) Where the Roman Catholic de Gournay really shocks is in her call for an expanded formal religious role for women in administering all of the sacraments. She has numerous examples of the Saints and Church Fathers favoring and praising women in religion. One female religious that she highlights in particular is Mary Magdalene, reminding the reader that she “. . . is named in the Church as equal to the Apostles.” (*Equality*, 90.)

For these reasons, de Gournay justifies equality between the sexes. She acknowledges that women have accomplished less than men, but that in no way hinders the female case for equality. She explains it thus:

¹⁶⁷ de Gournay, *Equality*, 84-86. Subsequent references to this work appear in text as (*Equality*, 00.)

If, therefore, women attain less often than men to the heights of excellence, it is a marvel that the lack of good education - indeed, the abundance of outright and blatantly bad education – does not do worse and prevent them from doing so entirely. If proof is needed, is there more difference between them and men than among themselves – according to the training they receive, according to whether they are brought up in a city or a village, or according to nationality? (*Equality*, 81.)

Asking her readers to consider the role of education and childrearing, as well as cultural difference, Gournay's essay takes an empirical and sociological turn. As a largely self-taught woman of letters, Gournay was intimately acquainted with the hardship of self-study in an unsupportive setting. The four women writers, collectively, then based on their own experiences and their observations of how the social institutions discriminated against women, voiced a need for change. Education, good education on par with boys was one articulated remedy.

Pedagogical theorists advocating for girls' schooling emerged in the seventeenth century, too. They were a small, but diverse group -- including Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670), Bathsua Makin (1600-1675), François Poullain de la Barre (1647-1723), François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon (1651-1715), and Mary Astell (1666-1731). These educational thinkers linked the familiar themes of women's worth and intellectual capacity to new arguments for formal schooling, sometimes echoing the sentiments of the earlier *querelle* writers in criticizing male tyranny. They all believed that girls' schooling would be a boon to society and not just women (as individuals or as a group). Also, they were involved with actual schools, Comenius as the "teacher of nations" who masterminded whole systems of schools, Fénelon as a royal tutor, curriculum writer and affiliate at Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr, and Makin, Poullain, and Astell as teachers.

The “teacher of nations,” Moravian Johannes Amos Comenius, was the first advocate for universal female schooling, and the most important pedagogical theorist of the seventeenth century. He wrote contemporaneously with de Gournay, motivated like her by religion in promoting universal education. As Bishop of the Moravian Brethren during the Thirty Years’ War, Comenius was a refugee and spirited fighter for religious and national liberty, yet, as Robert Ulich points out, “his writings breathe an atmosphere of peace and hope.”¹⁶⁸ Guided by his religious convictions, Comenius envisioned and promoted educational opportunity for boys and girls of all conditions in every Christian state. He took Vives’ message of universal education to its logical conclusion and worked to establish schools across Europe.

In young adulthood, Comenius taught at a school at Přerov in Moravia (modern Czech Republic), a Latin school for boys.¹⁶⁹ After his ordination in 1616, he directed a school at Fulnek, and ministered to his community there.¹⁷⁰ When the Thirty Years’ War erupted, and lessons interrupted, Comenius’ travails began. Losing his wife and two sons to the plague, and simultaneously, witnessing his Protestant brethren persecuted in their own land by Spanish Habsburg forces, Comenius entered a most difficult phase, but turned to scholarship for some comfort. He found refuge for a time at a nobleman’s estate, and was able to write *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, 1623, which encapsulates his new pansophical thought, which inter-mingled theology, philosophy, and science. Comenius remarried in 1624. In 1628, he fled to Poland and began teaching at the Gymnasium at Lezsno, and completed the *Didactica magna* (The

¹⁶⁸ Robert Ulich, ed., *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 339.

¹⁶⁹ Jan Jakubec, *Johannes Amos Comenius* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971), 15-16.

¹⁷⁰ Jakubec, *Comenius*, 17.

Great Didactic) in 1632.¹⁷¹ This work was readily adopted by seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century educators along with Comenius' *Orbis sensualium pictus* (The Visible World in Pictures), which was revolutionary in its use of illustrations to stimulate learning. Both works were translated into several vernacular languages (English, French, German, Czech, Hungarian, Russian, Polish, Slovene and Italian).¹⁷²

In *The Great Didactic* (written in the years 1628 – 1632, and published in Latin at Amsterdam in 1657), Comenius plainly states how education for all corresponds to God's will. "First, all men are born for the same purpose; they are to be human beings, i.e., rational creatures, the lords of other creatures, and the images of their Creator . . . God himself has frequently asserted that with Him there is no respect of persons, so that, if, we admit some to the culture of the intellect, we exclude others, we commit an injury not only against those who share the same nature as ourselves, but against God Himself who wishes to be known, loved, and praised by all."¹⁷³ Following this justification, Comenius specifically addresses female learning:

. . . Nor can any sufficient reason be given why the weaker sex (to give a word of advice on this point in particular) should be altogether excluded from the pursuit of knowledge (whether in Latin or in their mother-tongue). They also are formed in the image of God, and share in His grace and in the kingdom of the world to come. They are endowed with equal sharpness of mind and capacity for knowledge (often more than the opposite sex), and they are able to obtain the highest positions, since they have often been called by God Himself to rule over nations, to give sound advice to kings and princes, to the study of medicine and of other things which benefit the human race, even to the office of prophesying and of inveighing against priests and bishops.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Jakubec, *Comenius*, 26.

¹⁷² Jakubec, *Comenius*, 27.

¹⁷³ Comenius, *Didactic*, 66.

¹⁷⁴ Comenius, *Didactic*, 68.

To this religiously-minded imperative, Comenius adds that girls and women display the ability and intelligence required for study. Strengthening his argument further, he points to examples of talented and powerful women who, positioned by God, labored successfully in politics, medicine, and religion.

Unsurprisingly, the type of education which Comenius advanced for the feminine sex was not designed to help girls join these typically male dominated fields or any professional field for that matter. His picture of female education included learning that “enables her to look after her household and to promote the welfare of her husband and her family.”¹⁷⁵ To this traditional viewpoint, which echoed the sentiments of humanist advocates from the sixteenth-century like Vives and Erasmus, Comenius added another spiritual reason to educate women and males of the lower classes. Akin to the argument given by More in his poem *To Candidus*, Comenius claimed that education would bring inner peace and enjoyment to each pupil, helping her or him through this life before moving on to the next one.

Forced to live as a refugee, Comenius traveled throughout Europe to share his ideas and publications. Hailed across northern Europe and America for his educational theories, he inspired individuals to enact his theories and erect schoolhouses; he ran schools and taught classes himself in Leszno, Poland and Saros-Patak, Hungary, and was in the service of Sweden from 1642-1646, to reform their entire educational system, providing new elementary and secondary school textbooks.¹⁷⁶ Comenius' book *Janua*

¹⁷⁵ Comenius, *Didactic*, 68.

¹⁷⁶ Jakubec, *Comenius*, 48-49; Will S. Monroe, *Comenius and the Beginnings of Educational Reform* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1900) 60. In Sweden, his work was so well-respected by Queen Christina of Sweden's preceptor, John Matthiae (1592–1670), that he used Comenius' materials to teach the young monarch. Christina's extraordinary humanist education, which included Greek letters, modern languages, philosophic inquiry, and many other subjects was mandated at the time of her father's death, and designed to be fitting for a boy to ensure seriousness and quality.

Linguarum (Gateway to Languages) was used as a textbook at Harvard and his influence was securely established in England as well, largely through the efforts of Samuel Hartlib who invited him to England and introduced him to the intellectual circle at Cambridge and translated *The Great Didactic* from Latin into English.¹⁷⁷

Inspired by Comenian ideas, Hartlib assisted John Dury in publishing *The Reformed-School and The Reformed Librarie-Keeper* (1649, 1651). This work proposed the ideal Comenian school in which all are instructed so that they may become good Christians and be “profitable instruments of the Common-wealth.”¹⁷⁸ Beyond their religious and domestic training, Dury recommends that if girls “such as may be found capable of Tongues and Sciences, (to perfect them in Graces and the knowledge of Christ for all is to be referred to him above the ordinary sort) are not to be neglected; but assisted towards the improvement of their intellectual abilities.”¹⁷⁹ Mrs. Dorothy Dury, too, wrote on the topic. She frowned upon teaching girls and young women “dauncing and curious workes,” the kind of training she received and had to forget as a Christian woman of conscience. Education ought to benefit girls spiritually and aid society. The common practice of teaching girls fashionable dressing and curling (of the hair) distressed Mrs. Dury for its lack of utility. In fact, she gives a detailed diatribe against this sort of popular training, mainly because she believed it fed vanity and self-pride which then became obstacles to charity and fraternity.¹⁸⁰ Through the education of boys and girls, Dury and his wife, Hartlib, and Comenius saw “a beginning of some Real[l]

¹⁷⁷ Morison, S.E., "Review of 'Comenius and the Indians of New England'," *The New England Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1930): 183.

¹⁷⁸ Dury, *Reformed School*, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Dury, *Reformed School*, 20.

¹⁸⁰ G. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton; University Press of Liverpool, 1947), 120-121.

Reformation” in their age.¹⁸¹ Comenian-inspired schooling for girls in England was carried on by a great admirer, Bathsua Makin.

Bathsua Reginald Makin was one of her country’s first professional scholars; she worked as a tutor, schoolmistress, and advocate for female learning. Among other high-ranking pupils, Makin tutored Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of Charles I. Makin and van Schurman exchanged words of support and encouragement in letters, and in a 1646 letter to Makin, van Schurman stated that she was “completely in sympathy with your [Makin’s] marvelous work.”¹⁸² While the wealthy van Schurman was free of domestic cares and pursued learning primarily for God’s greater glory, Makin used her intellectual talents for a host of reasons, not the least of which was to earn a living after the death of her husband.

In 1673 Makin’s work, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, was printed in London. In the *Essay*, Makin advocated advanced education for ladies, answered objections to female learning, and advertised her school at Tottenham Cross.¹⁸³ Realizing full well that she would “meet with many Scoffs and Taunts from inconsiderate and illiterate Men,” the author stated her case and hoped to persuade parents to “be more careful for the future of the Breeding of their Daughters.”¹⁸⁴ She argues that female education is appropriate for a specific subset of girls and women; her subset is wider than van Schurman’s but is still class-based. The pupils she envisions are “. . . Persons of competent natural parts, indifferently inclined and disposed to Learning, whom God has blessed with Estates, that they are not cumbred in the World,

¹⁸¹ Dury, *Reformed School*, 21.

¹⁸² van Schurman, *Christian Woman*, 68.

¹⁸³ The school and its curriculum at Tottenham Cross are discussed in Chapter III, “English Schools for Girls.”

¹⁸⁴ Makin, *An Essay*, 4, 41. Subsequent references to this work appear in text as (*Essay*, 00.)

but have liberty and opportunity in their Childhood: and afterwards, being competently instructed in all things now useful that concern them as Women. . . .” (*Essay*, 29-30.) For Makin, unlike van Schurman, the married state did not interfere with learning, but provided more occasions for it. And, if a woman found herself widowed, she could manage her affairs much better with reading, writing, arithmetic, and logic.

Some of the chief arguments Makin offers in her justification of female education and call for girls’ schools relate to the family and the nation. First, Makin argues that a learned wife is an asset to the husband. Thrice she cites the “industrious Dutch” as rightly valuing women’s education which directly augments their flourishing commercial society where the wife is engaged in the family business alongside her husband. Second, Dutch women are credited with “instructing them [their children] before they are fit to be sent to School.” (*Essay*, 27.) All educated mothers have the opportunity to use their learning to better raise the children: “none have so great an advantage of making most deep impression on their children, as Mothers.” (*Essay*, 28.) This, of course, works both ways, as mothers (and fathers) can lead children down a more brutish path. Makin juxtaposes the Arts and Sciences which, as the humanists had argued, edify and adorn the soul, with “this Apish kind of Breeding” in cards, dice, cosmetics, and vanity which debases the soul and corrupts the body. Parents are warned not to “Bring forth and breed up a generation of Baboons.” (*Essay*, 32.)

Finally, with regard to the Nation, Makin points to “the worst of Nations” and pairs their sorry States with the undervaluing of their women. To the list of Russia, Ethiopia, and all the “Barbarous Nations of the World” she adds the American Indians, “where they make their Women mere slaves, and wear them out in drudgery.” (*Essay*, 22-

23.) Only if England imitates The Netherlands and values women's education can it stamp out its faults:

We cannot expect otherwise to prevail against ignorance, Atheism, Prophaneness, Superstition, Idolatry, Lust, that reigns in the Nation, than by a Prudent, Sober, Pious Virtuous Education of our Daughters. Their Learning would stir up our Sons, whom God and nature has made superior, to a just emulation. (*Essay*, 28.)

Makin repeatedly asserts that educated daughters are agents in regeneration, not just morally, but also intellectually. She claims their achievements will spur males on to greater moral and intellectual heights. She writes, "Were a competent number of Schools erected to Educate Ladies ingenuously, methinks I see how ashamed Men would be of their Ignorance, and how industrious the next Generation would be to wipe off their Reproach." (*Essay*, 4.)

These arguments are part of Makin's appeal, which came at the issue from multiple angles. She reminds readers that women had been educated from classical times to the present and that they have distinguished themselves in every field. Her examples range from Sappho to Queen Elizabeth, and she cites women of the Old and New Testament in order to show that women have knowledge of the highest of all things in their knowledge of God. She built an argument for "mundane" education from here: if God allows women knowledge of the highest, "Who then will forbid them the studying of Arts, Tongues, History, Philosophy, etc. subservient to these?" (*Essay*, 24.)

Knowledge is a pleasurable end in itself for Makin. She argues that women should be permitted to study rather than be haunted by curiosity and ignorance.

There is in all an innate desire of knowing, and satisfying this is the greatest pleasure. Men are very cruel that give them a look at a distance, only to know they do not know; to make any thus to tantalize, is a great torment. (*Essay*, 25.)

Furthermore, if this honest pleasure is not permitted, ladies of leisure turn to games of chance, romances, and vanities, all of which do no one any good. Knowledge, too, is the best “hedge against heresies” because, Makin claims, it allows people to judge accurately truth from fallacy, and protect themselves from seducers and heretics. Here Makin (presumably unknowingly) echoes the continental advocates of Ursuline schools from earlier in the century.¹⁸⁵

The closing of her essay serves to empower women to want learning and associate it with their personal worth. Her sympathy with Comenius’ thinking is clear.

I hope some of these Considerations will at least move some of this abused Sex to set a right value upon themselves, according to the dignity of their Creation, that they might, with an honest pride and magnanimity, scorn to be bowed down and made to stoop to such Follies and Vanities, Trifles and Nothings, so far below them, and unproportionable to their noble Souls, nothing inferior to those of Men, and equally precious to God in Christ, in whom there is neither Male nor Female. (*Essay*, 41-42.)

Toward this end, Makin opened and ran a school at Tottenham Cross, a few miles from London, offering elite families an opportunity to entrust their daughters to this new approach which was a far cry from “finishing school” and utilized principles of Comenian pedagogy to make learning academic subjects enjoyable.¹⁸⁶ She offered a new vision for female education and a place to achieve it.

Another original and determined advocate for women’s education and equality, François Poullain de la Barre left behind his Aristotelian scholastic training and embraced the “new philosophy” of his countryman Descartes in the service of this grand debate. Using the Cartesian method, he wrote and published (anonymously) three treatises in the

¹⁸⁵ In Chapter Two, the Ursuline Order and their schools for girls are studied.

¹⁸⁶ Makin’s pedagogical inspiration and strategies are explored in Chapter Three: English Schools and Mary Ward’s Institute.

1670s that presented the issues of equality and education for women within this novel philosophical system. The treatises appeared at the booksellers in consecutive years, *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (On the Equality of the Two Sexes) (1673), *Education des dames* (On the Education of Ladies) (1674), *De l'excellence des hommes* (On the Excellence of Men) (1675). New editions were printed in Paris, Lyon, and Geneva up through the 1690s.¹⁸⁷

Poullain was convinced that Cartesianism was logically sound and provided the way to Truth by exposing prejudices. Realizing how controversial Cartesianism was in the 1670s, Poullain writes in the *Equality*, “. . . if anyone should take exception to this treatise for any reason, he should lay the blame upon truth and not upon the author.” (*Equality*, 51.) Marcelle Maistre Welch entertains the possibility that it was Molière's scathing satire about women's learning, *Les Femmes savantes* (The Learned Ladies), 1672, which prompted Poullain to act.¹⁸⁸ But, as Poullain never mentions Molière in any of the texts, it is difficult to assess. What is clear is that he arrived at a number of radical conclusions about female rationality and capability.

The *Equality* attempts to clear away cultural bias toward women. Poullain sees the body as the only location of difference between men and women. The mind, he claims is equal in men and women; it has no sex.

A woman's mind is joined to her body, like a man's, by God himself, and according to the same laws. Feelings, passions, and he will maintain his union, and since the mind functions no differently in one sex than in the other, it is capable of the same things in both. (*Equality*, 82.)

¹⁸⁷ Poullain de La Barre, *Three Treatises*. According to Welch, the Geneva editions gave Poullain de la Barre's name as the author. Subsequent references to these works appear in text as (*Equality*, 00.) and (*Education*, 00.)

¹⁸⁸ Poullain de La Barre, *Three Treatises*, 10.

Besides incorporating Descartes' theory on the passions, Poullain employs the latest anatomical knowledge in his argument as well. "A most minute anatomical study reveals no difference here between men and women; a woman's brain is exactly the same as ours." (*Equality*, 83.)

For Poullain, it is the unequal education boys and girls receive that make it seem that the male mind is superior. Given a sound education, women can excel in every advanced field, from metaphysics to canon and civil law. Furthermore, Poullain argues they are capable of joining the highest professions . . . even as military generals.

(*Equality*, 98.) Any faults or defects in women are imposed upon them through custom:

If at present we find flaws or some defect in some of them, or even if we find that not all of them see basic things as men do (although experience shows the contrary), we should put this down solely to the condition of their sex and the education given them, which includes the ignorance to which we condemn them, the prejudices and error we foster in them, the example set by other women, and the whole state to which they are reduced by etiquette, restraint, reserve, subjection, and timidity. (*Equality*, 110.)

Poullain's social critique leaves no stone unturned, and Mary Wollstonecraft would argue in the same fashion a century later.

Poullain goes on in the *Education* to emphasize how women should set about obtaining true knowledge. A good many books and subjects are recommended - nothing in particular makes the curriculum "feminine" - but what distinguishes Poullain's plan of education is his emphasis on personal reflection and judgment.

In order to make your studies more useful and to add pleasure brought by reading of a large number of books, get into the habit of relating to your reading everything that comes into your mind. As all books of reasoning should be based on experience, you can best acquire

this intelligently and efficiently [. . .] Observe everything, look at everything, and listen to everything without scruple. Examine everything, judge everything, reason about everything [. . .] You possess the power of reasoning: use it, and don't sacrifice it blindly to anyone. (*Education*, 238.)

Part pedagogue, part personal coach, Poullain wanted to empower women to be free and critical thinkers. For this, a small learned (co-ed) society is formed in the Fifth Conversation, as part of the *Education*. Schools for girls and women are not suggested, most likely because there were no schools (even for boys) that taught Cartesian principles and free thinking. Poullain's advocacy encompassed women's education and emancipation, but it was part of a wider vision that challenged the very notion of authority in knowledge and access to truth.

Despite the potential for incendiary debate, no one came forward with a reply to Poullain's revolutionary ideas. Within the year, Poullain replied to himself with *On the Excellence of Men Against the Equality of the Sexes*, complete with its own refutation, also by the author. In the late 1680s and 1690s, as Welch has documented, there was a "surge of interest in Poullain's feminist ideas" which "must be attributed to the climate of polemic discourse that swept the country over the "Ancients and Moderns' *Querelle*."¹⁸⁹ The English woman, Judith Drake wrote *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* in 1696, which employed the Cartesian method in the same way as Poullain's works had. She also appropriated the Lockean position on understanding, claiming that there were no innate ideas, and instead sense perceptions and reflection alone lead to understanding and Truth.¹⁹⁰ Her experience and reflection allowed her to identify the social causes of difference between the sexes. Like Poullain, she argued that souls and minds were equal,

¹⁸⁹ Poullain de La Barre, *Three Treatises*, 29.

¹⁹⁰ Haskins, "A Woman's Inventive Response to the Seventeenth-century *Querelle des Femmes*," 288-301, 294.

even if the distribution of power was not. In the meanwhile, Poullain had moved to Geneva and became a teacher. Perhaps this advocate had the satisfaction of knowing that his call for change was not echoing in an empty abyss, but circulating and promoting ferment. In 1682, the French literary magazine, *Le Mercure Galant* even published the following statement, taken from a letter written by Antoinette de Salvan de Saliez, an aristocratic provincial, “Among honest people, the equality of the sexes is no longer a contested principle.”¹⁹¹ One wonders whom exactly Madame de Saliez counted among the “honest” people. The issue was far from settled, but advocates for women’s equality and education were visible, articulate, and confident; they began convincing society, little by little.

Alongside Poullain, but in a more traditional manner, Fénelon, the Archbishop of Cambrai and royal tutor of the Duke of Burgundy, King Louis XIV’s eldest grandson, Louis de France, lent his pedagogical expertise to the project of girls’ education and formal schooling. In his 1687 *On the Education of Daughters*, Fénelon offered a religious justification for the education of females; he also described the purpose and type of education suitable for girls and women. The Duchesse of Beauvilliers (mother of eight girls), asked Fénelon for an educational program for her daughters, and the treatise was the result of the request. Fénelon’s agenda was adopted in the highest circles, including the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr.¹⁹²

For Fénelon, like de Gournay and Comenius, the main reason women and girls ought to be educated is because Christ died for them too: “it must be remembered that

¹⁹¹ Siep Stuurman, “Literary Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Southern France: The Case of Antoinette de Salvan de Saliez,” *The Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 1 (1999): 1.

¹⁹² An examination of the education offered to poor noble girls at L’Ecole de Saint-Cyr is offered in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

they are *one half of the human race, REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST, AND DESTINED TO LIFE ETERNAL.*”¹⁹³ Educated women of means were encouraged by Fénelon to spread their knowledge and benevolence through schools and charitable societies. He wanted useful knowledge and Christian morals to be imparted to the poor, and saw women as agents in the mission. The fear of what society would be like with females left in ignorance or given the wrong kind of instruction seems his other chief motivator.

Lastly, let us not forget that if women do great good to the community when well educated, they are capable of infinite mischief when viciously instructed. (*Daughters*, 9.)

As he explains it in *On the Education of Daughters*, Fénelon is much in line with Vives, claiming that the primary object of education is “to form the mind and inspire it with a sincere love of virtue,” necessary for women and men. (*Daughters*, 241.)

Fénelon states that in developing an educational program for pupils of both sexes it is necessary to consider their “situations and functions in life.” (*Daughters*, 201.) The privileged class of the Old Regime clung tightly to their stations, and Fénelon’s writing advocated training that corresponded to a person’s estate:

In the education of a young woman, her condition ought to be regarded, and the situation and cast of life she will probably move in. Take care that her expectations do not exceed her fortune and rank; if they do they will cost her many sorrows. (*Daughters*, 237.)

Along the same lines, he mentioned rearing country girls in accordance with their surroundings, so that they do not grow up desiring urban things and happenings.

¹⁹³ François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, *Fénelon's Treatise on the Education of Daughters*, ed. and trans. T.F. Dibdin (Albany, NY: Backus and Whiting, 1975; reprint, of 1687 orig. in 1806), 9. Subsequent references to this work appear in text as (*Daughters*, 00.)

Fénelon believed that married women of means needed to be able to educate their children and manage both the household economy and sometimes the family's property. He encouraged noble women to take an interest in their families' lands. They should not be ignorant of topics like the sale of grain and other forms of income, including rents.

After all, solidity of intellect consists in wishing to be exactly informed of the way in which things operate, which constitute the foundations of human life; the greatest occurrences are regulated by this principle. The strength and felicity of a country consists not in the possession of provinces badly cultivated, but in the enjoyment of those productions of the earth which are necessary and sufficient for the sustenance of a numerous people. (*Daughters*, 206.)

Including knowledgeable women in his vision of national prosperity, Fénelon advocacy is exceptional for his time. Ironically, it is motivated by a fear that is less than charitable to women.

What intrigues does history present to us – what subversion of laws and manners- what bloody wars—what innovations in religion-what revolutions in states- all arising from the irregularities of women? Ought not these considerations to impress us with the importance of female education? (*Daughters*, 10.)

For Fénelon, it is not the fear of lost chastity, but rather what is perceived as female induced political and social instability and upheaval that he hinged his argument upon.

The curriculum he set forth in the treatise therefore reflects this accusatory perspective. Girls and women should not be instructed in “politics, military tactics, philosophy, and theology.” (*Daughters*, 6.) He also warns against teaching them mechanical arts, and believed learning Spanish and/or Italian would be unnecessary for most. Instead, their lessons should consist of reading, writing, penmanship, French language, basic arithmetic, Greek and Roman histories, French history with some “accounts for foreign countries,” and Latin only for those of “good judgment and discreet

conduct only.” (*Daughters*, 223-26, 29-30.) Since poetry, music, and painting were though to agitate “too much their lively imaginations,” girls should only be taught these subjects with great care. (*Daughters*, 231.) His advice with regard to teaching them the rules of justice and law at first strikes the modern reader as contradictory. He recommends legal studies since “When women marry, they will find a knowledge of these things of great importance to them. But at the same time, convince them how incapable they are of entering deeply into the subtilties [*sic*] of law . . .” (*Daughters*, 225-26.) In the lines that follow this statement, one sees that his advice comes less from a low opinion of female rationality, than from a low opinion of the French legal system.

Fénelon was in close consultation with Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV’s second wife with whom the King founded the girls’ school at Saint-Cyr, about the education offered at the school. The mission of the school was to stamp out mischief and foster pious, wise, useful, and virtuous practices among the nation’s noble *filles*. Fénelon’s advice was especially critical to Madame de Maintenon when she went through a period of Quietism in the late 1680s. The Archbishop was an adherent to this mystical and soon-to-be announced heretical brand of Catholicism. Saint-Cyr would eventually cut off its Quietist connections, but Fénelon’s curricular influence was sustained and was eventually transferred to Catherine the Great’s St. Petersburg school for noble girls in the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁴

The Englishwoman Mary Astell, contemporary with Fénelon, best known for her advocacy for a women’s college in *A Serious Proposal for the Ladies* (1694), succeeded in founding a charity school for the daughters of veterans affiliated with the Chelsea

¹⁹⁴ The Smolnyi Institute was modeled on Saint-Cyr, and is treated in Chapter Two.

Royal Hospital.¹⁹⁵ Astell lived in Chelsea among a strong network of female patrons who were amenable to her ideas as described in *A Serious Proposal*, as well as *Some reflections upon marriage occasion'd by the Duke & Dutchess of Mazarine's case, which is also considered* (1700), and other works. Chiefly through her network's sympathy with her ideas and confidence in her, most especially that of Lady Betty Hasting's, Astell founded the Chelsea Charity School in 1709. The curriculum was elementary, consisting of reading, writing, casting accounts, and some handiwork. Unlike many charity schools for girls of the period, the Chelsea girls did not have to sew or do laundry to supplement the charitable grants to the school on their behalf.¹⁹⁶ While this school was not exactly what Mrs. Astell had in mind when she wrote *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, she was devoted to its success, which all accounts confirm.

The *Proposal* sought to erect a "Monastic" and "Academic" setting for women where "service to GOD and improvement of their own Minds" would take place.¹⁹⁷ The work went through four editions in five years, and it was in circulation in the early eighteenth century-- one of the copies in the British Library marks it as a gift from a

¹⁹⁵ According to Ruth Perry, although Astell was promised a generous endowment in the sum of £10,000 for the college (probably from her friend and patron, Lady Betty Hastings), Bishop Burnet halted the foundation claiming that Astell's college would be too much like a Catholic nunnery. Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Bridget Hill has argued in "A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery," that "opposition often appears to have been not so much a fear of any resurgence of Catholicism as a feeling that such female institutions as those proposed were in some way a threat to men." Bridget Hill, "A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery," *Past and Present*, no. 117 (1987): 119. In Astell's *Proposal*, she does treat the subject of male fear quite directly, "The Men therefore may still enjoy their Prerogatives for us, we mean not to intrench [*sic*] on any of their Lawful Privileges, our only Contention shall be that they may not out-do us in promoting his Glory who is Lord both of them and us." Astell, *Serious Proposal*, 159. Likely, cloistered women's schools were rejected and prevented by men for the threat they were perceived to pose, as well as their "papist" design.

¹⁹⁶ Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist*, 240.

¹⁹⁷ Astell, *Serious Proposal*, 14. Subsequent references to this work appear in text as (*Proposal*, 00.)

mother to her daughter in 1724.¹⁹⁸ In her work, Astell made several arguments that defended female education. First, she contended that education would conquer “Ignorance” and “Vice.” Her language brings Poullain’s argument to mind, which will be introduced below, but it is impossible to know whether or not Astell had read Poullain’s treatises. Instead, she was likely applying her own interpretation of Cartesian and Baconian ideas to the question of female rationality and the ability to throw off “custom” to ascertain Truth.

Disengage our selves from all our former Prejudices, from our Opinion of Names, Authorities, Customs and the like, not give credit to any thing any longer because we have once believ'd it, but because it carries clear and uncontested Evidence along with it. I shou'd think there needed no more to persuade us to this, than a consideration of the mischiefs these Prejudices do us. These are the grand hindrance in our search after Truth; these dispose us for the reception of Error, and when we have imbib'd confirm us in it; Contract our Souls and shorten our views, hinder the free range of our Thoughts and confine them only to that particular track which these have taken; and in a word, erect a Tyranny over our free born Souls (*Proposal*, 68.)

In fact, as part of the proposed curriculum, Astell recommended reading Descartes and Malebranche, stressing the need to keep up with French women who read philosophy. (*Proposal*, 20.)

In addition to ridding the female self of ignorance, vice, and falsehoods, Astell advanced a religious argument which held the divine gift of the human soul and its rational capacity to be identical in males and females, just like Comenius and Fénelon.

For since GOD has given Women as well as Men intelligent Souls, why should they be forbidden to improve them? Since he has not denied us the faculty of Thinking, why shou'd we not (at least in gratitude to him) employ our Thoughts on himself their noblest Object, and not unworthily bestow them on Trifles and Gaities and secular Affairs? Being the Soul was created for the contemplation of Truth as well as for the fruition of

¹⁹⁸ Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print 1550-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 91.

Good, is it not as cruel and unjust to exclude Women from the knowledge of the one as from the enjoyment of the other? (*Proposal*, 18-19.)

Here we can also detect a similarity to van Schurman's argument that contemplating God and Truth was an activity pleasing to God, and should not be withheld from women.

Astell's knowledge of philosophical and theological texts allowed her to make such a poignant and irrefutable claim.

With another set of rhetorical questions, Astell brought up the matter of the afterlife,

And since our Happiness in the next World, depends so far on those dispositions which we carry along with us out of this, that without a right habitude and temper of mind we are not capable of Felicity; and seeing our Beatitude consists in the contemplation of the divine Truth and Beauty, as well as in the fruition of his Goodness, can Ignorance be a fit preparative for Heaven? Is't likely that she whose Understanding has been busied about nothing but froth and trifles, shou'd be capable of delighting her self in noble and sublime Truths?" (*Proposal*, 19.)

To these metaphysical considerations, Astell added arguments stating women's education would benefit families, husbands, and communities. Educated women made better mothers, companions, conversationalists, and tutors. Their education would also, as Makin had claimed in her 1673 essay, serve to reform this "Prophane and Profilgate Age." (*Proposal*, 129-30.) While claiming to be capable of so much change, Astell tried to cast education for women as not encroaching on male turf. Concluding her proposal, she addressed herself to male concerns. Her tone is sarcastic and cajoling, pointing out that men are occupied with many worldly pursuits, while women only want a minor share in learning, not for competitive purposes, but rather to gain autonomy and understanding of God and His Creation.

They may busy their Heads with Affairs of State, and spend their Time and Strength in recommending themselves to an uncertain Master, or

a more giddy Multitude, our only endeavour shall be to be absolute Monarchs in our own Bosoms. (*Proposal*, 159.)

For women to be “absolute Monarchs in our own Bosoms” (i.e. to have complete personal autonomy) was hardly a small request in 1694.

They shall still if they please dispute about Religion, let 'em only give us leave to Understand and Practise it. And whilst they have unrival'd the Glory of speaking as many Languages as Babel afforded, we only desire to express our selves Pertinently and Judiciously in One. We will not vie with them in thumbing over Authors, nor pretend to be walking Libraries, provided they'll but allow us a competent Knowlege of the Books of GOD, Nature I mean and the Holy Scriptures: And whilst they accomplish themselves with the Knowlege of the World, and experiment all the Pleasures and Follies of it, we'll aspire no further than to be intimately acquainted with our own Hearts. (*Proposal*, 159.)

The way in which Astell piles male obligations on top of their worldly pursuits, and then claims women should be granted only “Knowlege of the Books of GOD” and knowledge of their own hearts (selves), minimizes any sense of female public sphere involvement.

And sure the Complaisant and Good natur'd Sex will not deny us this; nor can they who are so well assur'd of their own Merit entertain the least Suspicion that we shall overtop them. (*Proposal*, 159.)

In light of the totality of her arguments in *A Serious Proposal*, and in her work with the charity school, it is clear that Astell attempted to appease male readers or objectors. She wanted advanced education for women to be applied in service to God, self, family, and community. In reference to childless women, Astell, at her most unrestrained wrote, “Nor will Knowledge lie dead upon their hands who have no Children to Instruct; the whole World is a single Ladys Family, her opportunities of doing good are not lessen'd but encreas'd by her being unconfin'd. Particular Obligations do not contract her Mind, but her Beneficence moves in the largest Sphere.” (*Proposal*,

130.) How quickly Astell moved to place single women in the public sphere and doing good works shows that her policy of male appeasement was paying lip-service to the traditional male fear of being displaced. Astell, together with the other seventeenth-century advocates for girls' schooling employed a wide ranging set of justifications and prompts to further their cause. By the end of the century, the call for girls' schooling purported to answer many of society's ills, to become a site for reform and regeneration.

In conclusion, asking to what extent the humanist affirmation of girls' education and the *querelle des femmes* were a mobilizing force in opening up access to education for the female population and expanding their opportunities in society, is an appropriate query. Hard and fast figures, of course, cannot be found to document the tide of intellectual change. However, opening people's minds and offering new alternatives in theory is the precursor to praxis. Considering how widespread misogynistic attitudes were, and how few girls and women received the benefit of any education in the year 1500 as compared with the year 1700, a substantial change in both arenas is evident. New attitudes toward women's worth and their right to schooling swept through Europe in an almost unending series of treatises, pamphlets, and defenses. Once the problem of imperiled chastity was diffused by Vives (and scoffed at by the firebrand Tarabotti), and European society saw the value of girls' education for character formation, institutionalized secular female education was finally feasible in a Christian culture. What is more, new Cartesian theories about the bodies and minds were being adopted, as seen in Poullain's and Astell's writings, and used to bolster arguments for female potential. By the seventeenth-century, because of the intellectual hurdles that humanists and *querelle* writers surmounted, and the advent of the new science and learning (in which

Baconian, Cartesian, and Lockean proponents were gaining ground) advocates like Comenius, Makin, Fénelon and Astell were able to open girls' schools and serve as consultants and teachers therein.

The contemporary English writer and advocate for girls' schools, Daniel Defoe (ca. 1660- 1731) offered a reflection that each seventeenth-century advocate mentioned above shared with him, “. . . what they might be capable of being bred to, is plain from some Instances of Female-Wit, which this Age is not without.”¹⁹⁹ At the close of the seventeenth-century he argued for female academies in every English county, and ten in London, stating, “For I cannot think that God Almighty ever made them [. . .] all to be only Stewards of our Houses, Cooks, and Slaves.”²⁰⁰ As shown in this chapter, faith in girls' and women's intellectual potential was a *new* faith, not *ex nihilo*, but forged over two centuries in diverse and powerful ways. This new attitude was the necessary foundation to launch the educational project of schooling for girls. Collectively, many of the ideas for girls' schooling were instituted in Europe (west and east, including Russia), and in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An examination of some of Europe's first girls' schools follows, showing the nature of this pioneering movement. In the rhetoric of mission statements and founding documents, the sentiments of the early advocates and pedagogues were oft repeated, showing a consensus among advocates, pedagogues, and founders of schools: female virtue would be enhanced at school.

¹⁹⁹ Daniel Defoe, *An Essay Upon Projects* (New York: AMS Press, 1999), 108.

²⁰⁰ Defoe, *An Essay*, 111, 115.

Chapter Two: Schools of Church and State in Italy, France, Quebec, and Russia

Schools for girls were founded all over continental Europe beginning in the sixteenth century, and Europeans soon instituted them in their colonies as well.¹ Invested in the idea that education could be used to mold the character and habits of the pupils, school founders and teachers focused on creating obedient virtuous and able young women. Church leaders and heads of state seized upon the utility of teaching orders, girls' academies, and day schools to help them realize an idealized type of female, one who was not necessarily learned, but far from ignorant.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ursuline Order pioneered schooling for girls in Europe and New France at Quebec City and Trois-Rivières, setting a pattern that other schools followed. Beholden, primarily to the Catholic Church, the Ursuline schools also served the needs of families across the socio-economic spectrum in boarding and day programs, teaching languages as well as domestic skills and moral virtues. Two seventeenth-century French schools, remarkable not only for their involvement with theological and political movements bore similar missions to the avant-garde Ursuline endeavor: Port-Royal and Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-

¹ See note 1, 5, and 6, in the Introduction for reference to the secondary literature regarding sites of European girls' education, prior to the sixteenth century. Beguinages, originating in the thirteenth-century Low Countries, were semi-monastic communities that served the poor and educated children. Sometimes in co-educational groups, the Beguines taught children reading, writing, arithmetic, religion, foreign languages and music. The level of education varied because there were no centralized standards, and these associations of pious laywomen never aspired to become formal religious communities. In the fourteenth century, the Beguines began to be persecuted by the Church, and some of Beguine mystics were branded heretics. Despite their questionable status within the orthodox religion, a few beguinages survived into the early modern period.

Cyr. While the girls' school at Port-Royal was harassed and ultimately closed for its association with Jansenist theology, Saint-Cyr thrived and quickly became a model for other aristocratic girls' boarding schools in Europe. Its grandest reincarnation, occurred later in the eighteenth century, and was in St. Petersburg, Russia, where Empress Catherine II, aiming to aide the state with a contribution to girls' schooling devoted her attentions to the Society for the Upbringing of Noble Girls, which came to be known as the Smolnyi Institute.

This chapter first investigates how the charitable endeavor of Angela Merici (1474-1540) gave rise to the Ursuline Order, which, though originally non-cloistered in accord with its founder's vision, had to devise ways to teach day students from within the convent as required by the prescriptions of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Tracing the evolution of the Ursuline schools from their beginnings in Merici's Brescia and other parts of Italy in the early sixteenth century to their maturation in the seventeenth century as the schools spread to France and Quebec, the missions of the schools and the variety in the program of studies that was offered to thousands of girls are presented. While this study focuses on the Italian, French, and Canadian convents and their schools, owing to the availability of sources, mention of the Belgian, Swiss, Austrian, and German congregations is made so that the scope of the Order's mission can be appreciated. Many people had a role in providing the impetus for the catechism and education in these girls' schools within the cloister: besides Angela Merici and her successive international daughters of the Ursuline Company, Charles Borromeo, as the leader of Counter Reformation efforts from the Catholic Church, and a host of religious men affiliated with the Society of Jesus who served as spiritual advisors, confessors, and advocates for the

Ursuline schools in France were instrumental in promoting the initiative. Six sections comprise the Ursuline segment of this chapter: *Angela Merici*, *Transition to Clausturation*, *Italian Schools*, *French Schools*, *Quebec Schools*, and, in conclusion, *The Ursuline Accomplishment*.

Next, the seventeenth-century schools at Port-Royal and Saint-Cyr are examined, each in their own section. Following, is a discussion of the Smolnyi Institute founded in eighteenth-century imperial Russia, a great tribute to its model, Saint-Cyr. While this list of schools is certainly not exhaustive, they are featured because they were controlled by those exerting political or ecclesiastical power at the highest levels. Embedding the origin of girls' schooling within the larger early modern themes of the Reformations and the emergence of centralized states and empires is the appropriate context for understanding the importance of the new schools and their crucial role in the creation of a moral order as articulated by religious and political leaders. The success or failure of a girls' school relied upon its ability to form girls as orthodox, faithful subjects, and capable wives and mothers, as Church(es) and State saw fit.

The Ursulines

Angela Merici (ca. 1470 – 1540). This study offers a new insight in Ursuline scholarship, showing that the Order arose from a long tradition of charitable activity by non-cloistered holy women in Italy, represented in the person of its founder Angela Merici, and her earliest followers. As a young Brescian woman, Angela Merici followed in the footsteps of many pious lay women living in Italy. She joined the Third Order of St. Francis, and the future saint lived a “mixed” life which combined active charitable

work in the community with a contemplative and ascetic component in serving Christ and the Church. Merici embodied an earlier paradigm of female religious activity, that of the “Holy Woman” or “Living Saint,” and yet, she revised and restated female religious work in creating the Ursuline Order which catered to secular people, especially orphaned girls. She envisioned and formed a cadre of trained non-cloistered sisters reaching out into the community, visiting charitable centers and family homes to give moral instruction and basic catechism lessons. Her new Order was converted to a cloistered group of religious women who formally trained boarding and day students in the decades following her death. Therefore Merici must be recognized as a transitional figure, one who widened the vocation that Third Order lay women experienced, and who immediately presaged their evolution into the cloistered teaching orders, arising directly from her vision.

Since the thirteenth century, with the rise of the mendicant movement, people began experimenting with various forms of religious living, outside the traditional monastic domain.² Pious living was recreated and expanded by men and women, and, beginning in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it came to include groups of *bizzoche* (also known as *dimesse*), which were associations of lay women attached to a religious order.³ Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), the famous tertiary of the Dominican Order, lived according to this pattern and, by her example, encouraged other women to do

² Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, Preface, xii; Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, 224. On the tradition of holy women, see also,

Bornstein and Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion*; Richard Kieckhefer and George D. Bond, eds., *Sainthood: Its Manifestations in World Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Jill McGinn Bernard Raitt and John Meyendorff, *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1987); André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³ Bornstein and Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion*, 28.

likewise.⁴ The women of *bizzoche* embraced the “mixed” life whereby they could remain in the world and still lead devoted lives of service to God.

In this penitential spirit, Merici entered the Franciscan tertiary group and catered to the *incurabili*, orphans, prostitutes, and condemned prisoners in Brescia.⁵ Her choices and actions mark her as one of Bornstein and Rusconi’s “Living Saints”:

Dedicated to maintaining an active presence in society as providers of aid to the poor and needy, but even more as teachers, these devout women nevertheless owed their reputations for sanctity to the mystical gifts that singled them out. Sparing in their eating, diligent in their prayer, and severe in their discipline, they lived in perfect abstinence and raptures of ecstasy, repeating in their own bodies Christ’s Passion.⁶

Sanctae mulieres rather than *homines*, came to dominate the Third Orders from the fourteenth century onwards.⁷ It is crucial to view Merici within this context; she represents one who operated within the tradition of a “mixed” life especially popular in urban Italy, and also innovatively pushed the female religious vocation in the direction of serving and catechizing secular people. Merici’s writing and the contemporary accounts of her initiative in founding the Ursuline Order reveal how she envisioned an Order of virgins, living the “mixed” life in their familial homes to meet the social, economic and political challenges of sixteenth-century Brescia.

To understand Merici’s vocation, some contextual information is required. In the 1520’s, Merici experienced turmoil in Italy with the advent of Lutheranism, and the arrival of troops, that would eventually sack Rome in 1527; Merici along with her fellow Brescians felt these seismic disturbances deeply and responded to help those in distress on the local level. *Luoghi pii* (centers for piety) were opened and offered charity in the

⁴ Lehmijoki-Gardner, Bornstein, and Matter, *Dominican Women*.

⁵ Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 24.

⁶ Bornstein and Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion*, 236.

form of nursing, alms, and catechism, perhaps as early as 1522, in large part responding to the “French disease” which was rampant.⁸ In Brescia, a new hospital, called the *Incurabili* was founded by the lay confraternity *Divino Amore*. This hospital supported both female penitents (reformed prostitutes) and female orphans, and some of Merici’s associates and future sisters in the Ursuline Order worked there.⁹ While there is no record of Merici’s personal work at the Hospital, given the offers she received from the Venetian government and Pope Clement VII in Rome, to manage their respective hospitals with identical services, one may surmise her more than casual familiarity with the *Incurabili*’s good works.¹⁰ Also, a link through her close disciple, Elizabeth Prato, who was co-manager of the orphanage from 1532, and chosen by Merici to succeed her as Mother General, should not be underestimated. In a seventeenth-century *Vita* of Merici, written by Superior General Faino of the Ursuline Order, he associates Merici with the *luoghi pii*,

An apostolic woman walking through the streets with such modesty and discretion that she drew the hearts of other women to follow her way. She continually visited Churches and charitable institutions (*luoghi pii*), appealing to people to do good.¹¹

Through frequent visits and edifying conversation, Merici established herself as a leader in Brescia. What was different about Merici, and what positions her as an atypical “Holy Woman,” was that she organized a company of lay women to address societal needs, which included catechism.

⁷ Bornstein and Rusconi, eds., *Women and Religion*, 92.

⁸ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:68.

⁹ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:69.

¹⁰ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:72-73.

¹¹ As cited in Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:75.

From 1529–1535, Angela Merici gathered other lay women who served actively in the community. Regular meetings were held in the Prato home, and in 1535, their numbers reached twenty-eight.¹² As mentioned above, each woman lived with her own family, and agreed to informal vows and rules for a new religious Order on the foundation day, November 25, 1535. On August 8, 1536, the Vicar General of Brescia, Cardinal Francesco Cornaro, granted ecclesiastical approbation for the rule.¹³ Angela dictated the *Regola* (Rule), *Arricordi* (Counsels), and *Testamento* (Testament or Legacies) to her secretary Gabriele Cozzano; ironically, it is quite possible that the mother of the first educative order for women could not write herself. These three documents comprise the Trivulzian Codex (1545/6), named so on account of its discovery in the Biblioteca Trivulziana in Milan.¹⁴ It is the oldest extant manuscript of Merici's writings. This study offers a new comparative analysis of the Italian and French convent schools and relies on the Codex, together with archival materials found at the Ursuline College of New Rochelle.

As discussed in the Introduction, the Codex illuminates many aspects of the early Ursuline mission and structure, and some of its features are explained here. These three documents were addressed to different groups of people based on their function within the Order or in association with the Order. The *Regola*, composed of ten short chapters, was for the governance of the Order, and speaks primarily to Merici's "daughters and sisters," although the final chapter deals in part with the election of outside protectors and protectresses: four mature men and four mature widows. The tone of the work combines

¹² Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:105.

¹³ Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 27.

a maternal love and urgency for faith with spiritual consolation in the face of real danger. The *Arricordi*, in nine sections was addressed to the *colonelle* (district leaders) of the Order shares this maternal and urgent tone, but because Merici gives advice on how to care for the members of the Order and the “daughters,” who are secular girls receiving training from the Ursulines, the document also resembles a spiritually infused teacher training manual. Lastly, the *Testamento*, made up of eleven legacies, was addressed to the *Matrone* (Lady Governors), who were not only benefactors of the Order, but also motherly figures for the sisters and daughters; it has a less authoritative tone because Merici was enlisting the support of noble ladies and begging them to safeguard the new community and each and every individual within its care.

Merici presents a bold mission in the *Regola* for the virgins of her Order. Her language announces her participation in Counter Reformation task of defeating the devil, who, in her belief was infecting the world with the Protestant heresy. The Initiate in the Company is therefore construed as an obedient Christian warrior who must face and defeat the devil in her life’s work.

Come then, let all worthily embrace this Holy Rule that God in his grace has offered. And, armed with these his sacred precepts, let us comport ourselves so valiantly that even we, after the example of the holy Judith, fearlessly decapitating Holofernes, in other words the devil, may be able to return gloriously to our homeland where for us great glory and triumph spring from all things in heaven and earth.¹⁵

First and foremost, Merici charged the Ursulines to assist their fellow Christians on the path to salvation: “But all our words, actions and movements should always be for the

¹⁴ The three Merician documents are included as appendices to the study by, Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 112-149. Waters juxtaposes the original Italian, with his translation of the texts into English. The quotations of the Merician documents in this dissertation utilize Waters’ translation.

¹⁵ Angela Merici, “Regola,” in *The Ursuline Achievement* (1994), 115.

instruction and the edification of those who deal with us”¹⁶ Daily visitation with orphaned girls and penitents was part of the Brescian Ursulines vocation; in 1562, they were made sole managing custodians of the orphanage within the *Incurabili* hospital.¹⁷

When the founder addressed the *colonelle* in the *Arricordi*, she expanded on the mission of care and training for the “daughters,” admonishing great vigilance, “But be sure that where you know for certain that there is danger to the spiritual well-being and virtue of your daughters, you must on no account consent to it, nor tolerate it, nor be prevented from acting for any reason whatsoever.”¹⁸ In caring for the children, Merici made it clear that the daughters’ spiritual and temporal concerns were the Ursuline’s responsibility. According to Merici’s *Fourth Counsel*, only by paying attention to each child’s individuality, could an Ursuline have success: “Be concerned and careful to know and understand the behavior of your daughters and to be aware of their needs, both spiritual and temporal. And you yourselves provide for these to the best of your ability, if it is possible.”¹⁹ The Lady Governors were in place as a safety net, but Merici believed that the Ursulines could fulfill their charges’ needs with God’s grace.²⁰ Daily visits to the children’s homes, and attendance at Mass with them was the core of their mission, and they had Merici’s assurances that she, too, would aid them in life and death.²¹

To avoid scandal and temptation the *Regola* emphasized certain precautions in attire and public comportment. Signs such as a cincture around the waist announced the young woman’s commitment to chastity. Fine fabrics and “other vanities” were replaced

¹⁶ Merici, “Regola,” 125.

¹⁷ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:69.

¹⁸ Angela Merici, “Arricordi,” in *The Ursuline Achievement* (1994), 133.

¹⁹ Merici, “Arricordi,” 133.

²⁰ Merici, “Arricordi,” 133.

²¹ Merici, “Arricordi,” 129, 131.

by homespun woolen clothes appropriate to “virginal propriety.”²² The philosophy expressed by these clothing markers is echoed in the chapter “Concerning the manner of behaving in public.” Ursulines were not permitted to participate in worldly events such as weddings, jousts, or balls, and they were advised “to move quickly, not delaying or stopping here or there, nor being in curious admiration of anything” in the streets. Merici warned her daughters that “traps and diabolical allurements” would befall them and these measures of containment and modesty were the best defense. Living a religious and celibate life in the midst the secular world, Merici fashioned a way to make the heretofore divergent ways of life compatible, with a vision not unlike that which Vives embraced almost two decades earlier.

Additionally, Merici wanted the actions and deeds of the Ursulines to be worthy of serving Christ and assisting fellow Christians on their own paths to salvation. Later editions of the *Regola* elaborated on this principle: “The function of the Mistresses will be, as her name implies, to teach the members under her; and this is to be accomplished first by her own example, so that they may find in it a living picture of the life they are to lead in the Company of St. Ursula.”²³ The Ursuline virgin modeled her teachings and became schoolbook embodied.

The advice offered by Merici in the *Second Counsel* described how instruction should be imparted to the youth. By imitating Christ as servant, the Ursulines were to be charitable in their interactions with children, and prudent with disciplinary measures:

²² Merici, “Regola,” 117.

²³ Sister M. Monica, *Angela Merici and Her Teaching Idea* (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1927), 264. Monica used the 1705 edition of *Reglemens des religieuses Ursulines de la Congregaion de Paris, Chapter XIX*, 1705. The 1705 edition is virtually identical to the 1652 edition of the *Reglemens*. The Parisian edition was very widely used throughout France.

Be kind and compassionate towards your dear children. Endeavor to act purely out of love of God and out of zeal for souls when you admonish and advise them, or when you encourage them to good or dissuade them from evil. For you will achieve more with gentleness and kindness than by harshness and cutting rebukes which must be used only when really necessary, and even then according to the place and time and the person.²⁴

While Angela Merici was not the first person to advise restraint and moderation in disciplining children, she notably agrees with secular authors in arguing against harsh discipline, such as Desiderius Erasmus, her contemporary, and the later thinker Johannes Amos Comenius who were discussed in Chapter One.

When she addresses the Lady Governors in the *Second Legacy*, Merici explained the ideal relationship between Ursuline mothers and daughters, who were the professed virgins, as well as the children they taught. The power ascribed to a spiritual relationship surpassed the bond between a natural mother and child. With her words, Merici fortified the Ursulines for the task that they had undertaken.

Next, I beg you to take care of all your daughters, having each and every one engraved on your mind and heart, not only their names but also their situation and character and every detail about them. This will no be difficult for you if you enfold them with heartfelt charity. Look at human mothers; even if they had a thousand sons and daughters they would have them all firmly fixed in their hearts, each and every one, for that is how true love works. [. . .] With still more reason, spiritual mothers can and should do his, for spiritual love is, beyond comparison, stronger than human love.²⁵

With hundreds, and soon to be thousands, of little girls attending their lessons, “true love” was the only capable force to carry the day.

A brief description of how the religious and secular arms of Merici’s Company were organized shows her probity in linking the non-cloistered Order with temporal protectors and governors, and thus securing the groups well-being after her death. When

²⁴ Merici, "Arricordi," 131.

Merici died in 1540, the Company numbered 150 virgins of mixed social origin; in order to be a full sister in the Company, the aspirant had to be eighteen years of age.²⁶ Four posts of *colonelle*, one for each quarter of Brescia were required, and they were drawn from the most mature and prudent widows; three of the first four women holding this position were the biological mothers of Ursulines sisters.²⁷ Another four leaders were elected from within the Ursuline Order to serve as the “masters and directors of spiritual life.”²⁸ Additionally, four respected men of lay status would be elected to act as agents for the material “needs of the Company,” and for individuals requiring a guardian in legal and financial matters.²⁹

It seems Merici was anticipating her death when in her *Eleventh Legacy* of the *Testamento*, she claimed the highest authority for the Rule and, thus, for the Order. “Hold it for certain that this Rule was rightfully planted by his holy hand, and he will never abandon this Company as long as the world lasts.”³⁰ With divine protection, Merici told her daughters that they should then, “. . . persevere faithfully and joyfully in the work begun.”³¹ Indeed, the Brescian Company flourished through the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, with 180 members in 1582, and 297 members in 1616.³² The second foundation of Ursulines was established in Milan by Giovanna Vistarina in 1560.³³ Following the Milanese foundation, the expansion of the Order into other parts of Italy and France began in earnest, albeit with some important modifications. Merici

²⁵ Angela Merici, "Testamento della Madre Suor Angela," in *The Ursuline Achievement* (1994), 143.

²⁶ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 2:201.

²⁷ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:123. The names of the first four *colonelle* were Maria Bertolini, Peregrina, La Piza, and Andriana.

²⁸ Merici, "Regola," 125.

²⁹ Merici, "Regola," 125, 127.

³⁰ Merici, "Testamento," 149.

³¹ Merici, "Testamento," 149.

³² Mazzonis, *Spirituality, Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy*, 205.

anticipated future exigencies that might affect the Company; in the *Eleventh Legacy* she addressed the likely need for change: "And if, according to times and needs, new rules should be made, or any change introduced, do it prudently and with good advice."³⁴ The first major step in the evolution of the Order was its transition to a cloistered setting.

The Transition to Clausturation. The Council of Trent decreed an enforced *clausura* on all female religious communities as stipulated according to Chapter Five of the 25th Session, issued on December 4, 1563.

The holy Synod, renewing the constitution of Boniface VIII, which begins *Periculoso*, enjoins on all bishops, by the judgment of God to which It appeals, and under pain of eternal malediction, that, by their ordinary authority, in all monasteries subject to them, and in others, by the authority of the Apostolic See, they make it their especial care, that the enclosure of nuns be carefully restored, wheresoever it has been violated, and that it be preserved, wheresoever it has not been violated; [. . .] But for no nun, after her profession, shall it be lawful to go out of her convent, even for a brief period, under any pretext whatever, except for some lawful cause, which is to be approved of by the bishop; any indults and privileges whatsoever notwithstanding.³⁵

Not only were the Ursulines forced to become a formal consecrated congregation and came under the authority of their respective bishops, neither family members nor pupils could enter the convent without risking excommunication for such a grave transgression.

And it shall not be lawful for any one, of whatsoever birth, or condition, sex, or age, to enter within the enclosure of a nunnery, without the permission of the bishop, or of the Superior, obtained in writing, under the pain of excommunication to be ipso facto incurred. But the bishop, or the Superior ought to grant this permission in necessary cases only; nor shall any other person be able by any means to grant it, even by virtue of any faculty, or indult, already granted, or that may hereafter be granted.³⁶

³³ Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:135.

³⁴ Merici, "Testamento," 149.

³⁵ J. Waterworth, "The Council of Trent, The Twenty-Fifth Session, The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent (1563)," (Dolman, 1848 [cited April 21, 2005]); available from <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct25.html>.

³⁶ Waterworth, "Provision is Made for the Enclosure and Safety of Nuns."

The Tridentine decree forcibly closed female religious to their wider communities of family, neighborhood, parish, and friends. The new law harkened back and restated what Pope Boniface VIII had decreed in the Bull, *Periculoso*, in 1298:

...and that no persons, in any way disreputable, or even respectable, shall be allowed to enter or leave the same (unless a reasonable and obvious cause exists, for which the appropriate authority may grant a special license) so that [the nuns] be able to serve God more freely, wholly separated from the public and worldly gaze and, occasions for lasciviousness having been removed, may most diligently safeguard their hearts and bodies in complete chastity.³⁷

Ostensibly, the spirit of the law shifted from punishing “lasciviousness” to protecting virgins from the outside world’s corrupting forces. Whatever the spirit, the intended result was the same, enclosure and separation. As Zarri has written, “The Regular Third Orders were thus compelled to become nuns of the Second Order, or their convents were suppressed.”³⁸

In the same year, 1563, Charles Borromeo was made a Cardinal of the Church and Archbishop of Milan, and thus assumed leadership of the Ursulines. His rise to power is well-documented; with connections in the highest places (his maternal uncle was Pope Pius IV, Giovanni Angelo de' Medici), and expertise in canon and civil law, the future saint was well-armed as a leader in the post-Tridentine Church.³⁹ Besides setting up to reform the clergy, Borromeo developed a catechism that was concurrent with the

³⁷ Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298 - 1545*, vol. 5, *Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Law* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 135.

³⁸ Gabriella Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline: 1450-1650," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 83-112, 104.

³⁹ For Borromeo, see Franco Buzzi, Danilo Zardin, and Cesare Alzati, *Carlo Borromeo e l'opera della "Grande Riforma": cultura, religione e arte del governo nello Milano del pieno Cinquecento* (Milano: Silvana, 1997); John M. Headley and John B. Tomaro, *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988); Cesare Orsenigo, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, trans. Rudolph Kraus (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1943); Margaret Yeo, *Reformer: St. Charles Borromeo* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1938).

Tridentine reforms and influenced by his association with the Schools of Christian Doctrine and the Jesuit Order. While Borromeo worked with many religious orders, his attention to the Ursuline order spanned almost the entire time of his tenure as Archbishop.⁴⁰ He revised Merici's *Regola*, changing the government of the Company and bringing them within the cloister.

The Borromean changes in the hierarchy and government of the Ursuline Order were important because they replaced Merici's own regulations. They were adopted by other bishops as the Order grew in Italy and France because of the Archbishop's reputation as an able and devout reformer. The new *Regola* was given to the Brescian community, and Borromeo arranged it so that the bishop of Brescia would be the Superior of the Company, and the Superior General would be his own (Borromeo's) representative.⁴¹ In short, as Gabriella Zarri has succinctly presented the Borromean influence, he replaced a system that was akin to a familial and maternal model to a structure that became beholden to the bishop and the male ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁴² The role of the secular matrons and male guardians was removed from the Order's administration.

Additionally, Borromeo's *Rule* reflected the significant change which transformed the Ursulines from being a lay order with informal vows to a monastic order with formal vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability.⁴³ Perhaps as early as 1572, Borromeo and his followers sought to abide by the Tridentine call for enclosure; whereby he "had

⁴⁰ P. Renée Baernstein, *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan* (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), 77.

⁴¹ Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 31.

⁴² Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline: 1450-1650," 105.

⁴³ Martin, *Ursuline Method of Education*, 288. Yet, according to Gabrielle Zarri, the Milanese congregation was able to avoid enclosure because of its lay statute which acknowledged living in community as a legitimate mode of living for these Ursulines.

the children come to the convent for instruction. Formerly, the Ursulines went to them.”⁴⁴

The “pretexts” of individual nuns wanting to leave the enclosure for even brief periods of time were to be scrutinized. Only in the rarest cases, whereby the bishop granted such a privilege, would anyone be allowed to leave the cloister.

This transformative moment, when the Ursuline Order became cloistered, has attracted much scholarly attention. Recent scholarship suggests that for all the effort in enforcing the Tridentine decree, many convents found ways to make their spaces at least semi-permeable.⁴⁵ This permeability is of paramount concern in any study of the institutionalization of Ursuline schools because the Ursulines reached into the community and made an indelible contribution in educating girls. The Church “reinterpreted” its own laws to make use of the Ursulines as teachers by partially sidestepping the rule of enclosure. Specifically, later *Rules* describe how systems of allowing day students to enter and exit the cloister were devised. For example, Pope Paul V offered the Ursulines of Bordeaux an accommodation in 1618:

Let cloister be most religiously observed, as the Institute directs, and no man or woman, not even a doctor or surgeon, may enter into the enclosure of the religious house, unless it be by permission of the Ordinary given in writing, and after the bell has sounded a signal and in the presence of the Mother Superior in company with two of the oldest Mothers.⁴⁶

While doctors were barred, the admittance of day students was worked out in the following fashion. Even with the following elaborate entrance and exit protocol for the

⁴⁴ Martin, *Ursuline Method of Education*, 289.

⁴⁵ Marie-Amélie Le Bourgeois, *Ursulines of Anne de Xaintonge (1606): Contribution to the History of Communities of Non-cloistered Women Religious* (Paris: Catholic Institute of Paris, 1995); Elizabeth A. Lehfeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: the Permeable Cloister, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators, 1298 - 1545*; Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister*; Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V," 210.

day students, it is interesting to note Paul V's willingness to be flexible in the cause for female education.

Let an ample hall be provided in the buildings on the far side of the church, yet within the cloister of the monastery or house, to which the Mothers and Sisters may go to teach school when the final school bell has sounded. This hall shall have twin doors, one exterior and the other interior, both to be locked. Into this hall the nuns will go two by two before and after noon, in the presence of the Assistant. From this hall, after about two hours, the nuns will return to their religious cloister. Then when these inner doors have been closed and not before, the doors of the hall giving access to the outside should be unlocked, and the girls who are not boarders should be permitted to return to their homes.⁴⁷

Lastly, the provisional character of this arrangement was made explicit:

However, this practice of admitting girls who are not boarders shall continue only so long as it pleases Us and the Holy See.⁴⁸

Presumably, similar systems were devised and operated in the cloistered Ursuline day schools throughout Italy and France. In the case of the Ursulines at Parma and Piacenza, a limited claustration was permitted for both the Ursulines and the boarding students, allowing them to attend the local church for Mass.⁴⁹ This expertly crafted compromise allowed for the schooling of secular girls while maintaining the all important *clausura* that characterized female religious communities post-Trent.

The Italian Schools of the mid-sixteenth century into the seventeenth century. The Ursuline Order established its first schools in northern Italy. Since most of the Italian congregations were founded after 1560, the nuns taught their female pupils within the cloister, and under the bishop's watch. The Order thrived mainly because Borromeo and other Churchmen believed that the Ursulines were an edifying presence in northern Italy

⁴⁷ Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V," 210.

⁴⁸ Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V," 210.

⁴⁹ Culpepper, "Our Particular Cloister," 1024.

and effective transmitters of orthodox belief. At the same time, the Schools of Christian Doctrine were being founded in the sixteenth century. In time, the Ursuline sisters would staff the schools of Christian Doctrine in Milan under the auspices of Charles Borromeo. Similar to Merici's calling, the mission of the Schools of Christian Doctrine was "to instruct uneducated, or minimally educated, laypersons in the rudiments of the faith in order that they all might live good lives and achieve salvation."⁵⁰ A summary of Paul Grendler's findings concerning the Schools of Christian Doctrine illuminates the fertile ground which the Ursulines tended alongside so many confraternities committed to preparing children in the rudiments of their Catholic religion.

Grendler retells the anecdote that beginning in 1536, the same year as Merici gained approbation for the Ursuline Order, the Milanese Abbott Castellino da Castello enticed local children to come to church and learn the sign of the cross with the sweet reward of apples. With both clerical and lay assistants, the schools were quickly established throughout northern Italy: Pavia (1538), Venice (*ca.* 1540), Genoa, Verona, Vigevano, Piacenza (1541), Mantua, Parma (1542), Lodi (1545), Cremona (1547), Varese (1550), Novara (1553), Bergamo, Brescia (1554), Rome (1560), Monza, Asti, Ascoli (1562), Desio (1563), Belgioioso, Savona, Turin, Ferrara (1563), and Como (1565).⁵¹ The movement reached the countryside and enjoyed the highest ecclesiastical endorsement.

According to the study, the numbers of pupils, male and female, who attended the schools in Bologna, Milan and Rome reached impressive highs. In 1564, Grendler asserts that "over 2000 students were taught by 200 adults;" for Bologna, in 1577,

⁵⁰ Paul F. Grendler, "The Schools of Christian Doctrine in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Church History* 53, no. 3 (1984): 319-331, 330.

approximately 40% of the children of the city were attending the Schools of Christian Doctrine. By 1611, after fifty years, the seventy-eight Schools of Christian Doctrine in Rome were instructing 10,000 boys and girls.⁵² However, the methods used to get the children into the classroom were not always as sweet as a ripe apple. Volunteers walked the streets admonishing their neighbors with the following words, “Fathers and mothers, send your children to learn Christian doctrine. Otherwise, you will have to render a strict accounting to God on Judgment Day!”⁵³ Once at school, the children learned reading, writing, and religion, and Grendler reports that in some schools basic counting was also taught. As he explains, “Children learned to read in order to know the prayers and commandments of God; they read prayers in order to learn to read.”⁵⁴

Here, the Schools of Christian Doctrine, as with the Ursuline schools, an oral culture began its transition to a semi-literate one, spurred by religious needs. In the schools of Christian Doctrine the level of instruction was elementary; the meetings were typically held once a week and lasted for only two hours. As Grendler reminds us, “this was better than nothing,” and, as is argued below, it was the entry-level opportunity into which the Ursulines stepped, too.

Merici’s contemporaries saw the compatibility of the Ursuline Order and the Schools of Christian Doctrine, and commented on the benefits to society. In a treatise written in 1584 by the moralist Giovanni Giolito, the author explained and advocated the third way of life the Ursulines of Italy had undertaken. For Giolito, this way of life included “good education” and had much to offer the Church and noble families. He

⁵¹ Grendler, "Schools," 321.

⁵² Grendler, "Schools," 321.

⁵³ Grendler, "Schools," 321.

⁵⁴ Grendler, "Schools," 326.

questioned whether there was anybody but “virgins of exemplary life” to educate children and administer other charitable works.

If the different advantages which can arise from introducing Virgins of this kind are considered, it could be said that such a state is necessary in the Church. . . Furthermore, would it not be of importance for the good education of children from noble families if there were devout Virgins of exemplary life, whose faith was trustworthy? Would it not also be of great importance if there were such Virgins to give themselves faithfully and in all charity to the teaching of Christian doctrine in girls' schools, or who would help in the Hospital for Women and in other devout works?⁵⁵

Giolito's insistence that the virgins were “necessary in the Church” for the administration of Christian Doctrine was soon apparent to others, too. Borromeo, supporter of the Schools of Christian Doctrine, took little convincing that the Company of Ursula could be of extreme usefulness in the educational endeavor of the reforming Church. In the excerpt below, we see that Cardinal-Bishop of Bologna, Gabriele Paleotti, like Giolito, recognized the Ursulines as a “suitable” taskforce for teaching Christian Doctrine to girls and as an important resource for Church and city to draw upon during the trying times of the sixteenth century. He wrote to Borromeo, stating:

Because many virgins who wish to serve God in this status but cannot shut themselves up in convents, and many others who even though they [would like to] embrace the religion of Christ, cannot on account of poverty to fulfill their desire, it appears that to aid these [women] to serve God, a Congregation of Little Virgins might be established and given a few little rules, with which, staying in their parents' homes, they could serve God in the virginal status.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Paleotti remarked that the resource would be self-supporting, which was no small point to men of the cloth. Paleotti noted that there was a shortage of suitable instructors, and he spelled out the advantages of using the lay sisters:

⁵⁵ As cited in Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 61.

⁵⁶ Gabriella Zarri, “The Third Status,” in *Time, Space and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 181-199, 186-187.

In time, once they were spread in various parts of the city, these Little Virgins could also teach girls Christian Doctrine, and in this group one could find many people able to aid various noble families, and this work would be of great utility to the city, without financial burdens, for each one would support herself by her own labors.⁵⁷

These types of arguments, which were brandished throughout Italy with Borromeo's staunch support, did the remarkable work of convincing Italian bishops that the Ursuline order was a blessing. This blessing may have been begun as a relatively humble arm of the Church, but it had tremendous promise in retaining the flock of believers, raising literacy rates among girls, and inculcating specific "feminine" virtues.

In the latter part of the sixteenth century, northern Italian Ursuline schools multiplied and welcomed significant numbers of girls to their lessons. The majority of Ursuline schools in Italy were established after 1560. In 1576, Borromeo called his bishops to a Provincial Council at Milan and ordered them to found Companies of St. Ursula throughout the realm.⁵⁸ When Borromeo died in 1584, "five communities were at work in the diocese of Milan: six hundred Ursulines, teaching in eighteen schools."⁵⁹ According to Angelo Turchino, who has made a careful study of education in Spanish Lombardy, the order was faithfully carried out over the next two decades; he reports that more than 71 Ursuline Companies existed in the city of Milan and its territory by 1595.⁶⁰ At the same time, the reputation of the great utility of the Ursuline Order spread to other areas of northern Italy.

⁵⁷ Zarri, "Time, Space and Women's Lives," 186-187. Schutte reports that the letter was first quoted by Carlo Marcora in "Nicolò Ormaneto, vicario di san Carlo," *Memorie storiche della Diocesi di Milano* 8 (1961):384.

⁵⁸ Borromeo's "paternal affection" and support for the Order and its schools was carried on by his nephew, Federico Borromeo. As reported by Myhr, after his uncle's death, Federico persuaded Cardinal de Sourdis to initiate and support a new congregation of Ursulines in Bordeaux, France. Mitylene Morrison Myhr, "Apostles and Mothers: the Company of St. Ursula in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century Bordeaux, France," (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1999), 90.

⁵⁹ Rapley, *The Dévotes*, 50.

The earliest Ursuline convents with schools made their homes in northern Italy, and by the seventeenth-century spread as far south as Naples.⁶¹ Table 1, below, offers the foundation sites grouped chronologically by decade. Between 1560–1585, new foundations in the north of Italy proliferated, with the south receiving the Ursulines, beginning in 1609.

Institutional records show the intentions of the Ursuline founders for the new schools. The seventeenth-century *Rule* from Virola Alghise in Lombardy, explains the dual purpose of the school. The Preface states “. . . there will follow not only the good upbringing of girls in moral and civic virtues, but the institution everywhere of the important work of the Christian Doctrine for all the women and girls of that same region...” Chapter XVIII adds, “And since the school was founded not only for the benefit of the maidens but for the common good of the whole region, they must work for this as one of the motives of their vocation.”⁶² Working at the behest of Church authorities, the Ursulines were credited with reforming beyond their walls and reaching out to the “whole region.”

At Parma and Piacenza, where the Ursulines were subject to ducal jurisdiction under the Farnese family, rather than the usual episcopal authorities, their schools charged high fees and only the daughters of the nobility were permitted to attend.⁶³ The Merician standard of serving out of a charitable impulse had been subsumed by the Farnese desire to create an educated elite for their realm. Using the convent to further its own political needs, the Farnese court controlled admissions tightly-- from its foundation

⁶⁰ Turchini, *Sotto l'occhio*, 291.

⁶¹ Culpepper, "Our Particular Cloister," 1021; Faresin, *Le orsoline di Breganze fra l'antico e il nuovo*, 50-51.

⁶² As cited by Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*, 1:233.

in 1649-1731, the Ursulines at Piacenza educated 180 boarders from the highest ranking families of the duchy.⁶⁴ The girls were trained to be devout, obedient, and capable domestic managers, suitable for noble marriage.

Ursuline foundations were not the only institutions that offered schooling for girls in Italy; other limited avenues did exist. Other small groups of *dimesse* (third order laywomen) provided lessons to girls, as did the sixteenth-century *Collegio della Beata Vergine Maria*, which later became known as Guastalla College in Milan.⁶⁵ The College was an uncloistered secular school founded in 1557 by Countess Paola Lodovica Torelli.⁶⁶ Through the patronage of the King Philip of Spain, Torelli obtained tax exempt status for the College in 1560—royal support of girls' schools would increasingly become the fashion.⁶⁷ In 1565, together with the official charter, she had a written constitution drawn up in which she named the Jesuits the spiritual directors. Even as a “secular” institution, a religious affiliation was sought.⁶⁸ By 1609, as Renee Baernstein has found, approximately 400 pupils boarded in Milan's forty convent schools, including Torelli's *Collegio*, the Ursuline schools, and others.⁶⁹ A third schooling option, described by Zarri, was the Florentine college of the Montalve, founded in the mid-seventeenth century by the noble woman Elenora Ramirez di Montalvo. There were few other institutions for girls to learn to read, let alone to pursue more advanced studies. Zarri

⁶³ Culpepper, "Our Particular Cloister," 1022.

⁶⁴ Culpepper, "Our Particular Cloister," 1028.

⁶⁵ Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline: 1450-1650," 109.

⁶⁶ Jacopo del Campo, "Collegio della Guastalla," (2005 [cited September 8, 2005]); available from <http://www.guastalla.org/storia.asp>. The school still exists today in Milan, albeit in another location.

⁶⁷ King Edward VI and the subsequent monarchs of England were patrons of Christ's Hospital, as described in Chapter Three. Also, Louis XIV of France was the patron of the Maison Royal de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr. For the many royal patrons of the Institute of Mary, see Chapter 3, Table 5. Lastly, the Smolnyi Institute for noble girls (examined in this chapter, below) was central in Catherine II, Empress of Russia's educational and imperial reforms.

⁶⁸ Baernstein, *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan*, 54.

reports that there were a few unaffiliated, semi-monastic schools, taught by unmarried women, and guided by the Jesuits.⁷⁰ The Ursulines, however, pioneering schools for boarding and day students, had the most extensive network of girls' schools in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy.

See Table 1

The French Schools in the Seventeenth Century. At the end of the sixteenth century, the French bishops learned of the Ursuline activity in Italy and sought to establish them within their borders, too. By directing pious women to organize the Company of St. Ursula in France, the princes of the Church encouraged the network of girls' schools to serve the secular girls in France. The first French foundation was settled in the cosmopolitan religious center of Avignon, at the nearby Isle-sur-Sorgue in 1597. This initial effort was established by three key personages: César de Bus, founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, Françoise de Bermond (1572-1628), the first Superior, and Father Jean-Baptiste Romillon, S.J., Spiritual Director of the Company. The convent at Paris, founded by Madame de St. Beuve in 1612, also inspired the Pope to offer a larger sanction for all of the French dioceses. A formal Bull was promulgated in November 1617, and gave all Archbishops and Bishops of France authority to erect Ursuline Convents; the rapid expansion of the Order followed.⁷¹ With this ruling, the Church identified and relied upon a new group of young Ursuline-educated girls, to spread its word and secure its future.

⁶⁹ Baernstein, *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan*, 94-95; Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline: 1450-1650," 195.

⁷⁰ Zarri, "From Prophecy to Discipline: 1450-1650," 195.

⁷¹ Martin, *The Spirit of St. Angela*, 132; Ursulines, *Constitutions of the Parisian Congregation*, 12.

Table 1:
Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Italian Foundations
of the Order of Saint Ursula

Foundation	City/ Town with Year Established
1530s	Brescia, 1535
1560s	Milan, 1560 –1595 (multiple foundations) Cremona, 1566 Bergamo, 1567
1570s	Venice, 1575
1580s	Verona, 1580 Ferrara, 1584
1590s	Parma, ca. 1590
1600s	Naples, 1609
1620s	Modena, 1620
1640s	Piacenza, 1649
1650s	Virola Alghise, 1652
1690s	Velletri, 1696

Data compiled from Culpepper, ““Our Particular Cloister””; Ledóchowska, *Angela Merici*; and Turchini, *Sotto l’occhio*.

From the beginning, the French Ursuline mission was facilitated in part by the Jesuits. After a discussion of the ways the Jesuits assisted the Ursulines, an analysis of how the French companies differed from the Italian is offered. Following that, a close reading of *Reglemens, Constitutions*, and a *Coutumier (ou Directoire)* pertaining to the Parisian and Bordelaise congregations is offered in support of the argument, and to provide a description of the schools themselves, which have been little studied. Lastly, the writings on Antoinette Micolon, founder of the Ursulines at Clermont and Tulle are interpreted and shared for their expression of confidence and determination in carrying out the Ursuline mission in the face of interference from civil magistrates and family members of pupils who were pursuing goals at odds with Micolon's plan. The *Reglemens, Constitutions*, and *Coutumier (ou Directoire)*, which are from the Ursuline Archive of the College of New Rochelle, New York, have yet to be mined for their enormous value in elucidating the type of care and training secular girls in the day schools and boarding schools received in the seventeenth-century Ursuline convents.

The followers of St. Ignatius were instrumental in the spiritual direction, and support of many French Ursuline houses. For example, in 1609, Pierre Coton, S.J. initiated the foundation at Aix-en-Provence.⁷² His fellow in the Society of Jesus, Father Lancelot Marin voiced the following sentiments to a foundress of Ursuline convents and schools, in 1612, explaining his enthusiasm for girls' schools: "Our Father St. Ignatius has secured through our Company good education for boys. A girls' school would be a nursery garden of Christian women who would reform family life."⁷³ His explicit expression that girls would be the agents of societal regeneration is Marin's justification

⁷² Martin, *The Spirit of St. Angela*, 132.

⁷³ Martin, *The Spirit of St. Angela*, 150.

of their need for schooling. Reflecting upon his Order's mission to educate boys, Father Marin, S.J., looked to the Company of St. Ursula as a female order to do the same for girls. The end of their education, as he saw it, and as recorded in the *Ursuline Chronicles* (published in 1673) was to use it in creating a domestic family life filled with Christian virtue.

Our blessed Father Ignatius worked towards this end, directing our Company to the sound education of young boys. It would be a praiseworthy and useful work to establish a congregation into which one could transplant young girls, as though into a fertile soil, so that after being well instructed, they could leave to bring virtue into their families.⁷⁴

The Merician spirit of instilling virtue in young girls so that they would become sources of a wider edification was amenable to the Jesuit fathers.

Also, Father Binet, S.J. wrote the first biography (*ca.* 1636) of Anne de Xainctonge of the Dôle house, who relied heavily on Jesuit assistance and pedagogy. As a young woman speaking to her tutor and confessor Father Gentil, S.J., de Xainctonge said the following regarding Jesuit schools for boys, "'Sir, I am struck with the good fortune of those schoolmasters and I envy them because they employ their natural abilities to instruct boys in piety and to make of them true Christians. . . . But when I turn to pupils of my own sex I find that hitherto they have been very unfortunate in that no one has undertaken to bring them up piously as you do with boys."⁷⁵ When Anne de Xainctonge (1567-1621) established the Ursuline school for girls at Dôle in 1606, she adapted the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*, and continued to employ Jesuits as spiritual directors and confessors. A Jesuit report indicates their approval of Anne's endeavor, ". . . as to the education of girls which she proposes to undertake, it is certainly a despised

⁷⁴ Ursuline, *Les Chroniques de l'ordre des Ursulines*, 1:105.

occupation in the eyes of the world, but it is as clear as day that the call to so humble yet useful a work comes from the Spirit of God Who, loving humility, rejects the proud and gives His grace to the humble.”⁷⁶

Key differences between the Italian and French schools are discernible in a comparison of the seventeenth-century *Reglemens* and other documents with the earlier Borromean and Merician texts. The most important difference lies in the emphasis the French placed on teaching above all other works. In fact, other charitable works are altogether omitted from their *Reglemens* and *Constitutions*. The Introductory chapter of the Parisian *Constitutions* of 1623 describes the rationale behind the “fourth vow” of offering education which the French houses increasingly took to safeguard their identity as a teaching order. Written as a *Petition* to Pope Paul V by the founder of the Parisian Ursulines, Madame de St. Beuve, the text then became a part of the Bull *Inter Universa* before the pontiff’s death in 1621, which approved their status and mission. Teaching is construed as “higher in perfection” than any other work:

. . . the Bull of the establishment of this Monastery of Saint Ursula of Paris has willed that the Religious vow and promise to devote themselves to the instruction of young girls in the world, placing themselves for that end and aim in religion, hoping to continue in it, always performing for that object the charges and offices of the Monastery and applying themselves to the keeping of it with all their power and attention of their souls. This fourth vow is much higher in perfection in that it is conformed to the will and command of Jesus Christ, and regards the greatest good of souls, such as the preservation of purity, innocence and the increase of grace and virtue.⁷⁷

This fourth vow secured teaching as the rightful and honorable apostolate of the French Ursulines, and distanced it from its Italian predecessors that undertook teaching in

⁷⁵ Howard Clive Barnard, *The French Tradition in Education: Ramus to Mme. Necker de Saussure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 53.

⁷⁶ Barnard, *The French Tradition*, 62.

⁷⁷ Ursulines, *Constitutions of the Parisian Congregation*, 5-6.

addition to other charitable works. Another point should be made regarding Madame de St. Beuve's *Petition*. It offered a different interpretative schema, one which signaled an active identification with Christ as fellow teacher, in contrast to the Merician identification with repentant sinner and soldier of Christ (see above for the Merician allusion to Judith slaying Holofernes). This shift from an Order doing battle with heretical Protestant teachings, to an Order devoted to training young girls, is more than a shift in rhetorical strategies; it underscores a curtailing of broad general works in society to make the Ursuline mission more limited, but at the same time more focused on attending to female education.

Importance differences surface in other parts of the Italian *Regole* and the French *Constitutions* and *Reglemens*, too, showing that the most significant departure from the Italian regulations was the single-mindedness of the French mission. "The religious are obliged to employ themselves in instructing young girls, proposing this for their principal end and aim, disposing to this effect all their charges and offices, and devoting themselves to this with all their strength and concentration of mind, considering that by this means they fulfill their vocation."⁷⁸ The French Ursulines wanted to be educators of girls without distraction and they justified their limited function, which broke from the tradition of confraternities and cloistered nuns alike by appealing to the strongest role model available to Christians, the Christ.

While the following excerpt from the Parisian *Reglemens*, describes education as a form of charity in a way that reflects the Italian Ursuline philosophy, it can be contrasted with the position of the Ursulines of Bordeaux. The Parisians list catechism

⁷⁸ *Reglemens des Religieuses Ursulines de la Congrégation de Paris*, as cited in Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 72.

and conduct as one of a number of charitable works: “and they must in turn supervise the implementation of a specific teaching function, that of Christian instruction. [. . .]

According to the judgment of their confessor, all of them must carry on some charitable work, especially that of Christian instruction. In this let them be prompt in obeying superiors, and so conduct themselves that they will not fail to teach good conduct as well as good doctrine.”⁷⁹ The 1683 *Règles et Constitutions* of Bordeaux made education the one and only duty of the nuns: “She [The Mother of the Classes or Headmistress] will take care that the Mother Regents have no other responsibilities while in class, other than teaching the girls how to read, write and sew, and any other practice which they deem fit to teach their girls.”⁸⁰ The French Ursuline became a full-time teacher, and she was trusted with a flexible curriculum, in that the *Rule* gave each teacher the option of introducing other subjects or skills of their choice.

The ethos of a “charity worker” was fully replaced with a teaching agenda that counted conversion as its primary purpose. The *Instituti sodalitatis SS. Ursulae et sodalium virginum recens coactae compendium*, which was written by a Jesuit circa 1621, and published in 1625, records the visible effects of the French Ursulines as formidable agents of conversion because of their ability to teach. The Jesuit credits them with thousands of successful re-conversions; this aspect of their apostolate differs significantly from the Italian Ursuline experience that did not experience the spread of Protestantism in the same magnitude.

Many highly placed men, observing this institute and the remarkable good that it was accomplishing for the Church spoke out boldly saying that this institute

⁷⁹ Sister M. Monica, *Angela Merici and Her Teaching Idea*, 266.

⁸⁰ *Règles et Constitutions*, 208. “Elle prendra garde que les Meres Regentes n’ayent autre occupation pendant qu’elles sont en Classe, qu’a apprendre les filles à bien lire, & écrire, & coudre, ou telle autre occupation qu’elles doivent apprendre à leurs écolieres.”

responds to an urgent need of girls and women, especially in places infected by heresy. I who write these things, because of my concern for the greater glory of God, heard these credible men who had themselves worked for many years during troubled times of persecution and in an environment of heresy, affirm that, thanks to these Ursulines, some thousands of female heretics have returned to the faith while others who were hesitant, have been strengthened in their faith. No one can doubt that women also are capable of teaching the faith.⁸¹

Although limited to teaching girls, the Ursulines were gaining the sincere esteem of churchmen.

Turning to an examination of the curricula and daily life in the schools themselves, and beginning with the curriculum used by the Parisian Congregation according to the *Reglemens* of 1705, it is clear that the level of instruction that the Ursulines imparted was advanced. As part of the congregation, the boarding students of Rouen received daily lessons in reading (both in French and Latin), writing, spelling, arithmetic, religious instruction and Christian virtues, speech, posture and grace, wool working, silk, embroidery, as well as respect for authorities and one's peers.⁸² The day students followed an abbreviated curriculum which filled a four hour school day, included catechism and Christian virtues, reading, writing, and counting.⁸³ The Ursulines deemed it highly important to impart this instruction to their charges, at least as far back as 1640. The Parisian Congregation's *Constitution* printed in that year proclaimed, "The instruction of extern pupils is laid down as an essential Ursuline duty from which they may temporarily dispense themselves only in cases of utmost danger, as e.g. plague."⁸⁴

Its *Règles et Constitutions* record that the Bordeaux Congregation offered similar subjects and confirms the wide social range of pupils receiving tuition. Pope Paul V's

⁸¹ Le Bourgeois, *Anne de Xainctonge*, 248.

⁸² *Reglemens*, 31-34.

⁸³ *Reglemens*, 161,172.

⁸⁴ Ursulines, *Constitutions of the Parisian Congregation*, 15.

1618 *Bull* granted the convent at Bordeaux special provision to teach poorer girls and foreigners how to earn a living. Since it was felt that girls and women were “addicted” to luxurious commodities, this bad habit was to be stamped out by the Ursulines, too.

They teach them to abstain from luxury (to which the womanly sex is too much addicted); they train them in all kinds of skills that are upright and befitting their sex. In order to draw the poorer classes to the study of Christian doctrine, they teach poor girls and those from foreign lands those same skills with great care: skills by means of which these girls may be able to provide themselves with a living. And on feast days they instruct servant girls and poorer women who have heard little or nothing about their Faith, and teach them to know their Faith well.⁸⁵

Indeed, keeping the girls in orthodoxy and equipping them to provide for themselves were important functions of the school. This document signed by Paul V, gives the fullest expression of papal support. He announces that the Ursulines “have brought forth very great fruits up to the present time, and even greater fruits are hoped for in the future with God’s blessing. Now it is a fact which daily experience confirms, that many of the girls, if deprived of this opportunity of learning gratis, would remain in the darkness of ignorance.”⁸⁶ The “fruits” were educated female pupils, well-trained in the Catholic religion. As mentioned above, Paul V streamlined the process, enabling French bishops to readily establish Ursuline congregations and affiliated houses with day and boarding schools.⁸⁷

Ever mindful of class distinctions among their pupils, the Bordelaise *Règles et Constitutions* (1683) identified “idleness” as the most dangerous condition for girls of all stations. In line with what Vives, Erasmus, and More had urged, the Ursulines, too, stated their opposition to idleness and the evil it bred. “She [The Headmistress] will take

⁸⁵ Salvatori, “Bull of Paul V,” 205.

⁸⁶ Salvatori, “Bull of Paul V,” 206.

⁸⁷ Appendix I and II enumerate the French foundations and show the intensity with which they were established after Paul V’s Bulls, issued in 1617 and 1618.

great care that the girls learn a subject so that they may work and earn their keep, especially the poor ones and house maids, in order that they avoid idleness, mother of all vices.”⁸⁸ In this Rule, two distinct sets of ordinances for day students and boarders were operative at Bordeaux with the *caveat* that the sisters should “. . . nevertheless esteem and love them equally, as much as the dear Sisters, and consider the content of their hearts, not as their superiors, but as true mothers: having as a singular benefit from God to be responsible for this charge, which so resembles that undertaken by the Angels.”⁸⁹ Similarly, at Grenoble, the 1645 *Coutumier (Comportment Manual)*, written by Catherine de Jesus Ranquet (1602-1651), explicitly instructed the nuns of the Lyons Congregation, founded in 1623, to follow Christ’s example of accepting the poor and to keep class prejudices in check. “Never speak to them without a serious, modest, and religious demeanor, and without building a wall between themselves and the day students, on account of disgust for their poverty or condition, but to the contrary seeming very glad to teach them.”⁹⁰

While a “separate but equal” philosophy was recommended, the curriculum was not in fact the same for both groups. An example from the Bordelaise *Règles et Constitution* shows the day students were taught reading in French and Latin, the

⁸⁸ *Règles et Constitutions*, 207. “Elle doit avoir grand soin que les filles apprennent un métier pour gagner leur vie de leur travail, & sur tout aux pauvres, & aux filles de maison, pour éviter l’oysiveté, mere de tous vices.”

⁸⁹ *Règles et Constitutions*, 147. “. . . pourtant les estimeront & aymeront également, comme ses cheres espouses; et se reputeront interieurement en leurs coeurs, non comme leurs Superieures, mais comme leurs vrayes Meres: tenans pour un singulier benefice de Dieu d’ être employées à une charge, qui appartient aux Anges.”

⁹⁰ Ranquet, *Coutumier*, 173. *Article XII, Reglement des Maistresses des Externes. (Rules of the Mistresses of the Day Students.)* “Les Maistresses des externs auront un soin tout particulier de leur enseigner la doctrine Chrestienne, la pieté & bonnes moeurs par paroles & exemples, ne leur parlant jamais qu’avec un maintien grave, modeste & religieux, sans leur faire paroistre aucun dégoût de leur pauvreté & condition, mais au contraire qu’elles sont tres-aises de les instruire.”

catechism, and necessary religious prayers.⁹¹

[They] read in French, and in Latin, focusing on whichever the student excels in: at approximately nine o'clock, they will attend the Holy Mass, or say the Rosary, and ponder the mysteries of the life of our Lord: at ten o'clock they will take a meal, and during this meal they will be silent, in order to ensure they give their full attention to what is said: they will say grace, and when this is done, they may go to recreation. After reciting the Christian Doctrine, then writing, reading and studying . . .⁹²

The boarding students participated in these studies and observances, as well as in some notable additions in religious studies and needlework. The section of the *Règles et Constitution* below was addressed to the Mothers/School Mistresses who were in charge of the boarders specifically. The day program was enhanced in at least two identifiable ways compared to the boarding curriculum. The boarding program's religious dimension was substantially increased and intensified, and sewing was added. In general, all boarders engaged in a daily regimen of religious instruction "for the sake of their souls" as well as to become more accustomed to virtue and orthodoxy.

They will teach (the students) not only to read, write, and sew only good works: but also to say the divine Office, the rosary, to take exams of the conscience, participate in the morning discussion, in confession and communion, and will give instruction as to the proper method of silent and spoken prayer, as to remain in the presence of God.⁹³

Accustoming themselves to the convent's schedule also included observing a regular Silence.

⁹¹ The curriculum was virtually the same for the Lyon congregation. *Règles et Constitutions*, 201-202. *La règle de S. Augustin e constitutions pour les religieuses de Sainte Ursule.*, (Lyon: P. Valfray, 1724), 80-93.

⁹² *Règles et Constitutions*, 147. "[Elles les apprendront] à lire en François, & en Latin, selon qu'elles feront avancées: environ les neuf heures, elles entendront la sainte Messe, où elles diront leurs chapelets, en pensant à quelques mysteres de la vie de nôtre Seigneur: à dix heures elles dineront, & pendant le dîner, garderont le silence, afin de se render attentives à la lecture qui se fera: & à l'issuë diront grades, lesquelles étant dites, iront à la recreation. Après diront la Doctrine Chrétienne, puis écriront, liront, & travailleront . . ."

⁹³ *Règles et Constitutions*, 201-202. "Elles les enseigneront non seulement à lire, écrire, coudre à toutes fortes l'ouvrages: mais encore à dire l'Office, le chapelet, faire l'examen de conscience, le propos du matin

They will ensure that the girls accustom themselves to and enjoy one hour of silence, which will be at a consistent time (daily).⁹⁴

While the boarders were fully cloistered along with the Ursuline sisters, they were allowed to receive parental visits. The students were to share their newly gotten moral and spiritual lessons during those occasions.

In the event that parents should come to see them, the Mothers of the boarders shall bring the girls to the parlor and remain with them: if the parents wish to speak with their daughter alone, the Mothers will allow it.

They will teach their charges some topic of devotion to entertain those who have come to see them with edification.⁹⁵

Because of the separation from her parents, the Ursulines filled the duty of both teacher and guardian, showing each pupil how to care for herself and progress in the prescribed manual skills.

(The Mother) will teach the boarders how to dress, and care properly for their little needs: and do the same for their needlework and writing.

She will ensure that they have good books, and above all, that they know the Christian Doctrine by heart, and that they maintain their knowledge of the lives of the saints.⁹⁶

The Ursulines always entertained the prospect that some of the boarders might become nuns and prepared them for that possibility by requiring actions of renunciation and mortification of all of the resident pupils.

The Mother Superior of the boarders will train their young ladies in the mortification of their passions, and break their will: so that if God should call

à se bien confesser & communier: & leur donneront une methode pour les instruire en l'oraison jaculatoires, pour s'enstretenir en la presence de Dieu."

⁹⁴ *Règles et Constitutions*, 202-203. "Elles les accoutumeront de bonne heure, d'aymer le silence, & leur feront garder à certaine heure du jour."

⁹⁵ *Règles et Constitutions*, 203. "Lors que les parens les viendront voir, les meres des Pensionnaires les meneront au parloir, & n'iront jamais seules: si leurs parens veulent parler quelquefois en particulier aux filles. Les meres des Pensionnaires leur permettront. Elles leur enseigneront quelques propos de devotion, pour entretenir les personnes qui les viennent voir, avec edification."

⁹⁶ *Règles et Constitutions*, 203. "Elles sera apprendre les Pensionnaires à habiller, & à tenir proprement les petites besognes: & feront le meme de leurs coutures & écrire. Elles leur feront avoir de bons livres, & sur tout, qu'elle sachent la doctrine Chrétienne par coeur, & qu'elle les fasse entretenir souvent en la lecture des vies des Saints."

them to a greater perfection as nuns, they will have the instruction and the disposition to attain the perfection that vocation requires.⁹⁷

Additionally, the Mothers were ordered to guard the chastity of the boarders, for this supreme virtue was necessary for girls entering the religious life or the married state. Toward this end the Rule prescribed the following safeties, “they will dress them very modestly, not allowing them to expose their throat, nor to powder themselves: but to wear a high collar and a hood in place of powders and other such vanities, with which worldly girls might entertain themselves.”⁹⁸ The “full-time” mothering role that the Mistresses of the boarders embodied is crucial to understanding why the boarders received additional training in religion and sewing. Whereas the day students returned home to their natural mothers or guardians who instructed them in handiwork and the ways befitting a secular woman, the boarders were in the care of the Ursulines around the clock.

Alongside the detailed descriptions of how Ursulines mistresses were to behave toward the children, a few sisters stand out on account of their own writings. The autobiography of Antoinette Micolon describes the way in which she, as a foundress, managed to find success and acceptance in the community in spite of many obstacles and without much human assistance. In 1618, Micolon took her name in religion, Soeur Colombe de Saint-Espirit. She founded and served as superior of the houses in Clermont (part of the Parisian Congregation) and Tulle (which formed its own Congregation), and authored the Tulle *Constitutions* of 1631. In her text, Soeur Colombe is depicted as a divinely inspired agent in almost all of the vignettes about her life. First, with regard to

⁹⁷ *Règles et Constitutions*, 202. “Les meres des Pensionnaires exerceront leurs filles à la mortification de leurs passions, & rompre leur volonté: afin que si Dieu les appelle à plus grande perfection pour être Religieuses, elles ayent l’instruction & la disposition d’acquiescer la perfection, que cette vocation requiert.”

her own learning, she reported that she learned how to read and to speak French through an inner voice that she recognized as a divine gift. In 1614, Soeur Colombe organized her first large catechism lecture for local women. Instructing the peasant women in God's omniscience, she explained to them the need to work for their own salvation:

Her zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls led her to gather together in a large barnyard every Sunday fifty or sixty peasant women who came to the town to hear the holy Mass of the parish, after which they eagerly came to hear the good instructions that she gave them. And to make herself better heard, she raised herself up where, standing on a chair, she spoke to them in the local dialect and taught them the means of achieving their salvation and of reaching Heaven, teaching them to know the Creator of all things, telling them that God knew and saw all that they did and thought, and that he had the power to punish them.⁹⁹

The following year, Micolon opened the doors of a new Ursuline school at Clermont and continued giving lessons to the daughters of the parish. She claimed she founded and ran the convent schools as a testimony of God's love. Although she faced a fair share of trials, she succeeded in her aims. Two vivid examples are offered. In Part One of her work, Micolon shares her dislike of certain rules being imposed upon the order, such as the granting of a privilege of retaining some of one's own property for personal use. Prudently and patiently, she wrote, "I did not make my feelings known, thinking it wise to keep quiet. I was still patiently awaiting the bull, which I greatly desired, placing my trust in God for both spiritual and temporal matters."¹⁰⁰ But another matter arose that she felt compelled to challenge. The citizens of Tulle chose two of their gentlemen to be trustees of the new Ursuline congregation to collect tuition from the day students and boarders since the town had paid for establishing the Ursulines in Tulle.

⁹⁸ *Règles et Constitutions*, 204. " . . . elles habilleront fort modestement, & ne leur permettront de porter la gorge ouverte, n'y des poudres: mais un mouchoir de col, & autres vanitez, à quoy les mondains se plaisent."

⁹⁹ Lierheimer, *Micolon*, 71.

Micolon's recounts the situation highlighting her success in deflecting the secular authorities. Spirited by her faith in God, she spoke to these men with authority and persuasion, so that they left her to her business of running the convent and school:

. . . I saw that it would not be wise to allow laymen to be so closely involved in our business as to examine our students and collect money from our boarders. I appealed to God, invoking his help and his wisdom, and I decided then and there not to permit this, thinking that if the men were offended, God would be honored to uphold our rights, as I was insisting on something so just and reasonable. So I spoke to this man very persuasively, and told him once and for all that laymen should not be involved in our business, that there must be limits between us, that when I called on them for advice or help, I would be pleased if they would agree to help us, but if they wished to meddle on their own, that I would certainly stop them and that they would not be allowed to do this. That we were very capable of examining our students and receiving their pensions without them. That besides this I was no longer a minor, that I was over twenty-five, that I had no need for a tutor or guardian, but that I thanked him on my own behalf and that of the other nuns.¹⁰¹

Fortunately, for Micolon, the gentleman and Lieutenant General acquiesced. She describes their reactions,

This man seemed astonished to have a girl speak to him in this way. He began as did the others to fear me. But as for the Lieutenant General, he did not say a word, except that I was neither stupid nor foolish, and he loved me even more in God. I benefited from his goodwill when the Jesuit Fathers were established in Tulle, which happened the following year.¹⁰²

Immediately realizing that keeping laymen out of Ursuline affairs was in her interest, Micolon turned to God for the strength and eloquence to dismiss the Lieutenant General.

Similarly, in another instance she used her wit and position to prevent at least one girl from becoming enmeshed in worldly commitments. Pitted against the Governor of the province, Micolon protected a boarder whom the Governor was going to marry off to one of his servants. According to Micolon's account, the twelve-year-old boarder had a

¹⁰⁰ Lierheimer, *Micolon*, 95.

¹⁰¹ Lierheimer, *Micolon*, 105.

vocation to become an Ursuline. To thwart the Governor's efforts, Micolon claimed divine assistance and out and out deception:

I was determined to do this because in one of my prayers, I had a vision in which there appeared a procession of virgins dressed in white among whom was this little girl, and as the procession continued, the great Lord and Governor came to snatch her from the company of the other virgins. The good child struggled and cried out for me to help her, to rescue her from the clutches of the Governor and the other people in his company, which seemed to be made up of many powerful people. Then a voice inside me said: "Spare nothing to help her. I will be with you and will protect her and give her to you as a nun. Take this powerful man by the collar and deprive him of his prey. I will fight him and be your strength," [. . .] I heard these words in my heart: "Know that all this will come to pass. Hold fast, let nothing take you by surprise, I will be with you so that the world will not triumph over the brides of Jesus Christ."¹⁰³

Micolon hid the girl, deceived the governor, and arranged for her to take the veil without parental permission, Micolon won her crusade. Not surprisingly, it cost her in legal fees.

Micolon and other exceptional Superiors under the authority of their local bishops, and with assistance from their male spiritual directors, succeeded in bringing the Ursuline Order to almost every large town and city in France.¹⁰⁴ They created the largest network of schools for girls in seventeenth-century France which prompted their inclusion in the project of colonizing and "civilizing" New France.

The Quebec Schools. Before schools for girls were a commonplace in Europe, the Ursuline Order together with King Louis XIII, brought education for girls across the Atlantic to New France. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec City in the French colony of New France. The indigenous Naskapi-Montagnais people, currently known as the Innu, began an alliance with the French and aided them in their quest for

¹⁰² Lierheimer, *Micolon*, 105.

¹⁰³ Lierheimer, *Micolon*, 119.

¹⁰⁴ See Appendices I and II.

furs. The colonists of Quebec struggled through successive wars (with both Amerindian groups and the English) but, nonetheless, were able to establish the site as a permanent settlement in the seventeenth century. In a courageous act, three Ursuline women and a wealthy widow, Madame de la Peltrie, who agreed to join them, traveled to New France to educate both the “savages” and French girls living there.¹⁰⁵

Although this remote new community in Quebec was challenged by the wars, extreme poverty and famine, fires, an earthquake, and other devastating occurrences, the Ursulines succeeded in founding a day school for Amerindian girls and a boarding school for the colonists’ daughters.¹⁰⁶ Losing no time, Louis XIII issued the royal charter for the foundation that same year, 1639. By 1647, the foundation accepted a blend of the Parisian *Constitutions* with those of Bordeaux. Marie de L’Incarnation arranged for this amalgam because she had sisters from Paris and others from Bordeaux who had joined them in Quebec.¹⁰⁷ A decade after Marie’s death, they adopted the 1640 Parisian *Constitutions*. Many original documents were lost to fire, but a reprint of the 1647 edition of the *Constitutions et règlements*, as well as a collection of letters from one of the original Ursulines of the 1639 party, Marie de l’Incarnation Guyart (1599 – 1672),

¹⁰⁵ The three Ursulines by name were: Marie de L’Incarnation Guyart, Marie de St-Joseph de la Savonnières, and Cécile de Ste-Croix. For the Ursulines in New France, see Raymond Brodeur, *Femme, mystique et missionnaire: Marie Guyart de l’Incarnation: Tours, 1599 - Québec, 1672* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2001); Françoise Deroy-Pineau, *Marie de l’Incarnation: Marie Guyart, femme d’affaires, mystique, mère de la Nouvelle France, 1599-1672* (Paris: Éditions R. Laffont, 1989); Magnuson, *Education in New France*; Montreuil, *Three Came with Gifts: The Story of the First Hospital, The First School and The First Cloister in Canada and Their Heroic Founders; Letters of Marie de l’Incarnation*. Natalie Zemon Davis also includes Marie de l’Incarnation as one of the three figures she discusses in her book, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-century Lives* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) 63-139.

¹⁰⁶ Sister Mary of Jesus, “Ursulines,” (Marianopolis College, January 2005 1948 [cited April 25, 2005]); available from <http://www2.marianopolis.edu/quebechistory/encyclopedia/Ursulines-QuebecHistory.htm>. Lalemant, *Constitutions*, 107. Marie de L’Incarnation’s letters reveal that some Amerindian girls were boarders at times. The Ursulines of New France were flexible about letting the Amerindian pupils leave and return as they wished, unlike the French system.

¹⁰⁷ Ursulines, *Constitutions of the Parisian Congregation*, 16.

provide us with a vivid account of how the school operated.

The tight schedule described in the Quebec *Constitutions* mirrors the French Rules, as the segregation of Amerindian and French pupils recalls the bifurcation of poor day students and elite boarders in France. Amerindian and French pupils were assigned to different classrooms and had different lessons. Sometimes they shared mistresses, and their meals were taken apart.

The other mistress will teach the catechism to the savage girls at 4:00 PM or 4:30 PM. At 5:15 PM one savage girl will fetch dinner and at 5:30PM they will all be at table where they will observe the same order as they did in the morning. After which they will have recreation until 6:45 PM, then the Sister who is with them will have them pray and then the Mistress who was with them during the week will come to make them examine their consciences, and to say prayers to the French girls.¹⁰⁸

The letters of Marie de l'Incarnation Guyart offer a less institutional portrait of the school. After the death of her husband, Marie Guyart became an Ursuline at Tours and received her name in religion. Her writing recounts the famous parting moment when she chose to abandon her son for God. Although the young boy was distraught, in time he came to understand his mother's vocation; he, too, would later join the Church, and it was he who edited her letters and had them published. The following excerpt from one of the letters dated 1668 provides with an account of the school's responsibilities. While there were fewer students in the Quebec school than in the typical French house, the instruction was more intensive and the need was perceived as even more urgent for

¹⁰⁸ Marie-Emmanuel O.S.U. Chabot, "Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online: Marie de l'Incarnation," (University of Toronto, 2000 [cited May 6, 2008]); available from <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=34392#top>; Lalemant, *Constitutions*, 107. "L'autre maîtresse fera le catéchisme aux filles sauvages à 4 heures, or 4 heures et demi. A 5 heures et un quart une des séminaristes ira quérir le souper et à la demie toutes se mettront à table, où l'on observera le mesme ordre que le matin. Après quoy elles se recréeront jusques à six heures trios quarts, et lors celle qui est avec elles en récréation fera prier Dieu les séminaristes, et ensuite la maîtresses qui est semaine viendra pour faire faire l'examen et faire dire les prières aux filles françaises."

both French and Amerindian girls, some of whom were boarders and others, day-girls.

Mother Marie wrote,

Firstly, we have seven choir religious employed every day in the instruction of the French girls, not including two lay sisters who are for the day-girls. The Savage girls lodge and eat with the French girls, but it is necessary to have a special mistress for their instruction, and sometimes more, depending upon how many we have.¹⁰⁹

The extreme poverty of the convent had a direct effect on how many girls could be admitted. In the early years, some of the parents paid for their daughters' board and tuition in kind; entries from 1646 in Marie de l'Incarnation's records detail the items received for "Mademoiselle C's board":

13 January 3 1/2 cords of firewood.
6 March 4 cords of firewood.
13 March 1 pot of butter weighing 12 lbs.
13 November fat pig, 1 barrel of peas.
1 barrel of salted eel.¹¹⁰

It seems that paying voluntary pupils were being instructed alongside non-paying pupils and at least one prisoner.

I have just refused seven Algonkin seminarians to my great regret because we lack food, the officers having taken it all away for the King's troops, who were short. Never since we have been in Canada have we refused a single seminarian, despite our poverty, and the necessity of refusing these has caused me a very sensible mortification; but I had to submit and humble myself in our helplessness, which has even obliged us to return a few French girls to their parents. We are limited to sixteen French girls and three Savages, of whom two are Iroquois and one a captive to whom it is desired that we should teach the French tongue.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 335.

¹¹⁰ Marie-Emmanuel O.S.U. Chabot, "Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online: Marie de l'Incarnation," (University of Toronto, 2000 [cited May 6, 2008]); available from <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=34392#top>.

¹¹¹ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 335-336.

Mother Marie candidly admits that her convent-school is perhaps best used as a safe-house for unmarried French girls, who would likely be raped or seduced by the many men that inhabit the area.

Great care is taken in this country with the instruction of the French girls, and I can assure you that if there were no Ursulines they would be in continual danger for their salvation. The reason is that there are a great many men, and a father and mother who would not miss Mass on a feast-day or a Sunday are quite willing to leave their children at home with several men to watch over them. If there are girls, whatever age they may be, they are in evident danger, and experience shows they must be put in a place of safety.¹¹²

The intensity of her project because of limited time with students also distinguishes the challenges of the Ursuline mission in New France from Old France.

In a word, all I can say is that the girls in this country are for the most part more learned in several dangerous matters than those of France. Thirty girls give us more work in the boarding-school than sixty would in France. The day-girls give us a great deal also, but we do not watch over their habits as if they were confined. These girls are docile, they have good sense and they are firm in the good when they know it, but as some of them are only boarders for a little time, the mistresses must apply themselves strenuously to their education and must sometimes teach them in a single year reading, writing, calculating, the prayers, Christian habits, and all a girl should know.¹¹³

Describing the usual way Amerindian girls came to the Ursuline convent, Marie reflects upon the psychological consequences of indoctrination and colonization. She recognized their resistance as a natural reaction, and did not use force in her mission to “civilize” them:

In the case of Savage girls, we take them at all ages. It will happen that a Savage, either Christian or pagan, wishes to carry off a girl of his nation and keep her contrary to God's law; she is given to us, and we instruct her and watch over her till the Reverend Fathers come to take her away. Others are here only as birds of passage and remain with us only until they are sad, a thing the Savage nature cannot suffer; the moment they become sad, their parents take them away lest they die. We leave them free on this point, for we are more likely to win them

¹¹² *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 335-336.

¹¹³ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 336.

over in this way than by keeping them by force or entreaties. There are still others that go off by some whim or caprice; like squirrels, they climb our palisade, which is high as a wall, and go to run in the woods.¹¹⁴

Convinced that acculturation was God's will, she was pleased when some of the Amerindian girls joined the new French culture and became Christians.

Some persevere and we bring them up to be French; we then arrange their marriages and they do very well. One [Marie-Madeleine Chrestienne] was given to Monsieur [Pierre] Boucher, who has since been Governor of Trois Rivières. Others return to their Savage kinsmen; they speak French well and are skilled at reading and writing.¹¹⁵

With regard to Marie de l'Incarnation's excerpt describing how some girls ran away from the Ursuline school, it should be said that occasionally European pupils did the same. One former Ursuline pupil who was raised as a Catholic, Martha Elisabeth Zitter, wrote to her Catholic mother explaining why she deserted the convent to embrace "the true evangelical religion."¹¹⁶ She reminded her mother that at fourteen years old she had been forced to go to the Ursuline school at Erfurt, Germany, "to learn the French language and all sorts of maidenly virtues as well as respectable work."¹¹⁷ In a few short months, Zitter said that she was cajoled and then compelled to take the habit. On the books, at least, there was supposed to be a period of time between the novitiate and profession of vows. Zitter complained that she was denied this requisite period, "What types of tricks they used against this are not unknown to [you] my mother."¹¹⁸ By the time Zitter was twenty-two years old she had escaped and adopted a new creed.

¹¹⁴ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 335.

¹¹⁵ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 335-336.

¹¹⁶ "Martha Elisabeth Zitter to Her Mother, 1678," in *Convents Confront the Reformation: Catholic and Protestant Nuns in Germany*, ed. Merry Wiesner-Hanks (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996), 82-104, 83.

¹¹⁷ "Zitter to Her Mother, 1678," 84.

¹¹⁸ "Zitter to Her Mother, 1678," 84.

Inclusion of this testimony is important in presenting a balanced history of the Ursuline schools known primarily through formal decrees and institutional documents. Zitter's letter and the reports of Marie de l'Incarnation record the feelings of young girls who did not want to be inculcated with the Christian Doctrine of the Catholic Church or taught womanly skills and European virtues. These records of protests are slim; perhaps the numbers of young protesters is larger than the documentation suggests.

Returning to the Canadian context, the Ursulines in their role as teachers became agents of colonization, advocates of miscegenation, and missionaries. They assisted both Church and State in the early and uncertain years of the conquest of North America. No small feat, Marie de L'Incarnation composed Algonquin – French dictionaries, and an Iroquois catechism for the task. The curriculum included reading, grammar, Christian Doctrine and sacred history, practical arithmetic, penmanship, and needlework.¹¹⁹ The subjects strove to Christianize and acculturate the indigenous girls to French ways, and Marie de l'Incarnation was convinced that their bountiful reward would come after death.

Writing to her son, she shared her belief that although the Ursuline work was not visible to people in the way that other charitable services were, she was confident that her accomplishments were not unnoticed by God.

My very dear son, what we accomplish in this new Church is seen by God and not by men; our enclosure covers all, and it is difficult to speak of what one does not see. It is quite otherwise with the Hospitalière Mothers; the hospital being open and the good done there seen by everyone, their exemplary charities can be rightly praised. But ultimately they and we await recompense for our services from the One that penetrates into the most hidden places and sees as clearly in the shadows as in the light; that is sufficient for us.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 417.

¹²⁰ *Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*, 337.

In 1677, Bishop Laval wrote to Marie de l'Incarnation's son, too, highlighting her talents and good works on behalf of the Church and State. Apparently her work was visible to mere mortals. He recognized her as a founder and inspiration to the Church in New France.

Having chosen her to inaugurate the founding of the Ursulines in Canada, God had given her the plenitude of the spirit of her Rule. She was a perfect superior, an excellent mistress of novices; she was capable of carrying out all the works of religion. Her life, ordinary on the outside but very regular and animated by a completely divine inner nature, was a living rule for her entire community.¹²¹

The Bishop continues his description pointing to Marie de l'Incarnation's zeal in converting the Amerindians as one of her greatest gifts:

Her ardour for saving souls and especially for the conversion of the Indians was so great and so far-reaching, that it seemed as if she bore them all in her heart, and we do not doubt that she contributed greatly by her prayers to obtaining from God the blessings which He has showered on this new-born Church.¹²²

Bishop Laval's associate, the Vicar General of Quebec, Hierosme Lallemant, also supported the Ursulines and the girls' schooling they brought to New France.¹²³

The Ursuline presence in New France grew in 1697, when another convent arranged by Bishop Saint-Vallier in Trois-Rivières was established along the St. Lawrence River. This foundation was a school for French and Amerindian students, as well as a hospital for the town.¹²⁴ In 1727, the Ursuline mission expanded again to the

¹²¹ Chabot, "Marie de l'Incarnation."

¹²² As cited in Chabot, "Marie de l'Incarnation."

¹²³ Ursulines, *Constitutions of the Parisian Congregation*, 16.

¹²⁴ Magnuson, *Education in New France*, 152.

south, in the French colony of Louisiana, at New Orleans.¹²⁵ There they not only instructed children, but they also aided the sick and catechized slaves alongside female confraternity members.¹²⁶ The Ursulines soon greatly expanded the mission in the United States. Indeed, there were twenty-four Ursuline foundations in operation by 1878.¹²⁷

The Ursuline Accomplishment. The success and popularity of the Ursuline schools in Europe and New France can be given multiple explanations. First, the documents discussed in this chapter show that the Church, its leaders, the Ursulines themselves, and the communities faithfully believed that girls could be instructed in virtue and raised to be humble, obedient, chaste, thrifty household managers, mothers, and wives. Here, a parallelism is evident with the arguments of the advocates for female education reviewed in the previous chapter. The overlap, even a cross-fertilization of ideas between those theorists and the Ursuline mission is clearly evident. For example, the sixteenth-century Christian humanists Erasmus, More, and Vives all pronounced that a woman's learning was the strongest means to help her to avoid idleness, sin, and ignorance which in their estimation beget terrible consequences for the family and for society. Advocates trusted that a liberal education specializing in edifying religious books would create a virtuous female pupil who would bring society good rather than ill. In Paul V, the most powerful and illustrious supporter of the Ursulines in France, this

¹²⁵ For a recent history of the New Orleans Order, see Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834*.

¹²⁶ Emily Clark, "'By All the Conduct of Their Lives': A Laywomen's Confraternity in New Orleans, 1730-1744," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1997): 769-794, 774.

¹²⁷ H. de Leymont, *Madame de Sainte-Beuve et Les Ursulines de Paris, 1562 - 1630* (Lyon: Vitte & Perrussell, 1890).

sentiment is writ large: “. . . besides benefiting themselves, they would be of no small assistance to others as well; in fact, even their own parents and other older persons are likely to benefit from private family conversation with them and thus learn from them the dogmas of the Catholic Faith.”¹²⁸ The dogmas of the Catholic Faith were the bedrock of virtue (in Catholic lands).

This justification for women’s education might well have been the motto of the Catholic Reformation Church, and, the Church applied its argument wholesale. In other words, while Erasmus, More, and Vives argued for tutors and parental supervision, the Church sanctioned and instituted schools, confident that they could safeguard female chastity. What can be established is that the literature that advocated for female learning circulated across Europe, and enjoyed reprints in a multitude of vernacular languages. Surely the educated classes (those from which the Church authorities hailed) read the three most learned humanist sons of the Catholic world who wrote on the subject. Indeed, by 1559, Erasmus’ works were condemned to the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, but the well-known and well-respected manual by Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1524), was readily available and approved.

Another reason for the success of Ursuline schools revolved around the parental and societal perception that girls needed literacy and other practical skills for their careers as future wives, mothers, or nuns, and points to an argument for utility. As the decree from Virola attests, the community as a whole recognized the usefulness of the skills being imparted to their daughters, and even called the education a “necessity.” Furthermore, the Rule of Virola and other Ursuline schools and congregations state that the schools were meant to benefit the “whole region.” That benefit would be felt when

¹²⁸ Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V," 206.

the pupils returned to their families and put their newly acquired learning to work in the household, and in the domestic economy. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and needlework were indispensable to early modern women and their families. As society turned increasingly toward the written word, relying upon written records beyond memory of the spoken word, having the resource of literate members in the household would be welcome.

The Church, too, recognized *practical* reasons for education that would complement the religious aspects. Paul V's *Bull* of 1618 explained how the Ursulines aided the foreign and poorer families of Bordeaux by teaching them subjects beyond Christian Doctrine and reading, such as handiwork, and "in all kinds of skills that are upright and befitting their sex."¹²⁹ Skills acquired in the Ursuline classroom were no doubt used in a variety of ways, and after their schoolgirl years, the Ursuline *alumnae* may have continued to read and consult their prayer books and other morally edifying materials. Yet, it is not merely coincidental that as girls' schools became institutionalized and achieved a rising female literacy rate, book sales for novels, love poetry, and romances in the vernacular languages continued to rise. Clearly, once females were introduced to reading on this grand scale, they developed their own literary tastes that were identifiably different from the "good books" that the Ursuline mothers and other schoolmistresses supplied as primers. In the seventeenth century, then, thanks to the success of the Ursuline girls' schools and other schools that will be examined in the coming chapters, females joined the print culture market as consumers and critics. Booksellers noted the change.

Also, by enriching their daughters in religious knowledge, household

management skills, and literacy, parents likely entertained hopes of better marriage prospects for their daughters. Since only a minority of girls who completed an Ursuline education continued at the convent to become nuns, most girls were intended to marry. That bourgeois parents may have sought an education for their daughters by high-bred nuns is suggested by the novelist Aldous Huxley in his exploration of mass hysteria at an Ursuline convent, the *Devils of Loudun*.¹³⁰ Like many of the French Ursuline convents, the Ursulines of Loudon came from elite families and their lessons in the French language and etiquette were highly valued.¹³¹ Social mobility in *Ancien Régime* France was not easy. Parents seized upon this rare opportunity for their humble daughters to be exposed to people of noble blood, and learn to hold themselves and speak as *les grandes*. Founded in 1626, the convent at Loudon was part of the Bordeaux congregation. Aside from its notoriety for the demonic possession of some of the professed, it shared key similarities with other French houses. It is estimated that the percentage of noble Ursuline sisters rose steadily from 15% to 30% in twenty-five years.¹³² We will consider their interpretation of that rise below. But the statistic is illuminating because it suggests that the convent at Loudon was certainly not alone in the aristocratic component of its membership. Parents in other cities and towns would have access to noble teachers for their daughters as well, a fact that may have enhanced enrollment and might well partially explain a parent's willingness to release a child from the usual chores in the home. The prospect of social betterment and overall family improvement could be a powerful motivating force.

¹²⁹ Ursulines, *Constitutions of the Parisian Congregation*, 205.

¹³⁰ Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudon* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1996).

¹³¹ Moshe Sluhovsky, "The Devil in the Convent," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 5 (2002); Zarri, "Time, Space and Women's Lives," 187.

Also, the making of the Ursuline Order with their attendant schools has internal as well as external explanations. The external explanations are the series of permissions and decrees issued by the Church and municipalities. The internal explanation, meaning the reasons young women had for joining the Order, also needs to be explored. The availability of willing teachers made it possible for girls' schooling to proceed. In the case of the early Italian schools, an ample number of lay women accepted the job. Zarri has written most convincingly on the subject, finding that this "Third Way," a celibate and religious life in the world which required no dowry, suited the budgets and disposition of many young women and their families in early modern northern Italy.¹³³ By 1700 in France, the number of Ursulines exceeded 10,000.¹³⁴

Rapley and Jones explore the internal reasons for the rise in convent education. Their argument uses the model of "contagion" as an explanatory framework to understand the rise of Ursuline convents (schools) and nuns in seventeenth-century France and is explained and critiqued here. While it may be an intriguing metaphor, the passivity of the model does not entirely capture the active phenomenon of the Ursuline foundations, professions, and enrollment. "The Ursuline movement seems to have spread [. . .] quickly and nationally by structural equivalence and, then, more slowly and locally by both cohesion and structural equivalence."¹³⁵ By "structural equivalence" the authors mean when people have similar backgrounds but do not know one another, and in the contagion model, they may use "emulation" of "known actions" to avoid "fear of being

¹³² Jones and Rapley, "Behavioral Contagion," 510.

¹³³ Zarri, "Time, Space and Women's Lives," 187.

¹³⁴ Rapley, *The Dévotes*, 48.

¹³⁵ Jones and Rapley, "Behavioral Contagion," 514.

different" or "losing caste."¹³⁶ The authors use the term "cohesion" to explain how people of similar backgrounds who know each other through "interpersonal circumstances or relations" influence each other's decisions and actions. Cohesion is exclusively a "local phenomenon," while structural equivalence is not. In both of these modes of contagion, emulation of one's peers is operative. For these and other reasons, French parents of the seventeenth century embraced the Ursulines, betraying a very human tendency to follow and become part of a trend.

Yet this model aside, which envisions an impersonal process at work, it is important to recall the pioneering actions of the early female Ursuline leadership. With little knowledge of other convents, many foundresses, like Micolon, created new institutions not because distant peers were doing the same, but because of the promise of a meaningful vocation and the opportunity to save souls. Those goals were operative for Marie de l'Incarnation. Although she was first an Ursuline at Tours, which was part of the Bordeaux congregation, her mission to Quebec was altogether without precedent. Thus, imitation and "contagion," alone, do not fit the individual calls to religion, inner strength, and creativity that moved the thousands of women who became Ursuline sisters. Begun in sixteenth-century Italy, the Order's most impressive achievements in the schooling of girls took place in seventeenth-century France, where both the poorest *fille* and the future Sun King's second wife, Madame de Maintenon, were educated by this omnipresent teaching order. No French town of importance was without an Ursuline school. Ursuline schoolmistresses offered an education that promised a firm foundation in the Catholic faith supplemented by useful skills.

¹³⁶ Jones and Rapley, "Behavioral Contagion," 513.

Certainly, the religious context within which the Order was formed offers a compelling partial explanation, and the schools should be seen as an initiative of the Counter-Reformation. An ecclesiastical imperative for educating girls not only for their spiritual and moral well-being, but for the health and future of Catholic Europe is evident.¹³⁷ From its sixteenth-century inception, Merici, Borromeo, and the other sponsoring religious authorities relied upon schools for girls to build up orthodoxy in order to nullify the Protestant threat. In part, the schools were orchestrated by the Church to counter the new move by Protestants to educate girls in basic literacy, hoping that Catholic girls would not fall prey to Protestant proselytizers. By the seventeenth century, the Church's desire for orthodox religious instruction by the Ursulines sisters had not diminished, but had increased, seemingly corresponding to Protestantism's staying power. Indeed, the widespread establishment of Ursuline schools signals a movement concerned with imparting orthodoxy to girls (for their own sake and in their roles as future wives and mothers). The advent of these schools shows that an acceptance of female religious education and literacy was overcome by the highest echelons of the Church in an effort to save itself. As discussed above, a new appreciation for girls' capacity for learning and cultural transmission was articulated by the Pope himself.¹³⁸ Fostering Ursuline schools was more than just suggested to bishops, first Borromeo ordered their foundation, and then the *carte blanche* approbation Paul V granted to the

¹³⁷ Other teaching orders for girls' were founded in seventeenth-century France to contribute to this Catholic Reformation initiative. While not as extensive as the Ursuline network of schools, these Orders were pioneers in girls' education alongside of the Ursulines: The Filles de Notre-Dame, founded in 1607 by Michel de Montaigne's niece, Jeanne de Lestonnac (1556-1640) with Jesuit assistance; Congregation de Notre-Dame, founded in the early seventeenth century by Alix Le Clerc (1576-1622) with Jesuit assistance, especially from Pierre Fourier, S.J. (1565-1640); smaller groups called the Daughters of Charity, the Daughters of the Cross, the Holy Family also instructed girls. For a critical study of these Orders, see Rapley, *The Dévotes*.

¹³⁸ Salvatori, "Bull of Paul V."

French bishops in 1617/18, furthered the schools proliferation. The Pope streamlined the process for them to facilitate his will and harness the potential of the girls and women in the model schools of the Order of St. Ursula. The Pope's message was heeded and the schools were founded *en masse*.¹³⁹

The following encounter, years later in 1685, provides an example of an informal report confirming another pope's approval of the Ursuline Order: Pope Innocent XI. The Pontiff granted an audience to an Ursuline nun, Anne Thècle, who was neither a foundress nor a superior. Thècle hailed from Flanders and made the long journey to Rome as a pilgrim and an advocate of the instruction her congregation was providing to girls. Her account of their meeting shows her readiness to assure the Pope of the school's role in preparing a proper Catholic soul without "the usual feminine trappings" of vanity. The encounter demonstrates Innocent XI's openness to discuss and support the Ursuline project.

I approached -- His Holiness with one of my little harangues in Italian, and presented him a memorial, which the Holy Father received with great kindness, promising to favor us. His Most Serene Highness had been informed of several aspects of our institute, and I said to the Holy Father that the goal of our institute is to attend to our perfection and to the salvation of the following, our boarders and schoolgirls and various other things for their instruction, and that we do not allow any vanity in our boarders. After each thing that I said, His Holiness responded 'This is good.'¹⁴⁰

Certainly, Sister Anne's "harangue" was less a lecture to the Pope about Ursuline

¹³⁹ See Appendices I and II.

¹⁴⁰ Jules Loridan, *Les voyages à Rome des Ursulines de Flandre, 1684-1732* (Tours: Alfred Cattier, 1895), 107. From Sister Anne Thècle's letter to her Superior at the Convent in Flanders. (1685) "Je me suis approchée de nouveau de Sa Sainteté pour lui faire ma petite harangue en italien, et lui ai présenté un memorial, que le Saint-Père a reçu avec une bénignité très grande et en promettant de nous favoriser. Son Altesse Sérénissime l'avait informé de plusieurs choses de notre institut, et moi j'ai dit au Saint-Père que le but de notre institut est de vaquer à notre perfection et au salut du prochain, que nos pensionnaires et

innovation and more a diplomatic request for a continuance of his favor in their joint pursuit of orthodoxy among the laity. Popes, bishops, cardinals, Jesuits, and other male figures in the Church enlisted female help because they recognize the female capacity for education, saw them as worthy Christians deserving of edifying Christian education, and, to be sure, they needed orthodox girls for the future health of the Church.

To conclude this section on the Ursuline educative mission, the founder of this extraordinary effort, Merici, was beatified in 1768, and canonized in 1807. Meantime, the schools flourished throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century and endured suppression under the French Revolution and Napoleon. With other bouts of suppression in Germany during nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf*, modernity would witness the Ursulines in a different phase, as a global order with schools in every corner of the world.¹⁴¹ As shown in this chapter, their global expansion began in North America, but also reached South America and the Dutch East Indies. By 1878, South America had four foundations in operation, and the Dutch East Indies had three.¹⁴² Presently, the Company is active in education globally, with foundations in Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroun, Canada, Congo, England, Eritea, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Madagascar, Malta, Switzerland, and the United States of America.¹⁴³ Continuing in its tradition to offer women more educational opportunity, in 1904, the first Catholic college for women was founded by the Ursuline Order in New Rochelle, New York.

écolières et diverses autres choses pour leur instruction, et que nous ne permettons aucune vanité à nos pensionnaires. A chaque chose que je disais, Sa Sainteté répondait toujours: 'Voilà qui est bon.'

¹⁴¹ See Appendix III.

¹⁴² See Appendix III.

The Port-Royal Schools: Port-Royal des Champs and Port-Royal de Paris

The two schools for girls run by the Port-Royal nuns resembled the Ursuline model as institutions dedicated to spiritual and moral edification, but because Port-Royal had its own interpretation of righteous belief, their history is much different. This Jansenist stronghold served as a site of resistance to the orthodox Catholic Church and Louis XIV in the seventeenth century. Despite immense popularity for its admirable course of studies and religious discipline, the two girls' schools along with the entire Port-Royal endeavor (convents, seminaries, boys' schools), ultimately, could not resist the King's authority and disapproval of their "heretical" doctrines.

Approximately eighteen miles from Paris, long before Angela Merici conceived of the Ursuline Order, the Abbey at Port-Royal des Champs was founded in 1204, under the supervision of the Bishop of Paris, Eudes De Sully.¹⁴⁴ The funds came from Mathilde De Garlande, whose husband was a knight in the fourth crusade. Prayers for her husband's life, and the education of girls became the nuns' chief occupation.

The community deserved a pious reputation up until the sixteenth century, when its lack of discipline and devotion marked it as a lax boarding house for noble daughters.

¹⁴³ See Appendix III.

¹⁴⁴ Building on the earlier literature on the Port-Royalists, notable late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century studies on the women of this famous abbey have been published. See Auchincloss, *False Dawn: Women in the Age of the Sun King*; Barnard, *The Little Schools*; Felix Cadet, *Port-Royal Education* (New York: Scribner, 1898); Marie A. Conn, *Noble Daughters: Unheralded Women in Western Christianity, 13th to 18th Centuries* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century*

In 1602, a young girl of the prominent Arnauld family was appointed abbess of Port-Royal. At first, Jacqueline-Marie Arnauld (1591- 1661) let things continue in their relaxed and worldly way, but within a few years Arnauld passionately wanted sincere reform at the convent. She took the name Mother Angelique and set about instituting a cloistered environment for the ten nuns in 1608, at the age of seventeen.¹⁴⁵

From this point forward, Angelique called for nothing less than religious perfection in herself and the sisters; as such Port-Royal emerged as a model convent in the mid-seventeenth century, and although Jansenist in its brand of theology, had marked similarities with the French Ursuline convents and schools. However, because of their interpretation of doctrine, they, as Jansenists, were silenced. During the 1620s, Angelique became acquainted with Jean Du Vergier De Hauranne, Abbé De Saint-Cyran (1581-1643), a Jansenist theologian.¹⁴⁶ Saint-Cyran became the confessor for the nuns of Port-Royal in 1635, and he founded the boys' schools between 1637-1638. At this time, Saint-Cyran was arrested at the command of Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII's chief minister. The Port-Royal community, male and female, was embroiled in a theological controversy that would hamper their work over the next four decades, and ultimately suppress their community. In short, the Port-Royalists accepted Cornelius Jansen's doctrines of original sin and grace, which were condemned as heretical by the Catholic Church in 1643, by Innocent X's *Cum occasione* papal bull. However, over the course of the century, in the midst of persecution for the Abbey's association with Jansenism, hundreds of girls received a Port-Royal education.

France (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Hammond, *Fragmentary Voices*; Weaver, *The Evolution of the Reform of Port-Royal*.

¹⁴⁵ Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 10.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, before the clash with the King, Angelique's reputation for reform grew, and she was asked to visit other nunneries and inspire them to reform also.¹⁴⁷ To help her fulfill her duties, her sister Agnes (1593-1671), who was also devoted to serving God, was made co-abbess at Port-Royal. From 1608-1626, Port-Royal des Champs attracted many postulants, but the convent was plagued with illness. From 1624 – 1626, fifteen of the eighty nuns of the community died, likely because of a tainted water supply.¹⁴⁸ Angelique and Agnes' widowed mother, Catherine Arnauld, assisted the nuns in acquiring a more salubrious location. She purchased a building in Paris for them in 1626, on the rue de la Bourbe, which is now known as the Boulevard de Port-Royal. From 1626-1648, the Paris location was the only one with a girls' school. From 1648-1661, Port-Royal des Champs re-opened its girls' school, and the Paris school continued as well.

Jacqueline Pascal's *A Rule for Children* (1657) and Mother Agnes' *Constitutions du Monastère de Port-Royal* (1665), offer testimony about the perceived function of education, and what kind of material was deemed appropriate for the students. First, a consideration of the admissions criteria and the schools' mission is offered. Following that, a close look at the schedule, curriculum, and type of supervision at the schools shows the seriousness of the Port-Royalists to instill in their pupils the Christian virtues whether or not they chose to continue their adult lives in the convent.

In order to enroll at either site, prospective students, under ten years of age, had to have a kind of parental manumission, as the *Constitutions* state: "only those shall be received whose parents are willing that they should be instructed in this manner and offer

¹⁴⁷ M.A. Schimmelpennick, *Select Memoirs of Port Royal* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1858), 102.

them to God without caring whether they are to become nuns or remain in the world, as it may please God."¹⁴⁹ Parents were allowed to visit their daughters occasionally in supervised meetings in the reception room; the sisters were to refrain from excessive praise or any type of criticism, unless the Abbess expressly directed a sister to make such remarks.¹⁵⁰ For orphaned or motherless girls, the usual age of acceptance, four or five years, was relaxed, so that the nuns were raising three year olds besides the older children. The pupils came from a range of social conditions, of which Mother Agnes recognized and addressed in a Merician fashion; as part of the rule for the school, the sisters were to treat "almost all of them alike so far as is consistent with discretion," in this way they would "obviate the inequality that exists among their parents."¹⁵¹ While the daughters of the Duc De Luynes boarded at the school, so too did the daughters of a notary, a merchant, and indeed, sometimes, the daughters of destitute parents.¹⁵² Fees were on a sliding scale, as the convents were very well-endowed.¹⁵³

The students were expected to stay for more than one year, because any amount of time less than a year "is not sufficient to form them in good morals according to the rules of Christianity."¹⁵⁴ Ideally, the nuns hoped the pupils would stay until they reached sixteen years old, if they were going to return to the world, and seventeen or eighteen years old, if they were to become postulants and novices to the order. Specifically the *Constitutions* called for the admission of twelve girls under ten years, who were invited to remain at the convent school until sixteen or eighteen years of age, "provided they are

¹⁴⁸ Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 192.

¹⁵⁰ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 195.

¹⁵¹ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 196.

¹⁵² Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 168.

¹⁵³ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 193.

¹⁵⁴ Schimmelpennick, *Memoirs*, 190.

tractable and well-behaved and that they take no liberties and profit by the instruction which is given them, abounding more and more in the Christian virtues.”¹⁵⁵ As the girls reached their tenth year, new young pupils were admitted to fill their spaces. It is unclear if the enrollment was enlarged or not, before the schools’ demise in 1679. In the *Select Memoirs of Port Royal*, Schimmelpennick claims that by the mid-seventeenth century the girls’ schools had a combined enrollment of over 300 pupils.¹⁵⁶ This information is not corroborated in any other source, and an enlarged enrollment is not alluded to in Mother Agnes’ *Constitutions*. Unfortunately, the number of pupils cannot be ascertained. The only other pupils that the convent accepted were orphans; their admission was considered separately, viewed as important charitable service because “these little orphans are often badly brought up, having no mother to look after them.”¹⁵⁷

The educational endeavor of the Port-Royal girls’ schools was an anomaly for the times. The mission was for charitable service and for the love of God as a kind of penance for the teachers (nuns), not for France or the established Church. In Jacqueline Pascal’s *A Rule for Children*, the author claims that their service has no limit because the pupils are “children of God” – “On many different occasions we should let them see that there is no limit to our desire to serve them and that we do so with real affection and fervor, because they are children of God.”¹⁵⁸ In this spirit, the nuns were commanded to have “great affection” and “great devotion,” and simultaneously maintain a “complete detachment.”¹⁵⁹ At first glance, the directive seems an impossible combination because detachment would negate devotion and affection, but since the nuns were to devote

¹⁵⁵ Arnauld, “Constitutions,” 193.

¹⁵⁶ Schimmelpennick, *Memoirs*, 166.

¹⁵⁷ Arnauld, “Constitutions,” 193.

¹⁵⁸ Pascal, *A Rule*, 97. Subsequent references to this text are referred to in the text as (*A Rule*, 00).

themselves to the students, for the love of God, and not because of the girls' charms or abilities, one can immediately see the logic involved. The *Constitutions* called for a "sacrifice" on the part of the nuns in charge of the children: the Mistresses were not to "show any tenderness they may feel for them, and they will make a sacrifice of it to God. . ."¹⁶⁰ Their action, supervision, and vigilance with the children, while it may not be called "tender," may be better characterized as caring and thorough.

The students were monitored around the clock; a sister slept in the same room to ensure tranquility and safety during the night. "In short, continual vigilance should be exercised so that, as far as possible, they may not lead each other astray; for that, as a rule, is what corrupts young people."¹⁶¹ Morality and Christian virtue, then, was the mainstay of student life at Port-Royal. Pascal's *Rule* explains her philosophy concerning the continual surveillance in a more affectionate manner, "I also think that our continual surveillance should be done with a certain gentleness and trust, which helps them believe that we love them and that we stay with them only to give them proper company." (*A Rule*, 101) Checking on each girl at bed-time, also showed the children that the sisters cared if they were warm enough for the night. (*A Rule*, 88)

With regard to their studies, the curriculum included reading, writing (transcription and composition), catechism, needlework, basic arithmetic, singing in the choir and etiquette.¹⁶² The schools were also known for their insistence on perfect spoken French. The playwright, Jean Baptiste Racine (1639-1699) in his history of Port-Royal wrote admiringly of the girls' schools:

¹⁵⁹ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 197.

¹⁶⁰ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 198.

¹⁶¹ Arnauld, "Constitutions," 196.

¹⁶² Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 173, 175, 187.

But it was not enough to instruct them in religion; immense care was also taken to develop their intelligence and reasoning powers, and endeavor was made to render them equally well fitted to become one day either perfect nuns or excellent wives and mothers.¹⁶³

The daily schedule was rigorous for all ages, with an emphasis on religion, silence, and study.¹⁶⁴ The girls rose between 4:00 AM and 5:00 AM, depending on their age. Prayers and silence in the bed chamber were followed by simple housekeeping like making the beds. After breakfast concluded at 7:30 AM, lessons and Scripture reading began. At 8:30 AM, some of the girls went to Mass, after which there was a writing lesson, and a singing lesson. Before their midday meal, there was an opportunity for open confession. An hour of recreation began the afternoon, and lessons ensued until the time for catechism, which was between 2:30 and 3:00 PM. The younger girls enjoyed *goûter* (snack) at 3:30 PM, and everyone said Vespers after which the time was spent reading until supper at 6:00 PM. A final hour of recreation was permitted, followed by night prayers, with every girl in bed by 8:15 PM. Arithmetic was taught on feast days; after the older pupils received their lessons, they taught the youngest ones the basic math. (*A Rule*, 96)

Far and away, Pascal confides, singing is the favorite subject at Port-Royal, “The pupils never tire of learning more and more about the art of singing.” (*A Rule*, 96) While recreation was scheduled twice a day, it seems that many of the older pupils preferred to work at the needle rather than play knucklebones or shuttlecock with the little ones. (*A Rule*, 82) Frequent warnings about vice and idleness seemed to have informed this choice. Pascal shares their method of training the youngest girls to keep busy: “Even

¹⁶³ As cited in Barnard, ed., *Port-Royalists*, 34.

¹⁶⁴ According to the “Appendix of Time-Tables,” Barnard, ed., *Port-Royalists*, 241.

when the pupils are very young, say four or five years old, we should not let them pass the time with nothing to do.” (*A Rule*, 101) First, the mistress should give the child some reading for fifteen minutes or so, then some needlework with the promise of play as a reward. If, however, the child lapses and fails to read or work the needle, the school mistress was not to reprimand the child, but wait until the scheduled work was supposed to be completed, and then explain to the child that she had to begin again and actually do the reading or work, before she could play. Pascal found that this method taught the children very quickly how to stay focused on their reading and work. (*A Rule*, 102)

Several times a month, each student met with the head school mistress for a one-to-one conference. “The greatest help in improving their conduct of the pupils is our custom of having private conversations with them,” Pascal writes. (*A Rule*, 105) These serious sessions focused on discussing the students’ faults and helping them to self-examine. Often, the students were assigned “reparations” for their minor and major faults. Pascal shares the variety of penances the students underwent: asking for forgiveness, begging the community for its prayers, wearing a card that listed the transgression, wearing different clothing, omitting the veil, deprivation of church services, etc. (*A Rule*, 108)

Pascal recognized the risk of making the pupils weary with too much religion: “Nonetheless, we try hard to avoid excess in this area. Given their youth, we do not try to make them too spiritual, unless we recognize that this comes from God.” (*A Rule*, 75) For those destined to return to the world, ever-vigilant about the safety of the pupils’ souls, Pascal said, “We show them just what they should avoid when and if they return to the secular world.” (*A Rule*, 75) In terms of substantive lessons on household

management or child-rearing, the pupils did not receive anything of the sort. What they were steeped in was Saint-Cyran's controversial *Catechism*, reading, writing, self-examination, and a deep understanding of the Mass, the religious calendar, and virtually all aspects of Catholicism. For girls returning to the world, after approximately ten – twelve years of convent life, the assumption was that they would make their new households centers of devout and pious practice for family, friends, and dependents.

Whether the pupils ultimately remained in the convent or left it in their late adolescence, they merited a high reputation for their literacy, French language skills, religious practices, and etiquette. It is impossible to know how directly the conflict between Port-Royal and religious and civil authorities regarding Jansenism, affected the children. From Pascal's writing, it is clear that the Port-Royalist conception of pre-destination (which was not dissimilar to Calvinism) was discussed in a minimalist way, so as not to "burden" the children. (*A Rule*, 104) Some of the Port-Royalist methods in education could have been attempts to blur the distinction between religious and lay people, like confession and keeping the monastic schedule.¹⁶⁵ However, the Ursuline and Institute of Mary schools also involved the students in a monastic or quasi-monastic daily schedule, and it is debatable as to whether this practice was aimed to blur any distinction or simply to mold the pupils in piety.

No doubt, because Port-Royal was neither a willing partner of Church or State, it was consistently under scrutiny and pressure from the 1650s on, and the persecutions intensified in 1661, when the girls' schools were first closed. Port-Royal was permitted to reopen in 1669, on account of their powerful protector, the Duchess de Longueville, who was Louis XIV's cousin. Toleration for the convent lasted a decade more, until the

Duchess' death in 1679.¹⁶⁶ Then, the girls' schools were permanently closed and the nuns were dispersed¹⁶⁷

On the topic of the Jansenists, Louis XIV's second wife, Madame de Maintenon, spoke to her female pupils and warned them about religious "innovations": "The Jansenists have written defamatory letters, full of bitterness, and animosity, and falsehoods, against the Jesuits, because this order has always been the firmest in denouncing these religious innovations."¹⁶⁸ From the Jansenist perspective, and that of the Port-Royalists', their religious life was not innovative. The education received by the girls at Port-Royal de Paris and des Champs, while it included studying the *Letters of Saint-Cyran*, and works selected by Antoine Arnauld (brother to Mothers Jacqueline and Agnes, and a fellow Jansenist), on the whole, its curriculum was steeped in conventional religious works that were an essential part of the accepted Catholic canon. (*A Rule*, 116) After the suppression of the schools in 1679, Louis XIV ordered the destruction of the Abbey of Port-Royal des Champs, even down to its cemetery in 1709. He was convinced that the brand of Catholicism the Port-Royalists were practicing and teaching was democratizing and subversive. (*A Rule*, 8).

The School at Saint-Cyr: the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis

The Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr, in contrast to Port-Royal, was a pet project for Louis XIV and his second wife, designed to strengthen the nobility's

¹⁶⁵ As John Conley argues in the Introduction to Pascal, *A Rule*, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 169, 254.

¹⁶⁷ Barnard, *The Little Schools*, 169, 254.

¹⁶⁸ Maintenon, *Dialogues and Addresses*, 128.

reliance on the monarch. The school operated contemporaneously with Port-Royal, and was founded by Françoise d'Aubigné, who became known as Madame de Maintenon (1635-1719). She was the daughter of a repeat felon who also abandoned his family, Constant d'Aubigné. His dishonor did not prevent Maintenon's rise from poverty to the inner royal circle; indeed, she became Louis XIV's second wife from 1683- 1715 and the founder of the Maison Royale de Saint-Louis at Saint-Cyr. Catering to noble girls of "poor" families, the education offered at Saint-Cyr aimed to mold future aristocratic wives and mothers in such a way that they would not be ignorant, unorthodox, or disloyal to France or the Catholic Church. By and large, Maintenon was praised for her successful institution, and emulated by other courts in Europe. Schools for girls now not only served the Church, but also the State.

The King met Maintenon in her capacity as tutor for his illegitimate children, born of Madame de Montespan. In 1673, the Sun King legitimized the children and brought them to the court, along with Maintenon. Soon after, Maintenon was rewarded with wealth and an aristocratic title, and she became a force at the court in her own right.¹⁶⁹ After the queen, Maria Teresa of Austria, died in July 1683, Louis and Maintenon arranged to be married secretly on October 8. Maintenon's influence of Louis has been explored in several works; it has been shown that she was involved in matters of state and religion.¹⁷⁰ Most prominently, in her newly created school for poor noble girls, Maintenon pursued a religious and political agenda that is examined herein. Her guiding philosophy in education, ultimately called for orthodoxy and moderation in religion, and

¹⁶⁹ Maintenon, *Dialogues and Addresses*, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Charlotte Haldane, *Madame de Maintenon: Uncrowned Queen of France* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); Alfred Rosset, *Madame de Maintenon et la revocation de l'édit de Nantes* (Audincourt: C. Jacot, 1897).

absolute allegiance to the monarch for the greater good, quite different from the Port-Royalists she abhorred.

The Ursuline nuns of Rue Saint-Jacques in Paris converted and educated Maintenon as a girl, who had been raised as a Protestant by her aunt. At the Ursuline convent, as a boarder, Maintenon became a sincerely pious Catholic. Interestingly, she did not replicate the Ursuline program for her own girls' school. In 1686, when she and the King founded the school at Saint-Cyr, Maintenon enacted her own unique vision for the program. The education was designed for noble (secular) girls combining religious instruction with academic, artistic, and practical domestic skills, while openly fostering a deep attachment to the Crown in each pupil. A history of the school has yet to be written in English; with surviving letters, pedagogical materials, as well as contemporary accounts of Maintenon and Saint-Cyr, a thorough analysis of the school and its goals is offered here.

As a precursor to Saint-Cyr, in 1682, Maintenon was involved with a small charity school at Rueil, which then moved to Noisy-le-Sec in 1684.¹⁷¹ Madame de Brinon, an Ursuline sister, was the head-mistress there, and later was installed by Maintenon at Saint-Cyr in the same position. By 1686, Maintenon successfully persuaded her husband to begin a boarding school for 250 poor noble girls. As announced in the *Edit d'établissement de la Communauté de Saint-Louis établie à Saint-Cyr* (Edict establishing the Community of Saint-Louis founded at Saint-Cyr), the stated goal of the school was to strengthen the bonds between the nobility and the King by

¹⁷¹ George Goyau, "Françoise, Marquise de Maintenon," (Robert Appleton Company, 1910 [cited September 17, 2008]); available from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09548b.htm>.

rescuing noble girls from poverty.¹⁷² The King provided the land and the facilities for the school, and dowered every girl upon completion of the program with 3000 crowns.¹⁷³ The admissions criteria required the entrants to show aristocratic lineage on the paternal side for four generations. Additionally, the criteria stipulated that the girls be from “poor” aristocratic families. As Lougee has pointed out, the term “poor” was used in relation to the demands of their noble class.¹⁷⁴ Thus, eligible families were not destitute, but rather, struggling to keep up an aristocratic lifestyle.

The King’s confessor, Father de La Chaise commented on the school’s goal of producing well-bred secular women: “The object of the foundation is not to increase the number of convents, which happens inevitably, but to provide the State with well-bred women. There are enough good religious, but not enough good mothers.”¹⁷⁵ With this goal in mind, Maintenon fostered a program that served the State; she trained the pupils to become able-minded wives and mothers, who could administer the families’ estates, promote loyalty to king and country, and raise children in a cool-headed brand of Catholicism.

King Louis was a regular visitor and an occasional speaker at the school, and Maintenon was Saint-Cyr. She became the perpetual Superior and was in sole command of the institution, determining the curriculum, schedule, admissions criterion, and staffing requirements. Designed to equip girls for the rigors of life in their class and of their “meager” means, Maintenon’s program was steeped in moral education. Maintenon, personally, led many conversational lessons over the course of thirty years. Her

¹⁷² Lougee, “*Noblesse*,” 99.

¹⁷³ Goyau, “Marquise de Maintenon.”; Maintenon, *Dialogues and Addresses*, 6-7.

¹⁷⁴ Lougee, “*Noblesse*,” 101-102.

¹⁷⁵ As cited in Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 100.

dialogues and speeches deal directly with the students' special standing in society. In aiding young noble women to make honorable marriages within their own class, the royal couple succeeded in "rescuing" hundreds of precarious noble families. Maintenon had experienced a troubled childhood as an impoverished aristocrat and she rose to become one of the most important women in France; she distilled her experiences and reflections on the sort of life they could enjoy and created a complete pedagogical system for their lot.

First, an examination of the administrative structure of the school and its teachers is offered. Over the years, Maintenon transformed the curriculum; the main features of the changes are understood in the context of her evolving teaching philosophy. Her pedagogical materials reveal much about the pride of place that she gave to her brand of "reason," practicality, and duty in the lives of aristocratic women. Some information about the pupils themselves is known and is examined here, too. Finally the legacy of Saint-Cyr as an inspirational institution is explored.

The administrative structure of Saint-Cyr resembled that of an Ursuline convent school, with Maintenon as a kind of General Superior overseeing the Superior who served as the head-mistress. Following Marie de Brinon's two-year tenure as Superior, from 1686-1688, Marie-Anne de Loubert served until 1692.¹⁷⁶ Three subsequent Superiors were elected in due course for the remainder of the century: Françoise-Angél de la Visitation de Ste.-Marie de Chaillot, Anne- Françoise Gautier de Fontaines, and Catherine du Pérou.¹⁷⁷ Under the head-mistress was a cadre of thirty-six school

¹⁷⁶ Theophile Lavallée, *et La Maison Royale de Saint-Cyr* (Paris: H. Plon, 1862), 408.

¹⁷⁷ Lavallée, *Madame de Maintenon*, 408.

mistresses, and twenty-four lay sisters.¹⁷⁸ The school mistresses came from the same social class as the students and they were given the title of the Dames of Saint-Louis. One assumes that they were younger siblings in poorer aristocratic families barred from marriage because of the lack of substantial dowries. From the school's inception the Dames took four simple vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and dedication to the teaching of girls.¹⁷⁹ Later, in the early 1690's, at Maintenon's urging, the Dames became a canonical order following the Order of St. Augustine.¹⁸⁰

Maintenon did not mince words about the vocation; she addressed the members of the faculty in 1686 as such,

Surely this is one of the most demanding vocations possible. You will scarcely have any free time between your tasks. If you are going to teach children, you must give your entire life to this enterprise.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, they were to have a welcoming attitude toward the students. They were required to overcome any repulsion they might feel regarding "vulgar" habits or want of cleanliness and devote themselves to the student body, even at the peril of their own lives in times of sickness. Maintenon recorded these directions, "You must calm their fright with warmth, wipe away their perspiration, follow them everywhere, and, even at the risk of your life, shut yourselves in with them when they have contagious illnesses."¹⁸² She insisted upon the best care and lessons because upon leaving the school, the young women had to take up important posts as the nation's aristocracy.

Maintenon wanted the girls to be models for emulation and not the butt of jokes in fashionable society. Along these lines, she felt that care had to be taken that erroneous

¹⁷⁸ Lougee, "Noblesse," 101; Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 100.}

¹⁷⁹ Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 101.

¹⁸⁰ Lougee, "Noblesse," 101.

¹⁸¹ Maintenon, *Dialogues and Addresses*, 137. Subsequent references are given in text as (*Dialogues*, 00).

ideas or superstitions did not creep into Saint-Cyr. Specifically, Maintenon warned the Dames about teaching the students “base and vulgar ideas;” she asked, “How many of them will be shaken when enlightened people mock them about things they received from you as somehow admirable?” (*Dialogues*, 149) Maintenon placed “reason” as the primary instrument that faculty should use and impart. “You should concern yourself less with furnishing their mind than with forming their reason.” (*Dialogues*, 138). In this way, the students would use good judgment in any given situation.

The *Addresses to Faculty* are transcriptions of conversations between Maintenon and the faculty which demonstrate Maintenon’s interest in the school, and her attention to any question or concern the teachers voiced. From major pedagogical insights, such as the need to identify with a student and earn her affection, to extolling what women’s proper education ought to be, the *Addresses* are a fascinating collection of a female pedagogue’s ideas in the seventeenth century. The right kind of education, Maintenon believed, was one that fitted the girls for their future lives among the provincial elite. She explained, “. . . your pupils have an infinitely greater need to learn how to conduct themselves as Christians in the world and how to govern their families wisely than to become scholars or heroines.” Maintenon repeatedly stressed the need for “reasonable” females. She acknowledged that the type of education at Saint-Cyr would not “make you [the Dames] popular with high society,” but, she consoled them with the promise that their efforts would yield, “completely virtuous, wise, and reasonable people.” (*Dialogues*, 147)

Maintenon also created a *Dialogue* for the students on the topic, *Sur l’éducation de Saint-Cyr* (*On Education at Saint-Cyr*); in this short piece, students discuss the merits

¹⁸² As cited in Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 101.

of “reason” and piety. Euphrosina, who has the closing lines, authoritatively remarks, “The more Christian and the more reasonable we become, the more we shall know how to adjust to the destiny that God deigns to send us. The reason they [the Dames] cultivate in us will help us to endure life with those who lack reason.” (*Dialogues*, 75) Maintenon rightly called a woman’s lot “dependent,” subject to the whims of superiors and husbands; reason was one dependable tool a woman could use to cope with her situation.

One of the students, Mademoiselle de Saint-Bazile (b. 1687), asked Madame Maintenon to comment on reason. Reason, the girl said, was a favorite topic of head-mistress Madame Brinon: “[She is] always telling us about the importance of reason.” (*Dialogues*, 95) Maintenon tied the concept to a girl’s obligation as a Christian, and as a future wife and mother, defining a reasonable person as “. . . someone who always does what she has a duty to do.” (*Dialogues*, 93) In order to sweeten the burden of being “reasonable,” Maintenon spoke of its reward, “If you truly become reasonable, you will become the most attractive women possible.” (*Dialogues*, 97) Her notion of “reason” was essentially a thoughtful abidance.

As mentioned above, it was the Ursuline Madame de Brinon’s whose responsibility it was to make sure the girls were educated as Maintenon prescribed. She was assisted by the Dames who filled important teaching and administrative positions: class mistresses, choir mistresses, secretary, mistress of the infirmary, librarian, bursar, and assistants.¹⁸³ The pupils were divided into four classes, which averaged 55-75 students per class, according to their ages.¹⁸⁴ The Red Class was for the youngest girls, 7-10 years. The Green Class was for girls aged 11-13. The Yellow Class was for 14-16

¹⁸³ Nyabongo, "Madame de Maintenon," 246.

¹⁸⁴ Nyabongo, "Madame de Maintenon," 246.

year-olds, and the Blue Class was for the group aged 17-20 years.¹⁸⁵ Further divided into cohorts of eight or ten students, the girls were grouped according to their study level, headed by a lead student called "Mother."¹⁸⁶

The curriculum during the early years at Saint-Cyr (1686-1689/90) was likely inspired by Maintenon's years as the poet Paul Scarron's wife, when the couple hosted a salon frequented by many luminaries. The youngest girls concentrated on reading, writing, arithmetic, basic grammar, religious instruction, and history.¹⁸⁷ These subjects were joined with needlework, knitting, and embroidery.¹⁸⁸ The older girls, in addition to attending to the youngest students' toilette, had many domestic chores at Saint-Cyr, in the kitchen, infirmary, and dormitory. Maintenon did not spare her charges from manual labor because she felt it would help them in the future as managers of family estates.¹⁸⁹ The girls at Saint-Cyr were not high nobility, and would not have places at court, as such, they needed practical skills, even thrift to make their households amenable.¹⁹⁰ So, while lessons in the art of conversation, theater, music, poetry, foreign languages, dance, mythology and letter writing, filled the early years at Saint-Cyr, Maintenon revisited the curriculum to edit what she came to see as unnecessary refinement, in favor of piety and practicality.¹⁹¹

In the 1690s Maintenon revised her teaching philosophy and invented new strategies for molding the aristocratic girls entrusted to her. Her approach was to enhance the religious dimension of the course, and eliminate subjects that made the girls proud

¹⁸⁵ Waters, *The Ursuline Achievement*, 102.

¹⁸⁶ Nyabongo, "Madame de Maintenon," 246.

¹⁸⁷ Misenheimer, *On the Education*, 48.

¹⁸⁸ Nyabongo, "Madame de Maintenon," 246.

¹⁸⁹ Lougee, "Noblesse," 96.

¹⁹⁰ Lougee, "Noblesse," 102.

¹⁹¹ Lougee, "Noblesse," 97.

and haughty. (*Dialogues*, 140) She explained the change to the faculty, speaking of “external accomplishments” and advanced intellectual skills, Maintenon said,

The ladies of the school of Saint-Louis should never be raised in this way, if it can be avoided. Given the fact that they are without wealth, there is no sense in cultivating their mind and their heart in a manner so unadapted to their fortune and to their social position. However, Christianity and reason, which are the two great values we wish to inculcate in our pupils, are as helpful to princesses as to paupers. (*Dialogues*, 140)

Mindful of the strictures of their gender and social position, Maintenon developed *Dialogues* and lessons that centered on manners and customs that would potentially help the girls. Civility, courage, piety, privilege, constraint, and other virtues and conditions were all explained and contextualized for the students’ own positions.

In Fénelon, the Archbishop of Cambrai, and author of *De L’Éducation des filles* (Treatise on the Education of Girls) examined in Chapter One, Maintenon’s found a like-minded pedagogue. They both emphasized finding an appropriate education to suit a girl’s status. In addition to serving as a confessor at Saint-Cyr, Fénelon also assisted Maintenon in drawing up the *Constitutions* in 1694. At this time, too, Fénelon was the tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, Louis’ grandson. Maintenon and Fénelon agreed that noble girls ought to have enough critical skills to recognize heretical positions in order to avoid error and sin. During the period of their collaboration, in the 1690’s, Maintenon embraced the most spiritual approach at Saint-Cyr. The school adopted the following schedule: upon waking, all contributed to housework from 6:00 AM – 8:00 AM. Mass was attended by all each morning at 8:00 AM, after which the morning lessons ran until noon. They had lunch and recreation between noon and 2:00 PM, and then afternoon lessons until 6:00 PM. The evening was divided by recreation and dinner, and all were to

bed by 9:00 PM.¹⁹² By the end of the decade, Maintenon had experimented with Quietism, a form of Catholicism that emphasized passive prayer, but found it ill-suited to aims at the school. She distanced herself from the Quietists and Fénelon, who had been receptive to Quietism, at least initially. Still, deeply Catholic, Maintenon advanced a mainstream Catholicism with the Saint-Cyr students and faculty members. (*Dialogues*, 125) In her address to students, “Against Religious Innovations,” she preached a spirituality that could even be called minimalist:

My dear children, the entire purpose of this lecture is to encourage you to remain always attached to the simplicity of the Catholic faith and to avoid ostentation in your devotional life. Don’t try to cultivate what they call a spirit out of the ordinary. Your soul will be expansive enough if you know how to save yourself. (*Dialogues*, 128)

Maintenon considered the Jansenists and Quietists as extremists who crossed the line into heresy, and she did not want any of her pupils flirting with dangerous doctrines or practices. To be safe, she counseled “simplicity.” Also, she directed the students in what exactly they should say about their religious standing, “If someone asks you just where you stand religiously, tell them you belong to no particular party in the controversies unresolved by Church authority, that you believe everything the Church teaches and condemn everything she condemns.” (*Dialogues*, 125) She called for “reasonable” piety that was moderate and active in the world. In the *Dialogue*, “On Piety,” Maintenon teaches that life can be enjoyed without peril to one’s soul, so long as the pleasure is an innocent pleasure. (*Dialogues*, 54) She offers a wide variety of principles and guidelines for secular girls, at once recognizing how limited their life choices were because of their sex, while at the same time trying to maximize their happiness and security.

¹⁹² Nyabongo, “Madame de Maintenon,” 246.

Part of being happy and secure, from Maintenon's vantage point was not only being simple and moderate in religion, but also being moderately knowledgeable. When one of her faculty members asked her how much history the students ought to be taught, her reply shows the conscious decision she made in keeping the girls *just* knowledgeable enough:

The pupils need to know enough to avoid mixing up the persons and the successions of our kings with the princes of other empires. It's also important for them to have enough historical knowledge to avoid confusing a Roman emperor with a Chinese or Japanese one, or a Spanish or an English king for the king of Persia or of Siam. But we should do all this without much detail or method. As long as they are not less ignorant than the majority of educated people are on these issues, that is sufficient. (*Dialogues*, 148)

By enforcing these limits, Maintenon hoped to protect the students from criticism or ridicule later in life, to save them from being labeled as pretentious and ridiculous *savantes* and *précieux*. Instead, she wanted them to be capable managers of noble households, who raised their families in moderate Catholicism with a solid loyalty to France's sovereign. After their schooling the young women were free to choose a religious or a secular path for adulthood, but the school functioned as a training ground for living "in the world."

With sweeping success in France, not the least of which came from the royal affiliation, Maintenon's experiment was soon a fashionable French export. From 1686 – 1773, 1121 students were educated at Saint-Cyr. The majority of them, 723, remained "in the world," and 398 of the graduates became nuns.¹⁹³ After more than a century, from 1686 – 1793, Saint-Cyr spawned several imitators across Europe. Rulers in Hungary,

¹⁹³ Goyau, "Marquise de Maintenon."

Italy, and Russia wished to bring up their young noble daughters in the same style.¹⁹⁴

Two years before her death in 1719, Maintenon had the honor of receiving the Russian Emperor, Peter the Great; his namesake city of St. Petersburg would boast the most illustrious replica of Saint-Cyr, at the hands of his grandson's wife, Catherine the Great.

The Smolnyi Institute, Crown Jewel of Catherine II's Imperial System of Schools

When Catherine the Great (1729-1796) was crowned Empress in 1762, the enlightened despot soon enacted a series of social and political reforms.¹⁹⁵ She envisioned the State as the arbiter of educational reforms, and the necessary guardian of Russia's children in the hopes of creating a new society. Through education, she sought a new kind of male and female citizen, a "new breed" of patriotic, God-fearing, industrious, and courteous Russians.¹⁹⁶ The late-eighteenth-century ordinances and statutes she legislated on girls' schooling mark Catherine as one of the most devoted advocates, and, as an Empress keen to use education in bolstering her reign and Russia's stability and power generally. The Smolnyi Institute, opened just two years after Catherine's arrival on the throne, took Saint-Cyr as its inspiration, although Smolnyi was twice the size and added a bourgeois division in 1765. Like Saint-Cyr, Smolnyi was an institution controlled by the monarch for her own ends. Catherine wanted a more "western-Euro" and enlightened nobility to fill her court and countryside; Smolnyi was the mechanism for reforming the nobility. For the common people, similar to the

¹⁹⁴ Lougee, "Noblesse," 103.

¹⁹⁵ De Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*.

¹⁹⁶ Catherine, "Nakaz," 90.

advocates and pedagogues discussed in Chapter One, Catherine wanted to stamp out “Idleness” as the forerunner of vice and the enemy of industry, and crafted a system of schools for the “people.”

Before Catherine II’s reign, there were perhaps two or three small schools for girls in Moscow and St. Petersburg, maintained by Lutherans for their daughters.¹⁹⁷ In the space of a few years, after reviewing reports of some girls’ schools in Europe, Catherine founded several schools for girls. First, the Imperial Foundling Home in Moscow was founded in 1763. Welcoming poor orphaned boys and girls to their respective segregated wards, the children received an education that intended to raise them to middle class status.¹⁹⁸ The female pupils at the Imperial Foundling Home were schooled in reading, writing, and catechism, as well as domestic skills, which would serve them well as future servants, nannies, midwives, and wives of soldiers.¹⁹⁹ The boys’ curriculum was identical, except instead of domestic skills, they learned manual skills.²⁰⁰

The following year, according to the *General Institutes* of 1764, other girls’ schools were founded in the realm with the same curriculum as the Foundling Home. Catherine’s minister of education, Ivan Ivanovich Betskoi announced a cycle of rational behavior that would be introduced at the girls’ schools and triumph over the “superstitious” traditions of the past:

As mothers they will raise their children well. As wives they will fulfill their duties better. As grandmothers they will not fill their grandchildren with ignorant and superstitious tales about the devil and such. On the contrary their

¹⁹⁷ Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 153.

¹⁹⁸ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 307.

¹⁹⁹ Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 169.

²⁰⁰ Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 155.

conversations will encourage worth, control passions, and lead to pleasant goings on and humanitarianism.²⁰¹

The education of girls was important in the new vision because of the pronounced role women had in raising families. Under Catherine, in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev, large numbers of girls received a state-sponsored education. At the time of the Empress' death, in 1796, approximately 12,600 girls had been educated in her imperial schools.²⁰²

In the Nakaz of 1767, Catherine cited her *Rule of Education*, which was used in all of her schools; she gave the following directive in raising Russia's children:

It is necessary to instill in Youth the Fear of God, to settle their Hearts in laudable Dispositions, to teach them the essential Rules which are suitable to their Situation, to kindle in them the Love of Industry and the abhorrence of Idleness as the Source of Evil and Error, to teach them proper Behavior in their Actions and Conversation, Courtesy, Good Manners, Compassion for the Poor and the Unfortunate, and an Aversion to every thing Audacious, to learn them private Economy is all is minute parts, ..."²⁰³

With this core set of values and skills, Catherine announced that the children would become "true Citizens useful and ornamental Members of Society."²⁰⁴ In this passage, the stamp of Vives, Fénelon and Comenius' ideas on education and virtue comes through; Fénelon and Comenius were especially admired by Catherine.²⁰⁵ Placing God before all else, avoiding Idleness, and seeking moral and industrious behavior, the German-born princess worked to bring early modern Western ideas about education to her late-eighteenth-century Eastern European and Asian empire.

While Catherine II was not the only advocate for girls' schools in her empire, she was the only one empowered to affect their foundation on a national scale. Other voices,

²⁰¹ As cited in Nash, "Educating Mothers," 309.

²⁰² Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 170.

²⁰³ Catherine, "Nakaz," 90.

²⁰⁴ Catherine, "Nakaz," 90.

²⁰⁵ Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 155.

such as that of the multi-talented Nikolai I. Novikov (1744-1818), who was a writer, publisher, philanthropist, and freemason, among other things, raised the question about advanced learning for girls. Although later imprisoned by Catherine for his radicalism, he composed a few lines of verse to celebrate Catherine's students at Smolny when they made a public appearance in May 1773:

As their presence has adorned this garden
So will the whole land of Russia be adorned.²⁰⁶

In his capacity as a freemason, Novikov assisted in expanding the number of schools. He established two charity schools: St. Catherine's School at the Church of Vladimir Mother of God, which was a day school began accepting students in 1777. The following year, he opened St. Alexander's at the Church of the Annunciation on Vasil'yevsky Ostrov, which had both boarding and day schools attached to it.²⁰⁷

Advocating for female learning, he published a dialogue that lamented the tyranny of men over women in the monopoly of higher learning. In his "Conversation between Aspaziia and Aristipp about Whether it is Decent to be Learned," the character Aspaziia considers female intellectual capability:

Are they [women] less gifted with the capacities for higher learning?
Marvelous men! They mess with all they wish; they relegate to themselves much that has no reason except that they wish it, and then, with much coercion, declare us incapable of such things which experience would show we manage as well as they or better.²⁰⁸

Novikov's work, which echoes the theme of unjustly denying women education, (a prominent theme in the European *querelle des femmes* since the fifteenth century) is reminiscent of Agrippa's *Declamation*. Novikov's work demonstrates that the theme had

²⁰⁶ Jones, *Novikov*, 65.

²⁰⁷ Jones, *Novikov*, 146.

²⁰⁸ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 303.

resonance in Russia on the eve of the foundation of Catherine's girls' schools. His advocacy for women and learning reached a portion of the populace, and likely warmed some to the innovation of schooling girls. The Empress, however, had no need to engage in the *querelle*; as a despot, she acted on her desires without worry about persuasion or debate. Her grandest school for girls, in which she took a personal interest, was known as The Society for the Upbringing of Noble Girls, or the Smolnyi Institute.

Acting as the emissary for the Empress Elizabeth (r.1742-1761) before Catherine came to the throne, Ivan Ivanovich Betskoi visited Saint-Cyr.²⁰⁹ Catherine channeled Betskoi's enthusiasm for the famous academy for French noble girls and gave him the lead role in creating the Russian version. Calling on four distinguished men from the Imperial Senate and other stately offices, Catherine established a Supervisory Board to interview prospective students and their families. Like Saint-Cyr, Smolnyi was only opened to aristocratic girls; the first recruits were daughters of court officials or members of the Royal Guard, followed by enrollees from the highest echelons of the nobility. Admissions were staggered to accept 50 girls ages five and six to begin the first of four stages of their education, which would last for twelve years. The school quickly reached capacity at 500 girls, double the size of Saint-Cyr. The formidable grounds of the old convent at Smolny came to be shared with a bourgeois division that Betskoi began in 1765. A sizable school in its own right, it numbered 240 female students, many of whom were the daughters of pensioned soldiers. Increasingly, though, to make room for the noble girls, the bourgeois students were transferred to the Foundling Home in St. Petersburg.

²⁰⁹ For the details of Catherine's activity with regard to Smolnyi, I rely on Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 154-166.

While the structure and concept of the school at Smolnyi were the same as Saint-Cyr, the goals of education were somewhat different. Whereas Maintenon saw that the majority of girls at Saint-Cyr would not be invited to court with all of its social employments, she prepared her students to be primarily household managers and loyal subjects of the Crown. Catherine, too insisted that the pupils be brought up with a sincere loyalty to the Empress or Emperor, as well as a patriotic love of Russia itself. Beyond their civic duty, she envisioned the future graduates of Smolnyi as the new cultured leaders of Russian social life.²¹⁰ As such, she authorized many excursions for the students at various palaces and gardens, where they interacted with a wide variety of Russian people, “all of St.Petersburg.”²¹¹

In her on-going correspondence with Catherine, one of the pupils, Aleksandra Petrovna Levshina, thanked her for the many activities she and her peers enjoyed: carriage rides, a trip to the Cadet Corps, horseback riding, comedies, ballet, and opera.²¹² On one occasion Catherine wrote to Aleksandra about the link between a Smolnyi education and the country’s welfare. The Empress approved of a prince serenading the pupils; she explained, “He likes to please you; he has seen how you came into the world and desires the best for you because he loves to see his country prosper, and your education contributes to it.”²¹³

The amusements and festivities were matched with serious academic study. After a poor start with Princess Anna Dolgorukova (1719-1778) as the Headmistress, Catherine raised the governess, Madame Sofia de la Font (1717-1797) to the position. Serving in

²¹⁰ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 308.

²¹¹ Bisha et al., eds., *Correspondence*, 170.

²¹² Bisha et al., eds., *Correspondence*, 172-173.

²¹³ Bisha et al., eds., *Correspondence*, 171.

this capacity, in fact holding both positions as Governess and Head Mistress for most of her thirty year tenure, de la Font fit Catherine's criteria perfectly. The Head Mistress, according Catherine's letter to Madame Bielcke in 1766, ought to be ". . . neither young, nor Catholic . . . nor titled, without obligations, independent."²¹⁴ As the senior administrator of the school, de la Font was given complete autonomy, guided by the written *Instructions to the Head Mistress*, which was authored by Catherine. The *Instructions* clearly demonstrate the political importance that Catherine attached to schooling the nation's noble daughters.

The head mistress must always keep in mind that under her care is the most precious security of the nobility and that the future fate which the government anticipates depends upon her attention to good order.²¹⁵

The "future fate" of the nobility, and thus the government itself was connected to the success or failure of the Smolnyi experiment. Careful attention to the students' welfare, studies, and moral development was paramount. "Good order" was expected in everything, especially the curriculum.

The youngest class, for students aged five to seven, studied basic laws and catechism, reading, writing, mathematics, morality, Russian and foreign languages, music, sewing, and knitting.²¹⁶ From age eight to ten, the students continued in all of these subjects and took on lessons in geography, history, and economics. The third class, for pupils aged eleven to thirteen, continued making progress in these subjects, and added grammar, architecture, and heraldry. The eldest group, aged fourteen to seventeen, concentrated on law, educational theory and practice, ethics, science, art, and household

²¹⁴ As cited in Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 159.

²¹⁵ As cited in Nash, "Educating Mothers," 307.

²¹⁶

economy.²¹⁷ Along with this program of study, much time was devoted to physical education and the dramatic arts.

Catherine, herself, pursued contact with Voltaire to secure worthwhile plays for the pupils to perform. The *philosophe* confirmed Catherine's inclusion of drama in the curriculum, writing about the benefits of theatrical education. "I do not know whether you make your girls perform tragedies; but I think that dramatic recitation, of tragedy or comedy, is an excellent form of education. It lends grace to the mind and body, and trains the voice, deportment, and taste. One remembers a hundred passages that one can later quote as occasion demands. This adds to the pleasures of society and does all the good in the world."²¹⁸ Despite Voltaire's goodwill, in 1772, the Empress had to remind him to send the works he promised to amend for student use: ". . . Sir, may I remind you of the promise you were kind enough to make me nearly a year ago, to adapt some good plays for the use of my educational institutes?"²¹⁹ Voltaire was not the only *philosophe* acquainted with the Smolny brand of education: Diderot and Grimm, both of whom enjoyed Catherine's support and esteem talked freely with the monarch about the Institute. Diderot praised the type of preparation the girls received at Smolny,

One has taken in your convent the surest precautions to strengthen health, conserve their natural character, their innocence and gaiety, and to give them talents without constraint, to form domestic economy without debasement, in a word, to prepare instructed, honest, and useful mothers, wives, and citizens.²²⁰

His use of the word "citizens" is *à propos* considering the anticipated social and political function the graduates were to undertake in Catherine's plan for a new society.

²¹⁷ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 310.

²¹⁸ Bisha et al., eds., *Correspondence*, 166; Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 163.

²¹⁹ Bisha et al., eds., *Correspondence*, 168.

²²⁰ As cited in Nash, "Educating Mothers," 311.

From the school's inception in 1764, most of the twenty-four teachers were women, with only a few monks to teach reading and religion. In time, when the Commission on Public Schools issued its report to Catherine in 1783, both the curriculum and staff would be changed in part.²²¹ The complaint was that the focus on drama came at the expense of the other subjects, and Russian and foreign language education needed improvement.²²² More men were hired as teachers for the academic subjects, amounting to a demotion of the female teaching staff to head up supervision and crafts.²²³ The reforms pleased Catherine who amply rewarded members of the Commission and some of the new teachers.²²⁴ The new curriculum was as follows: the first class studied catechism, reading and writing in Russian, French, and German. The second class continued in those subjects along with biblical history, geography, mythology, arithmetic, and drawing. The third group added to these subjects, physics and natural history, and the fourth studied two additional subjects, architecture and geometry. Heraldry was dropped completely, and needlework, domestic economy, music and dance were pursued as extra-curricular activities.

By her stewardship and personal vigilance, Catherine brought girls' schooling to Russia in an effort to mold Russian society. Her schools catered to poor, middling, and noble girls and won the admiration of both foreign and domestic writers. After Smolnyi, she established public schools, known as the "People's Schools," in all administrative districts of the Russian Empire, in 1786.²²⁵ The new schools offered instruction in

²²¹ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 310.

²²² Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 163.

²²³ Nash, "Educating Mothers," 310.

²²⁴ For the changes after the report of 1783, I rely on Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 164.

²²⁵ "Statute of the Public Schools (Vysochaishe utverzhdenny Ustav narodnym uchilishcham v Rossiiskoi Imperii)," in *The Educational Policies of Catherine II: The Era of Enlightenment in Russia*, ed. George K. Epp (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 203.

Russian language which was an innovation. The Statute establishing these schools described the necessity for them “as the only road leading to the happiness of their [the enlightened nations] people” and the curriculum:

The subjects of education are: a clear and intelligent understanding about the Creator and His sacred writings, the basic rules of unquestionable loyalty to the monarch, a true love for the fatherland, and love for our fellow citizens. These are the pillars of general prosperity of the state.²²⁶

Education, for every class of people, during Catherine’s rule was meant to enhance the prestige of her realm, to strengthen the students’ allegiance to the State, and to produce future generations of a more literate and cultured Russian populace.

The Smolnyi Institute was, perhaps, the crown jewel of Catherine’s schools, but certainly not her sole educational concern. The French ambassador to Russia, when he was in St. Petersburg in 1785 expressed his approval of the proficiency the Smolnyi pupils displayed, “One sees already a large number of elegant ladies, young girls remarkable for their graces, speaking equally well seven or eight languages, playing many instruments and familiar with the most celebrated poets and novelists of France, Italy, and England.”²²⁷ Praise for Smolnyi pupils reflected upon the monarch. A eulogy written for Catherine in 1802 by Nicholas Karamzin congratulated the Empress on the success of her education initiatives, specifically he wrote, the Smolnyi graduates had become, “. . . a delight to their community, a treasure to their husbands, and primary instructors to their children.”²²⁸ From this grand beginning, schools for girls steadily continued in imperial Russia. In the modern era, the Smolnyi Institute ceased to educate

²²⁶ "Statute of the Public Schools," 203.

²²⁷ As cited in Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 166-167.

²²⁸ As cited in Black, *Citizens of the Fatherland*, 171.

girls, and instead served as Lenin's headquarters during the October Socialist Revolution, 1917.

In concluding this chapter, which brings together the Ursuline network of schools, Port-Royal, Saint-Cyr, and Smolnyi, continuities in their missions to mold girls for Church and civil needs has been established, and a final comparison is offered. Recognized as able students and transmitters of values, girls were encouraged to attend the first schools. Whether in a cloistered environment, in Europe or in New France, schooling for girls was pursued for the perceived benefits it would bring to the family and by extension to society. Girls would be future wives and mothers, and even though advocates for their education voiced a concern for each individual girl's soul and future prospects as a respectable woman, the other articulated impetus for educating girls was for a wholesale reformation of society. Girls' schooling, born of religious commitment and institutes became increasingly secular in a continuous unfolding, where government took an increasing role in education. In harmony with the first early modern advocates of girls' education, members of religious groups and governments, from the admirers of the Ursulines, like the moralist Giovanni Giolito writing in the sixteenth century, to Fénelon, to the Russian Commission investigating educational efforts in 1782, all trusted that girls were worthy of education, apt pupils, and that girls' schooling would bolster a moral and law abiding society. The humanistic pedagogical maxim that education begets virtue had become an accepted platform for religious and secular schooling and was unreservedly applied to girls.

Chapter Three: English Schools and Mary Ward's Institute

From the opening of the first girls' charity school in London, England in 1552, the number of educational facilities for girls increased steadily, all of which implemented the humanist idea that education befitted girls as well as boys and instilled morality in pupils of both sexes. Philanthropists founded charity and day schools for girls of the lower classes, seeing them as fit pupils for reading, writing, accounts, religion, and morals. Entrepreneurial schoolmistresses and masters hosted wealthy young maids at boarding schools to refine their intellectual and artistic talents by learning languages, music and arts, and more advanced subjects in the liberal arts. These urban and rural schools were Anglican; alongside them, Quaker and Catholic schools were established as well.

The English schools for girls served two important functions. First, they were meant to turn out civic-minded good Christians who would enhance the community, since it was widely accepted that education would mold a pupil to be virtuous. English pedagogues acknowledged their predecessors for making this clear, especially Erasmus, Vives, van Schurman, Comenius, and Fénelon. Second, authorities and parents of middling and lower-class girls approved of schools that gave girls a set of skills so that they could find work and support themselves into adulthood. Idleness was abhorred, and, the hope was that girls with learned skills could earn enough money to build their own dowries and enable them to marry and live respectably.

This chapter begins by examining charity schools and day schools which were opened for girls in both urban and rural settings, beginning with Christ's Hospital in London, the first and the largest facility to begin the schooling of girls. It proceeds to the

new boarding schools which were usually located in the suburbs of London; one remarkable school in Edinburgh, Scotland, is also included, as are those of the non-Conformist Quakers. Following the discussion of charity schools and boarding schools, the second section of this chapter offers a full account of the early-seventeenth-century Catholic Institute of Mary, founded by Mary Ward (1585-1645), who sought to educate English Catholic girls secretly in England and openly on the Continent. Ward's academic program was quite rigorous and privileged Latin as the most important subject.

Whether Catholic, Anglican, or Quaker, the diversity of schools for girls that emerged from the mid-sixteenth century on, demonstrates that formal schooling for girls was part of a new social commitment that recognized female rationality and intellectual capacity, and counted on girls to renew and strengthen society through their absorption of important school lessons.

Charity Schools and Boarding Schools

In the sixteenth century, charity schools and boarding schools for girls were created for the poor and wealthy respectively. The girls of the middle classes typically learned to read and gather their lessons in the home from one or both parents, or sometimes from a sibling or another relative.¹ Charity schools typically offered a course that included Biblical reading, basic arithmetic, and sewing, which equipped girls for a life of service. Boarding schools, in contrast, had a different ends for education, and a wider variety of subjects that girls might benefit from studying. Learning for one's own edification was but one justification for female learning; another was to prepare the

¹ Bowden, "Female Education," 85.

young woman for a future husband and family. No matter what social standing a girl had in England, school was recognized as an appropriate place for her development if the home could not or did not offer the lessons deemed useful and beneficial for her, the kingdom, and her future family.

The sources for these new schools are varied, ranging from foundation bequests, admission registers, orations, petitions, inventories, school rules, to prose works by the benefactors. Using this evidence, the present section analyzes the context in which the schools emerged. Following that, an examination of the schools is offered in the following order: Christ's Hospital, Red Maids' Hospital, the Warwick schools, Merchant Maidens' Hospital, and the seventeenth-century boarding schools, to include both mainstream and Quaker facilities.

To contextualize the emergence of schools for girls, a wide scope encompassing the various educational changes in England during the sixteenth century is needed. Access to education and pedagogy itself was recast. A fair number of boys' schools operated before 1550, but the increase from 1550 – 1700 has been termed a "revolution" by scholars in the field, especially considering the dramatic curriculum change which reflected both humanist and Christian influences.² In essence, there were no girls' schools besides the few convent schools operating prior to 1534, and they were limited in their admissions, accepting only novices and a few noble girls for safekeeping. Many children learned skills and academic subjects outside of schools. Upper-middling girls and boys had long been sent to the households of their social superiors, sometimes for an education along with training in how to serve in a great household. This practice began

² Cressy, "Educational Opportunity in Tudor and Stuart England," 301-320; Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England*; Stone, "The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640," 41-88.

to wane amongst the gentry and middle class in the latter part of the sixteenth century and seventeenth century. It was eclipsed by the new trend of admitting children to day schools and boarding schools.

Explanations for this shift are difficult to verify. Still, population growth in early modern London can explain in part why many families turned to schools for their children's training. The social networks of old could not accommodate the rising numbers of children in need of "placement," and the newly successful merchant, yeoman, and burger families required schools to teach the essential subjects. Willing and able to shoulder tuition costs, upper-middling and gentry boys and girls began attending school in great numbers. Only the most elite families kept tutors and boarded guests.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Church of England brought a myriad of changes to the educational system. With the dissolution of the monasteries, new foundations and re-foundations of cathedral churches and schools were established beginning in the 1530s. The Church and Crown opted to share the responsibility for providing schools with the citizens. As such, the merchant and burgher class began establishing new grammar and day schools for boys and girls.

The emergence of girls' schools occurred in this context through the efforts of advocates for female learning, who were displaying and defending a new attitude toward the female sex's worth and talents. Amongst the most conservative Christian men, a new understanding of the female intellect surfaced in the sixteenth century. Thomas Becon (1512 – 1567), for example, who was exposed to schools for girls while on the Continent published upon his return to England *A New Catechism*, also known as *The Catechism Of*

Thomas Becon.³ In this work, he called for girls' schools appealing to God on the matter: "Would God there were some consideration of this matter had among the rulers of the Christian Commonweal that the young maidens might be godly brought up."⁴ Further, he believed girls' schooling was a public concern and responsibility for all Christian states: "It is expedient that by public authority schools for women children be erected and set up in every Christian commonwealth"⁵ The girls, he argued, should have lessons ". . . to be sober-minded, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, housewifely, good, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not spoken evil of."⁶ Becon elaborated on whom he thought the most fitting teachers would be, "honest, sage, wise, discreet, sober, grave, and learned matrons"; such women should receive "liberal stipends" for their service.⁷ His advice was taken, and mission statements for the new girls' schools echoed his sentiments. Becon's advice mirrored Vives' advice as described in the *De institutione feminae Christianae*, which had been translated into English in 1529 by Richard Hyrde. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen and women who founded the first schools for girls, drafted their mission statements and ran their schools according to Vives' and Becon's vision.

Driven by a powerful mix of religious conviction, charitable purposes, practical foresight, and civic duty, the founders of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century girls' schools did something completely novel in offering the "weaker sex" formal education.

³ Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Thomas Becon and the Reformation of the Church in England* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952); Jeffrey N. Knight, "Thomas Becon: Reform of Church and Commonwealth through Christian Education and the Primer of 1553," (master's thesis, Wake Forest University, 1999).

⁴ Thomas Becon, "Of the Duty of Maids and Unmarried Women," in *The Catechism Of Thomas Becon, S. T. P. Chaplain To Archbishop Cranmer, Prebendary Of Canterbury, &C. . . .* ed. John Ayre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 376-377.

⁵ Becon, *Newe Catechisme*, 376.

⁶ Becon, *Newe Catechisme*, 376.

⁷ Becon, *Newe Catechisme*, 376.

The two forms of schools examined here were newly conceived, but based on other institutions. Charity schools took as their model the hospital which was a fledgling welfare institution, and boarding schools adapted the traditional household system to become tuition collecting academies. The hospitals of early modern Europe were an invention of necessity. As urban populations grew, parish churches could no longer bear the costs of Christian charity to feed, clothe, shelter, nurse, and care for the poor and their children. In many European cities, the State intervened and erected hospitals, often staffed by religious orders or volunteers to care for the unfortunate inmates.⁸

Christ's Hospital. Founded in 1552, Christ's Hospital in London was a unique institution for poor children of skilled and unskilled laborers in London. It also cared for and schooled the children of prisoners, "vacabonds," "strangers," and "rogues."⁹ Although it changed its form and campuses over the centuries, it has a continuous history up to the present. This section will examine the conditions for Christ's Hospital's foundation, as well as its mission in "saving" the most distressed infants and children. By reviewing the nature of the benefactions, the admissions criteria, and student records, a clear picture of the school and its student population emerges. The founders and administration crafted a curriculum that combined academic, moral, and technical lessons to prepare students, male and female, for their adult responsibilities as English subjects and citizens of London.

⁸ Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe, 1500-1700* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁹ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*. See Appendix IV, V, and VI for charts and analyses of the admitted female population.

When the civil magistrates of London and the Crown embarked upon a revolutionary plan to meet the needs of Londoners through an elaborate hospital system, they reflected a new attitude about the learning capability of the female sex. Within the network of hospitals, which included Bethlehem (Bedlam) for the mentally ill, St. Thomas's for invalids, St. Bartholomew's for the sick, Bridewell for "vagabonds" and the unemployed, was Christ's Hospital, a hybrid institution for poor or orphaned children of both sexes. Christ's Hospital fed, nursed, clothed, sheltered, and educated London's most destitute children, indiscriminately. For the first time in English history, poor secular girls were enrolled in school.

The growing number of destitute and orphaned children prompted philanthropists to establish Christ's Hospital, which had several functions. Infants and toddlers were taken on and put out to nurse; children were boarded, educated and raised in the Hospital and if they survived into adolescence, they were apprenticed or, in a few cases, sent to one of the Colleges on scholarships. No matter the stage of life, Christ's Hospital intended to raise the children in piety and moral rectitude, and to teach them personal industry. By taking poor boys and girls out of destitute homes and the street, the governors of Christ's Hospital tried to stem the rising tide of beggary and degradation in the city. In the documents, one senses that the driving force of religious obligation, civic responsibility, and even moral disgust were thoroughly intertwined. For example, the porters of Christ's Hospital were instructed to guard the premises, making sure none of the children left to "falle to theire old occupacon," which was begging and thieving, but a few did get away.¹⁰ This structure is not dissimilar to the Italian asylums of the

¹⁰ John Howes and William Lempriere, *John Howes' MS., 1582* (London: Septimus Vaughan Morgan, 1904), 39. Hospital, ed., *Admissions*.

Renaissance, where foundlings and other people were institutionalized for their protection and the society's well-being.¹¹

Benjamin Long, an orphan reared in Christ's Hospital related such sentiments in an oration praising the institution, "Vagrants, be gone! And no more infest the Air of London with your noysom breath. It is pity that such a verminous brood should swarm and poison our streets."¹² Whether this child was a master at echoing the rhetoric he heard around him, or truly infused with a spirit of civic pride, he goes on to portray himself and fellow students at Christ's Hospital as contributing meaningfully to the Commonwealth and City of London, rather than being a burden--thanks to the education given them. If the purpose of the institution was "For the virtuous bringinge up of miserable youthe," to be "stayed with the monthlie collections graunted of the cittizens . . .," it was also "to clense the Cyttie cleane of all sorts of beggers."¹³ With that in mind, Christ's Hospital offered a welcome refuge for London's youngest poor.¹⁴

Beginning in 1552, the year before Edward Tudor granted the royal charter to Christ's Hospital, the foundation began to accept its charges. King Edward endowed the Hospital with £600 per year, and was joined by wealthy noblemen and citizens in establishing a sure income for the school. As a hybrid institution, part orphanage and

¹¹ Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Brian S. Pullan, *Orphans and Foundlings in Early Modern Europe* (Berkshire: University of Reading, 1989); Nicholas Terpstra, *Abandoned Children of the Italian Renaissance: Orphan Care in Florence and Bologna* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

¹² Benjamin Long, September 21, 1675, An Oration Spoken in the Grammar-school of Christ's Hospital, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

¹³ Howes and Lempriere, *John Howes' MS.*, 1582, 16.

¹⁴ From the Court Book (1557) as cited in William Trollope, *A History of the Royal Foundation of Christ's Hospital with an Account of the Plan of Education, the Internal Economy of the Institution, and Memoirs of Eminent Blues* (London: William Pickering, 1834), 53.

part school, Christ's Hospital relied upon its board of governors and other administrators to manage all of the affairs. The governors, who were among London's most prominent and successful citizens, largely managed the daily operations of the Hospital, admitting children, approving adoptions, apprenticeships and the like. They were also among the chief benefactors.

Several documents survive that describe general gifts to Christ's Hospital and affiliated charities, one of which specifies assistance for the girls' school. In fact, leaving money "for the poore children" of Christ's Hospital became popular in London wills. Some people stipulated exactly how they wanted the money spent, and others trusted the Governors to expend the money as they pleased. John Howes, an employee of Christ's Hospital, recorded the gifts and bequests made to support Christ's Hospital in its work (1582). The support came from many different people, and understanding the Hospital as a city-wide effort with individual supporters is the best approach.¹⁵ The funds collected from London's various "Companies" of Grocers, Drapers, Mercers, Clothworkers, etc. were recorded by Howes and demonstrates the civic-mindedness of these groups.

Among the earliest benefactions from an individual, was considerable fortune of more than £4000 from Lady Mary Ramsey. Lady Ramsey made additional gifts to the hospital, notably another £2000 for the purchase of lands in 1601.¹⁶ William Lamb's gift in 1580, established a trust with Christ's Hospital, and granted the Aldermen of London land in the county of Essex. Lamb was authorized to set up a grammar school for two

¹⁵ Howes and Lempriere, *John Howes' MS.*, 1582.

¹⁶ Trollope, *A History*, 65.

hundred “poore children of people there.”¹⁷ Sir Christopher Clitherow’s gift in 1625, gave scholarships to boys attending Christ’s Hospital so they could go on to St. John’s College.¹⁸ Similarly, Erasmus Smith’s gift in 1666, gave £100 towards apprenticing children and maintaining scholars at Oxford and Cambridge (not to exceed £8 per apprentice or scholar).¹⁹ The Last Will and Testament of Gilbert Keat (1658) gave money for the operation of the school and additional funds for three boys (£6) and three girls (£3) each year toward their apprenticeships when they turned fifteen years old.²⁰ In 1682, William Pease’s will also left money for apprenticeships, but he did not designate different amounts for the sexes--five pounds a year for a child to be apprenticed according to the discretion of the governors.²¹ Sir John Moore gave another major gift in 1681: £500 for “the use and benefit of the poore children harbored in Christs Hospitall Lond.”²² Added to these and many other individual gifts were monies collected during Church services throughout the city, beginning in the 1550s.

With a secure income, Christ’s Hospital began hauling destitute children out of the streets of London and picking up babies who had been left in churches and around the city.²³ The admissions policy in the early years (as it changed in the seventeenth century) stipulated that prospective children must be born in London and be at least four years of age, with parents either deceased or destitute. Foundlings under the age of four were

¹⁷ William Lamb, 1580, William Lamb's Gift, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

¹⁸ Sir Christopher Clitherow, 1625, Sir Christopher Clitherow's Gift, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

¹⁹ Erasmus Smith, 1666, Erasmus Smith's Gift, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

²⁰ Gilbert Keat, June 10, 1658, Last Will & Testament of Gilbert Keat, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

²¹ William Pease, 1682, William Pease's Gift: Extract from Pease's Will, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

²² John Moore, December 3, 1681, Sir John Moore's Gift, Receipt, Christ's Hospital Papers, Guildhall Manuscripts, London.

routinely sent out to nurse, and if they survived and were not adopted straight away, then they returned “home” to the halls of Christ’s Hospital. As part of the admissions process, youth meeting the above criteria had to have several witnesses from their parishes who could attest to their dire circumstances.²⁴ From the start, the number of children, boys and girls meeting the criteria was staggering. The governors had expected this, having done a preliminary “survey” of London’s parishes before initiating the foundation. In 1553, approximately 260 children came under Christ’s Hospital’s care. Initially, enrollment was capped at approximately 400 charges, but by the 1580s, the number of accepted children “to lodge and learn” climbed to 600.²⁵ From 1554-1599, Christ’s Hospital admitted 1201 girls.²⁶

Admissions continued to rise across the board, with a total enrollment of 1120 students in 1655.²⁷ In 1676, the regulations for admission were changed specifying stricter criteria for entry into the Hospital. The minimum age for entry was raised to seven years old; the age of discharge was set at fifteen years for boys, and fourteen years for girls, and foundlings were no longer accepted. Until the 1740s, when Captain Thomas Coram (c. 1668-1751) established the Foundling Hospital in London, there was no institution equipped to handle the rising tide of abandoned babies in the city.²⁸

Presumably the governors of Christ’s Hospital felt their resources were better used

²³ See Appendix VI for the number of female children admitted as foundlings, “starvelings,” and abandoned children between 1554-1578.

²⁴ Manzione, *Christ's Hospital*, 139.

²⁵ Manzione, *Christ's Hospital*, 139.

²⁶ See Appendix IV for the admittance rates in five – six year intervals.

²⁷ Trollope, *A History*, 69.

²⁸ Ruth McClure, *Coram's Children: the London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Gillian Pugh, *London's Forgotten Children: Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007).

focusing on the older children. What is certain is that the revised regulations at Christ's Hospital sought to alleviate the over-enrollment.

Another new rule which reversed earlier policy was aimed at barring children with physical disabilities and infectious diseases from the institution: "That none be taken in that are lame, crooked, or deformed; nor that have any infectious disease, as the Leprosy, Scald-head, Itch, Scab; or that have the Evil or Rupture."²⁹ This was a major departure from the original "policy," as sick children were especially welcome in the sixteenth century, as evidenced by the admission registers that describe different afflictions of newly admitted students.³⁰ Some pupils, even after being apprenticed, were welcomed back to Christ's Hospital to nurse an illness. In 1563, a woman named Julian Hearne, who was described as being "an Idiot" was accepted into the Hospital, where she remained until her death in 1587.³¹ There was a similar case of another woman, Mrs. Alice Prestgraue, in like circumstances being admitted in 1572.³² Their admittance demonstrates the liberal policies of the sixteenth century in contrast to later years.

An examination of the admissions registers for the sixteenth century shows that 104 girls were among the 325 children admitted to Christ's Hospital between September 1580 and September 1584.³³ Another sampling from September 1587 – September 1591 shows that of the 219 entrants, 79 were girls.³⁴ The register lists the age of the child, name and occupation of the father, as well as name of the parish from which the child was admitted. These data show that the backgrounds of the female entrants were the

²⁹ As cited in Trollope, *A History*, 73.

³⁰ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 1-264.

³¹ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 51.

³² Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 106.

³³ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 158-187.

³⁴ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 207-225.

same as the males. Yet boys were admitted in greater numbers, comprising approximately two-thirds of the student body. Is this because there were more boys surviving the ordeal of birth, poverty, and disease than girls? None of the extant source material speaks to this matter. Historian Barbara Hanawalt, in her study on children in medieval London, suggests that male infants were given better care than females because they had a “higher social value,” bringing wealth into the family rather than draining it with a dowry.³⁵ For sixteenth-century London, better care for male infants might account for the large discrepancy between the sexes in Christ’s Hospital’s admissions, since infanticide was extremely rare.³⁶ Once enrolled at Christ’s Hospital, all of the infants were given a nurse’s care and milk, as well as clothing and shelter, which many of the babies, as foundlings and orphans were not receiving from their families.

Indeed, many of the Christ’s Hospital children were foundlings, named after the street or gate at which they were found. Numerous deaths are recorded in the register relating where children died, in the sick ward or at the nurse, and are a testament to the high child mortality rates of early modern cities, and specifically London.³⁷ Those who survived were reared and schooled at Christ’s Hospital before being apprenticed, adopted, or in some instances, returned to a living parent.³⁸

³⁵ Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 58.

³⁶ Peter C. Hoffer and N.E.H. Hull, *Murdering Mothers: Infanticide in England and New England 1558-1803* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Mark Jackson, *Infanticide: Historical Perspectives on Child Murder and Concealment 1550-2000* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2002); Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Keith Wrightson, "Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England," *Local Population Studies* 15 (1975): 10-22.

³⁷ See Appendix VIII for the percentage of female deaths from 1554-1578.

³⁸ See Appendix VIII for the breakdown of students’ outcomes (apprenticed, returned to natal families, adoption, etc.), for 1554-1578.

For the social historian, the register, which covers the period from 1554 – 1599, provides a rare and detailed picture of the hospital’s student body. Appendix VII illustrates the class origins of girls admitted to Christ’s Hospital from 1554-1578, according to information given about fathers’ occupations.³⁹ While there are a significant number of pupils for which such information is unknown, a comparison of two samplings (1554-1564, and 1565-1578) reveals that from its beginnings, Christ’s Hospital catered to the daughters of both skilled and unskilled laborers of sixteenth-century London. In other words, the roster shows that daughters of highly trained craftsmen like goldsmiths, and daughters of day laborers and servants were accepted indiscriminately. Such girls were accepted together with children of unknown paternity and children of incarcerated prisoners. Here, there is no distinction between “deserving” or “undeserving” poor.

There was no “typical” student; as the circumstances concerning each girl’s life were unique. Some newborns were abandoned and referred to one of the Governors of Christ’s Hospital for admission without even a name. Others had lost one parent, like Jone Wright. Her butcher father died in 1563, prompting Jone’s enrollment at fifteen months old; at age seven, Jone was returned to her mother. Others came to Christ’s Hospital as older children because a parent had been taken to prison, as was the case with Jone Vaughan, ten years old. After her mother’s term at Bridewell, the two were reunited. Others were children of the streets, often hungry and “without comfort” whom the governors found and took guardianship of in regular sweeps of the city.

Once at Christ’s Hospital, most children would remain there until they received an apprenticeship or went into service. Typically, girls were bonded at twelve or thirteen years old, but some were younger. Then there were some girls who found employment in

³⁹ See Appendix VII: Class Origins of Christ’s Hospital Female Admittants (1554-1578).

their twenties. One Agnes Coxe, at age twenty-three stayed on at Christ's Hospital for work; she "preferred to be cook of this House."⁴⁰ Also, it seems some children left and returned to Christ's Hospital for a variety of reasons, because they were orphaned again when an adopted parent died, or because of sheer desperation as life with natal families became precarious. The following entry shows how Christ's Hospital was a refuge for at least one member of the Brooker family: "Dorothe Brooker, 9, who was sometime a child in this House again admitted for that the mother is frantic and hath six children more and not able to keep them."⁴¹ In the sixteenth century, even if both parents were alive, but some misfortune brought children into the streets, Londoners knew they could seek short-term or long-term aid for both boys and girls. The institution was sought for the lodging and meals it could provide, the education it provided came after these basic human needs were met.

Unfortunately, not all of the children brought to Christ's Hospital found its conditions hospitable. There were a number of runaways, and others who were abused during apprenticeships set up by the administration of Christ's Hospital.⁴² In 1568, eight year old Ellin (Hellen) Parker, the daughter of a fishmonger who had been at Christ's Hospital since her fourth year, was apprenticed to a baker. One way or another, it was found out that the baker, John Williams, "misused her" and Ellin was taken back into the hospital.⁴³ That same year, she was adopted, but was returned to the hospital in 1569 without note.⁴⁴ Speculation about how Williams "misused" his eight year old apprentice

⁴⁰ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 40. April 10, 1563.

⁴¹ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 103. February 23, 1571.

⁴² Between 1554-1578, four girls ran away, as illustrated in Appendix VII.

⁴³ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 63. December 30, 1564.

⁴⁴ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 89. June 4, 1569.

is futile; overburdening her with labor, under-nourishing her, physically or sexually abusing her, the admissions register does not specify.

Outcomes for the female student population have been tabulated in Appendix VIII. It is clear that the administration made an effort to find families for the children, recognizing that adoptions would ease the hospital's load, and give the children potentially better lives. For example, in 1563, 145 girls were admitted to Christ's Hospital; sixty-eight of them died that year or soon after either at their nurses' residences or in the sick ward.⁴⁵ Ten girls went back to their natal parent(s) over the next few years when their families' ability to care for them improved. Of the remaining sixty-seven entrants, twenty-one of them were adopted in the years that followed – an impressive adoption rate.

For the period between 1554-1578, of the known outcomes of 61%, and the mortality rate of 33%, the remaining 28% of the known outcomes is distributed as follows: 13% were apprenticed or put to service, 7% were returned to the natal family, 7% were adopted, and 1% ran away.⁴⁶ Considering the high number of the population that came in as foundlings and abandoned children in this period (approximately 16%), who would have likely perished, Christ's Hospital functioned as a lifeboat for a significant number of London's poorer daughters (and sons). The institution not only enabled their survival, but gave them the skills for employment (apprenticeship) and facilitated the covenants and adoptions that offered the children better prospects than the streets.

Those who called Christ's Hospital home would have found their surroundings well-appointed, as the 1623 list of "Household Stuffe" suggests. The list details items for

⁴⁵ Hospital, ed., *Admissions*, 27-57.

⁴⁶ See Appendix VII.

each “section” of the house, and is a veritable walking-tour of the grounds. The following areas are mentioned specifically, “the hall and great chamber, the bufferie where cutlery and such is kept, the brewhouse, the beddyng, the larder, the lininge, the poultrie, the Smithie, the Kilnehouse, the Kitchinge, and the bouldinghouse.”⁴⁷ The dormitories were also a part of the structure.

Daily life at Christ’s Hospital offered a stable routine. The sixteenth-century students were served a nourishing diet of beef, mutton, bread, milk, butter, cheese, porridge, beer, and some fish.⁴⁸ Both sexes shared the dining room at meals times until 1703, when the numbers were ever-rising, making it necessary to reorganize meal times. In fact, as described below, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the girls were relocated to the Hertford campus, which became their own school. Beds and linens were often donated, along with the blue coat uniforms that distinguished the students when they attended masses and funerals. The girls were responsible for all of the sewing and mending as part of their training, overseen by the resident tailor.

In addition to cloth work, a technical skill that was considered essential for most girls and women, academic and moral lessons were emphasized. The girls were schooled apart from the boys, and their curriculum very basic, with only the Bible for instruction. The first governess in the sixteenth century was Agnes Sexton, who received assistance from the wives of the steward and porter in teaching the girls, the “goodwives” Smoothing and Saepsched.⁴⁹ According to the General Account, the governess received

⁴⁷ Sherburne Charter (Inventory), 1623, British Library Manuscripts, London.

⁴⁸ Borer, *Willingly to School*, 64.

⁴⁹ Frances Mary Page, *Christ's Hospital Hertford: A History of the School against the Background of London and Horsham* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1953), 19.

6s. 8d., for her work in 1553.⁵⁰ She taught them the alphabet and reading, and catechism. Not until the seventeenth century, were the girls taught to write. Reading and writing were viewed as separate subjects with acutely different purposes. While reading was believed to be largely a passive activity that allowed one to absorb ideas and precepts, alternatively, writing was viewed as requiring a creative impulse and an analytic ability. In the sixteenth century, such skills were not deemed appropriate for girls. It is not clear if the girls were given lessons in the Music school or if that was reserved for the boys.

In the seventeenth century, the girls of Christ's Hospital acquired an advocate in Mr. Thomas Firmin (1632-1697). The nonconformist Firmin, who was perhaps their greatest patron, came from a family of middle estate and rank, and pursued a merchant's career in London. He became a governor of Christ's Hospital and St. Thomas's around 1673. His affiliation and friendship with Sir Robert Clayton brought about the erection of a new Ward in London for the girls.⁵¹ Firmin was also responsible for building other facilities such as the sick ward, a water system, a number of houses for the staff, etc., and for the repair of the existing structure. He also relieved the schoolmistress of acting as the school nurse too, so that she could concentrate on schooling the children exclusively. A new staff member became the nurse. Convincing others to give generously was yet another way Thomas Firmin enhanced Christ's Hospital and its seventeenth-century "satellite" campuses.

Outside of London, in order to establish a new school in Hertford, Firmin secured donations which were added to his own substantial gift. Starting in 1683, both boys and

⁵⁰ Lempriere, *A History*, 4.

⁵¹ Nye, *The Life*, 57.

girls boarded in this rural location. At first, the boys outnumbered the girls, 1256 to 70, with the number of girls rising gradually. Then, in 1778, the London ward for girls was closed and they were all sent to Hertford. In the twentieth century, Hertford was designated exclusively for girls.⁵² Firmin also supported the third of the Christ's Hospital schools in Ware, which boarded and educated 200 boys from 1674 – 1760.⁵³

Firmin's life was dedicated to helping those less fortunate than he because of a religious and civic imperative he explains in "Some Proposals for the Employing of the Poor, especially in and about the City of London" (1678, 1681). Deeply troubled by the "idleness" he saw in London among the poor children, Firmin wanted to fill their time usefully. He describes gangs of rowdy children hurling stones at coaches for lack of a better thing to do, or in his words, "for want of better education and employment."⁵⁴ On top of this mischief, Firmin complained that the parents of these able-bodied youths often received monetary support from the parishes. In his mind, that support was wholly unnecessary.

Firmin's "Some Proposals" describes the new charity school/workhouse that he set up to mirror the type of work Christ's Hospital was doing. It even had its own trustees. It was established in Aldersgate; there, girls and boys spent two hours per day learning to read and being instructed in religious principles.⁵⁵ The rest of the day, they learned how to spin flax and hemp and make cloth. The children were paid and required to turn over their wages to their parents toward their own upkeep, and the cloth was distributed among them and the other poor people of the parish once a year. Firmin

⁵² Page, *Christ's Hospital Hertford*, 25.

⁵³ Another small boarding school for girls at Hoddeson was operating from 1672–1696. Firmin paid the rent for the house, which lodged thirty girls and the schoolmistress. Page, *Christ's Hospital Hertford*, 27.

⁵⁴ Firmin, *Some Proposals*, 15.

contended that this occupation was a beneficial alternative to life in the streets. Referring to his duty of Christian charity in education, he quotes Solomon, that without knowledge, “the heart cannot be good and His people perish for lack of knowledge.”⁵⁶

To be sure, Firmin did *not* want to give these poor children an advanced education; he saw that as an inappropriate use of charitable funds. Instead, he thought the poorest sort should learn to read and have religion, and learn a trade they can practice with ease and certainty in keeping with their stations. The children whose parents had the means to pay tuition can fill the jobs that more skilled work requires. Firmin was not opposed to scholarships for poor children, but he did not see them as the answer the Commonwealth’s, and London’s problem with the poor.⁵⁷ Instead he wanted to see a wide-scale application of the school/workhouse along the lines of Christ’s Hospital’s program. The charity schools of the eighteenth century were remarkably close to Firmin’s prototype.

Other philanthropists for the girls’ schools were active in the seventeenth century. George Dunn, an alumnus of Christ’s Hospital, gave generously for the girls to learn to read and write, specifying that their education should help them to “better attain unto the knowledge of God and understanding of His Word.”⁵⁸ Strikingly, besides a William Jumper, who earmarked funds for teaching girls reading, most of the other benefactions were given by women. Sarah Wale, Dame Elizabeth Clere, Margaret Astell, and

⁵⁵ Firmin, *Some Proposals*, 1.

⁵⁶ Firmin, *Some Proposals*, 20.

⁵⁷ Firmin, *Some Proposals*, 17.

⁵⁸ Lempriere, *A History*, 6.

Elizabeth Earswell were among the seventeenth-century large donors for girls' education.⁵⁹

By providing for the educational and material needs of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English girls, in addition to boys, the governors and benefactors of Christ's Hospital inaugurated a new trend. While the curriculum for girls did not include Latin or the casting of accounts, as it did for the boys, and the girls were not fitted for university or highly skilled careers, the girls who learned to read and formed their characters according to Anglican morality and piety found that they could join the ranks of respectable Londoners as maids, nurses, clothworkers, and wives. Reflecting upon his visit to Christ's Hospital, John Evelyn praised the school in a diary notation on March 10, 1687. Impressed by the order and cleanliness of the place, he goes on to consider the lessons learned by both the boys and girls. With the boys, he highlights their instruction in mathematics. With the girls, he recognizes the domestic training they received. The whole is likened to a vision of angels, with the aims of the hospital being carried out with the highest success.

I went this evening to see the order of the boys children at Christ's hospital. There were near 800 boys and girls so decently clad, cleanly lodg'd, so wholesomely fed, so admirably taught - some the Mathematics especially the 40 of the late King's foundation, that I was delighted to see the progress some little youths of 13 and 14 had made. I saw them at Supper, visited their dormitories, and much admired the order, economy and excellent government of this most charitable seminary. Some are taught for the Universities, others designed for seamen, all for trades and callings. The girls are instructed in all such work as becomes their sex and may fit them for good wives and mistresses and to be a blessing to their generation. They sung a psalm before they sat down to supper in the Great Hall to an organ which played all the time with such cheerful harmony that it seemed to me a vision of angels. I came from the place with infinite satisfaction, having never seen a more noble, pious and admirable charity.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Lempriere, *A History*, 6.

The history of Christ's Hospital stretches right up to the present, with admirers and detractors for each century. For our purposes, it is enough to catalogue this extraordinary effort to ease the burden of poverty among London's youth by educating them, caring for them, and securing careers for them, both boys and girls.

Following the grand example in London of Christ's Hospital charity schools, other cities and towns in England founded free schools. The record is almost silent for other girls' schools in England in the sixteenth-century. One boys' school which was founded in 1594, at Bunbury in Cheshire, was admitting a limited number of girls for instruction in reading (English).⁶¹ They were permitted to stay until they learned sufficiently well or until they reached nine years of age. A similar arrangement was in place at Rivington Grammar School, but only one girl, Alice Shaw was registered in 1615, others attended, but according to the Register, not until 1678.⁶²

Red Maids' Hospital. The mission of Red Maids' Hospital in Bristol, founded in 1634, follows the model of Christ's Hospital, combining cloth-work, and domestic training with an academic and religious curriculum, the "class appropriate" education of poor girls. The founder, John Whitson (ca.1555-1629), who was a successful merchant and former alderman and mayor of Bristol, carefully explained how the hospital should be set up after his death. The combination of work and reading was mandated.

Whitson was married three times, and had one step-daughter and two natural daughters, but by 1606, his children were all deceased. In Whitson's memoir, the story is

⁶⁰ As cited in Lempriere, *A History*.

⁶¹ Borer, *Willingly to School*, 67.

⁶² Margaret M. Kay, *The History of Rivington and Blackrod Grammar School*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931).

told of how he overheard his nephews fantasizing about how they would spend their uncle's fortune "in pleasurable and expensive pursuits" after he died.⁶³ Whitson confronted the boys and vowed to give it to charity rather than have it wasted by them.

This gesture against luxury and avarice mirrors Whitson's final farewell in his essay, *The Aged Christian's Final Farewell to the World and Its Vanities, or A Pious Meditation*. In this work, he bids the vanities of the world farewell, knowing he would die sometime relatively soon. Whitson's belief that Providence was the guiding force in his life led him to eschew credit for his wealth, good health, and other blessings in life. Instead, Whitson looks to God with praise and thanks. His treatment of wealth is especially interesting. Describing it as a burden and in some sense, even a curse, "the idols of earthly minds and groveling affections," Whitson relates how heavy responsibility comes with great material fortune.⁶⁴ "Yea, I have learned to esteem the abundance of riches to be but a more burthensome kind of life, where they are possessed; for they rob a man of his quiet, and take away his time, either in the account of them or in the disposing of them."⁶⁵ Admittedly, Whitson was writing as a "worn-out old man," but he retained all of his faculties and valued money for the ills it could alleviate in Bristol. Having made his will and envisioned a new charity for girls in the city, he gave thanks to God, and wrote, "I desire no longer continuance here than to testify my thankfulness to him in the sight of the living; and then welcome that blessed hour, whenever he shall appoint to fetch me hence."⁶⁶

⁶³ John Whitson, *A Pious Meditation, Composed in the Seventeenth Century*. (Bristol: Printed by J. Mills and sold by Nortons, 1829), 34.

⁶⁴ Treasurer's Account of the Estate of the Worshipfull Ald. John Whitson, November 18, 1700-1761, Alderman John Whitson's Charities, Bristol Record Office.

⁶⁵ Whitson, *A Pious Meditation*, 11.

⁶⁶ Whitson, *A Pious Meditation*, 23.

In a few short years after Whitson's death, the Red Maids' Hospital was set up according to its founder's wishes. As two-time mayor of Bristol, Whitson had been the guardian of the city's orphans. His concern for female orphans is witnessed in his Last Will and Testament: "For the maintenance broodinge and education of fforty poore woomon children from time to time forevermore, in a house or hospital in the said city."⁶⁷ Perhaps because he was a father to three daughters, and not three sons, or a mixed brood, Whitson took care to have Bristol's poorest "maids" taken care of, trained in sewing and educated.

In 1634, Mistress Greenwell, the first Matron of the Hospital, accepted twelve girls into the house. Admitted between the ages of eight and ten, most girls stayed at the Red Maids' Hospital until they turned eighteen. The relationship between the Matron and the pupils was styled as an apprenticeship by Whitson, where the girls contributed to their own maintenance by working cloth and doing domestic work. His will reads: "And that the said woman shall have the benefit and profit of all the labors and services of said apprentices for and during the whole term of their apprentice-hoods. . . ."⁶⁸ At the time of their discharge, the girls received clothing and a cash payment to help them go into the service of a private family.⁶⁹

The Mayor's and Aldermens' wives, in particular, were charged inspecting the welfare of the girls. An early manuscript recounts their responsibilities as overseers:

You are appointed to be Visitors of the maids hospitall whom you are desired to be faithfull and to follow the instructions here underwritten.

⁶⁷ Receiver's Account Book, 1629-1784, Alderman John Whitson's Charities, Bristol Record Office.

⁶⁸ As cited in Sampson, *A History of the Red Maids' School*, 18.

⁶⁹ Vanes, *Apparelled in Red*, 23.

First, the women were enjoined to visit the Red Maids' Hospital in person and not send a servant in their stead:

1. You are one day in each month in the year privately in your own persons to visit the children.

Next, they were directed to monitor conditions of health and hygiene:

2. You are to enquire into the health of the children and to . . . their cleanness. . . they may be kept --and free from vermin.

Third, they were to ensure that the girls were provided a nourishing diet:

3. You are to make enquiry concerning their dyet and to see they have what is conuoniont [*sic*].

Fourth and fifth, they were to judge the girls' abilities in reading and domestic work. The women were reminded how important this was for the girls' future prospects.

4. You are to take notice of their ymploym^t: to see that they be duoly taught to reade English and to worke upon those things that may be their perform^t hereafter

5. You are to see that two of them every week be ymployed about househould affaires, and that as often as any of (. . .) placed abroad, others be brought in their rooms by the--- approbation of the Maior and Aldermen.

Lastly, although the manuscript is partially occluded, a general request that the wives make the Mayor and Aldermen aware of anything that needs "remedie" and attention concludes the document.

6. You are upon all occasions as you find - - - the Maior and Aldermen, that they knowingly --:is amis remedie may be applyed accordingly.⁷⁰

Records show that the Red Maids' Hospital was looked after closely during the Civil War of 1642-1651, and given special allotments of money, food, and supplies in

⁷⁰ Address to Maiors Lady of the Citty.

difficult times up through the eighteenth century.⁷¹ Many of Bristol's leaders and administrators were involved in its upkeep and the girls' welfare, taking very seriously their duty to dispense of Whitson's legacy appropriately.

It was standard practice for the Mayor, Aldermen, and Trustees to review petitions for admissions from the citizens of Bristol. One such petition from Philip Broad, Lighterman, survives. The father of three small children, Broad requested that Ann, who was a healthy seven-year old, be welcomed into the Hospital. Broad pointed to "many Misfortunes that hath attended him" as the reason for his poverty and need.⁷² His residency and poverty were two important features that made his daughter eligible for admission.

After Mrs. Rachel Whitson's death in 1654, the RMH trust gained a considerable amount of property and rents. In 1655, the trustees had another school built to lodge the prescribed number of forty girls according to Whitson's will. From the late 1650s through 1722, two buildings with two mistresses accommodated the Red Maids. A complete list of the girls' names from 1696 is the only register that survives. At that time, Mistress Ann Jones' had fourteen girls.⁷³

⁷¹ Abstract of the Leases and Estates made and granted of the lands settled by the worshipfull John Whitson Alderman deceased for good and charitable uses, 1646-1720, Alderman John Whitson's Charities, Bristol Record Office; Bundles, Vouchers, Petitions & Letters, 1709-1710, Alderman John Whitson's Charities, Bristol Record Office; Receiver's Account Book; Treasurer's Account of the Estate of the Worshipfull Ald. John Whitson.

⁷² Phillip Broad, n.d., Petition, Alderman John Whitson's Charities (Red Maids School), Bristol Municipal Charities, Bristol.

⁷³ Vanes, *Apparelled in Red*, 33. Their names were: Elizabeth Knott, Sarah Mason, Joan Mountain, Mary Mason, Ann Hancock, Ann Warren, Christian Brooks, Martha Knott, Mary Hopkins, Margery Bye, Abigail Bevan, Mary Phelps, Hannah Parker, and Elizabeth Sweet. Under Mistress Ann Green's care were twenty girls: Hester Green, Katherine Thomas, Mary Nut, Sarah Harris, Susanna Tilly, Elizabeth Marson, Sarah Sylvester, Hester Davis, Sarah Owen, Ann Ewens, Mary Wind, Susanna Middlebrook, Martha Middlebrook, Mary Wilmot, Joan Wootten, Mary Higgins, Magdalen Warn, Ann Elliott, Mary Doubley, and Elizabeth Edwards.

It is questionable whether John Whitson's desire that the girls learn to read was carried out under Mistress Ann Green whose tenure stretched until at least 1715. Receipts for a "free gifts" of £6 each in 1709 and 1715, for Mistresses Ann Green and Joan Dixon (who followed Mistress Ann Jones) bear Ann Green's mark and Joan Dixon's signature.⁷⁴ Perhaps Mistress Green could read, but she could not write. In 1722, the trustees greatly improved the Hospital by combining the two houses and took great care in hiring a Head Mistress and additional teachers specifically for reading, writing, and sewing. Nearly a century after his death, John Whitson's charity school for girls finally resembled what he had envisioned. The school thrives in Bristol today, still as an all girls' school.

The schools of Warwickshire, York, and Stratford. At least five schools for girls were operating in Warwickshire, York (founded by a Warwickshire resident), and Stratford-upon-Avon (founded by an Essex resident) in the seventeenth century. This section utilizes institutional documents about Warwickshire schools not previously studied. A new attitude toward female intellectual capacity is demonstrated in the founding documents for these schools. Curricula that include classical languages and writing, some co-educational classrooms, and other innovations are tangible measures that these seventeenth-century advocates pioneered for girls. The foundations were typically made through individual bequests and put in the hands of the city council and/or mayor. Usually the girls were schooled in separate quarters and with different teachers from the boys, and they came from the poorest families. Exemplifying these foundations

⁷⁴ Bundles, Vouchers, etc.

are the Warwickshire, York, and Stratford-upon-Avon charity schools treated below, selected because the sources have yet to be examined in a scholarly study.

In 1659 - 1660, the Parish of Polesworth established one such co-educational charity school following the death of Sir Francis Nethersole, the chief benefactor. While the records are not as complete as CH and RMH, a sketch of the school can be constructed. Sir Francis' Trust Deed and Will called for both a schoolmaster and schoolmistress to teach the boys and girls separately in a stone school house he donated in the Polesworth parish. "The boys are to be taught to write and read English, the girls to read and work the needle, and both to be instructed in the principles of the true Christian religion."⁷⁵ Upon Nethersole's death in 1659, an addition was put on the schoolhouse to house the schoolmaster and family.⁷⁶

The first schoolmaster was William Heathcote, and he instructed the boys until his death in 1677.⁷⁷ His son, Francis, took over for him, although perhaps not immediately. Mrs. Barwell was the first school mistress; it seems she left in 1673 and Joan Heathcote, the master's wife, taught the girls until 1694.⁷⁸ Mistress Heathcote's signature demonstrates her ability to write. Following Joan Heathcote's departure in 1694, Mrs. Mary Clayton took over for the girls. The number of students is not listed; one can only assume that the school must have been a day school, as there is no mention of lodging or food expenditures in the collection. The account book, however, kept by the Master Heathcote and those who came after him describes the salary payments,

⁷⁵ Sir Francis Nethersole, March 10, 1655, Deeds, Nethersole's Charity, Polesworth, Warwickshire County Record Office.

⁷⁶ Nethersole, Deeds.

⁷⁷ Letter from Trustees of Nethersole's Charities, February, 1677, Nethersole's Charities, Polesworth, Warwickshire County Record Office.

⁷⁸ Vouchers used in providing accounts to the trustees, 1667-1719, Nethersole's Charity, Polesworth, Warwickshire County Record Office.

repairs to the facility and grounds, as well as money spent for “oyle” and “catechisms.”⁷⁹

The schoolmistress made exactly half the salary of the schoolmaster with £20 and £10 to each per annum.⁸⁰

In part, the aim of the education for both boys and girls was to fit them for apprenticeships. From the years 1677– 1719, certificates were issued by the Ministers of Polesworth parish that the schoolmaster or schoolmistress had examined the students and “passed” them as eligible apprentices being able to read the Bible, say their Catechism, with the boys further being able to write and the girls sew.⁸¹ Recording the payment accompanying a departing student to her apprenticeship was also important for record-keeping. In 1691, Mary Hinks of Lichfield received £3 with her new apprentice, Rachel Clarke. In 1695, the rate remained at £3, which is what Elizabeth Singe of Ammington received when Alice Hunter joined her household.⁸²

In the same district of Warwickshire, roughly contemporary with Sir Francis Nethersole, another gentleman thought it worthwhile to provide for the education of poor boys and girls. In 1647, the Last Will and Testament of George Abbot of Caldecote called for the foundation and maintenance of free co-educational petty schools in two Warwickshire locales, Badsley, and Caldecote. It also stipulated support for a co-ed free school in Bishop Hill Parish in York, where Abbot had additional lands. The source is especially rich giving specific instructions for the type of education and schoolmasters and mistresses to be appointed. The poor children of the towns, and any “other Towns

⁷⁹ William Heathcote, 1660-1719, Accounts of the Schoolmaster, Nethersole's Charity, Polesworth, Warwickshire County Record Office.

⁸⁰ Heathcote, Accounts.

⁸¹ Apprenticeship Indentures, 1677-1719, Nethersole's Charity, Polesworth, Warwickshire County RecordOffice.

⁸² Heathcote, Accounts.

and Parishes that shall send them” were to be instructed how “to read English perfectly and to say by heart Mr. Ball’s little Catechism.”⁸³

Abbott appointed his father-in-law, Colonel William Purefoy, to oversee the foundation of these schools, as well as the provisioning of school books and catechisms. The Minister of Caldecote was called upon to fulfill these duties after Colonel Purefoy’s death. Specifically, Abbott was concerned with the quality of the teachers. He asked the Minister “to oversee and provide for the two aforesaid Free Schools, once or twice a Year to visit them, to see due Execution of this my Will in that particular to whom I give power to put out a debauched or negligent Schoolmaster or Mistress and to put in another, and to provide for the School books and Catechisms. . . .”⁸⁴ The same arrangement was made in York for his school in the Bishop Hill parish. A noteworthy difference from Nethersole’s charity school, and a rare gesture in regard to gender equality in the workplace, Abbott decided that the Schoolmaster and Mistress should be paid the same amount: £4 10s. in Badsey and Caldecote, Warwickshire, and £5 in York.⁸⁵ As no other documents pertaining to these schools survive, it is likely that Abbott’s schools did operate as he stipulated, knowing how fastidiously wills were adhered to and upheld in the courts. The longevity of the schools is unknown.

In 1686, Thomas Coton, Esq. of Warwick donated a cottage and land in the Kingsbury Parish to be used as a school and grounds for poor boys and girls. While most of the other charity schools in England at this time separated the girls and boys for their lessons, Coton’s school did not. Coton apparently did not share the philosophy that the

⁸³ George Abbott, 1647, Last Will and Testament, Parish of Baddesley Ensor, Warwickshire County Record Office.

⁸⁴ Abbott, Last Will and Testament.

⁸⁵ Abbott, Last Will and Testament.

Uffington School founder, Thomas Saunders held in 1637; his rules declared that co-education was “very uncomely and not decent,” girls were not welcome there at all.⁸⁶

The schoolmaster of Coton’s school would teach the children in a mixed setting, and above all, be “a Sober and Religious Man and a Protestant and if it be Convenient to be a Batchelor also.”⁸⁷ The curriculum was also different and went beyond what the other schools offered; the students were “To learn the Bible well and learn the Accidence and further in Latin and to teach them to write a good Secretary Hand before they go from School.”⁸⁸ The inclusion of girls in this type of “male” program is shocking because of their class. Coton, knowingly or unknowingly, followed Vives’ advice in *De institutione feminae Christianae*, and imparted knowledge of the classics to female pupils too. As a rule, poor girls were destined to work in domestic service and their education usually corresponded to this limited future occupation. Reading English was usually the extent of their literacy and learning. It was not unheard of for seventeenth-century girls from the gentry and wealthy merchant class (because they would have leisure time in adulthood) to learn Latin and other languages, as will seen in the discussion below of boarding schools.

In 1676, Mr. John Smarte of Rumford, Essex, endowed a small co-educational school at Stratford-upon-Avon. Like Coton’s school, it appears that here, the girls and boys were taught together. Rather than have another Latin school, Smarte comments that he wants poor men’s children to learn to read and write English. Records for Stratford upon Avon show that Smarte asked the magistrates to find “some auncient woman of

⁸⁶ The Uffington School was in Oxfordshire. As cited in Borer, *Willingly to School*, 67.

⁸⁷ Thomas Coton, April 3, 1686, Foundation, Parish of Kingsbury, Warwickshire County Record Office.

⁸⁸ Coton, Foundation.

your towne to teach them.”⁸⁹ The school mistress’ instructions were very specific regarding her supervision of the twenty children, boys and girls together. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, they should “be taught their catechises,” and each morning from ten-thirty a.m. until twelve noon, they should “bee taught to write” by a separate writing master. The endowment included a sizable parcel of supplies: horne books, primers, psalters, Bibles, catechises, and writing bookes – twenty of each.

The Bibles were for the use of the children inside and outside of school. Smarte was intent on bringing the Word of God to parents through their children. He wrote, “. . . they can read them [the Bibles] at home before their parents at least three tymes on the weeke (for parents are oftymes taken more with their children’s reading than with that they heare at church).”⁹⁰ Smarte was committed to this project and pledged to continue the gift each year for his entire life. If, he told the magistrates, a good job was done, his son would likely continue the school. This kind of annual arrangement appears to be unique. Most English charity schools were endowed with a private trust, and funds were drawn by the Treasurer to support the school at regular intervals. Mr. Smarte’s small school, likely did not last very long.

Merchant Maiden Hospital of Edinburgh, Scotland. In Edinburg, a unique hybrid institution which was both a charity school and a boarding school for girls was devised by Mary Erskine (1629-1707), the chief benefactor, together with Merchant Company. The extant records of the seventeenth-century Merchant Maiden Hospital of Edinburgh permit a comparison of a Scottish school with contemporary English charity schools for

⁸⁹ R.C. Richardson and T.B. James, eds., *The Urban Experience, A Sourcebook: English, Scottish and Welsh Towns, 1450-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 149.

girls. The Merchant Maiden Hospital is the first all girls' school that was founded through the initiative and charity of a woman in either England or Scotland. Erskine gave ten thousand merks Scots money to be "Employed & expended for maintaining and educating at bed boord & Schoolls, & Clothing of young children of the female sex of Merchant burgesses of Edinburgh."⁹¹ To be sure Lady Ramsey's substantial gifts to Christ's Hospital did benefit the girls there, but the funds were not earmarked for them in particular. Mary Erskine's foundation, then, was the first of its kind by a woman. This fact must have meant something to Erskine because in the contract she drew up with the Merchant Company, she required that the school always recognize her as a co-founder with the Company. She was extraordinary, too, because she was an independent private banker in her widowhood.⁹² Indeed, her charitable donations extended to another girls' school called the Trades Maiden Hospital, which was founded on the heels of the Merchant Maiden Hospital.⁹³ Unfortunately, no further information is available about that school.

The Merchant Company of Edinburgh did much to help with the project, facilitating further charitable donations, as well as providing a Hall for the school's rooms. Located in the Cowgate, which was a fashionable part of the city, the Merchant Maiden Hospital began its work in 1696. On the 25th of March, 1707, the Scottish Parliament (in its last session) confirmed the school's foundation.⁹⁴ The Governors established rules for appointing a governess, school mistresses, visiting teachers, a

⁹⁰ Richardson and James, eds., *The Urban Experience*, 149.

⁹¹ Margaret K.B. Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden Hospital of the City of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Former Pupils Guild of the Mary Erskine School for Girls, 1970), 2.

⁹² Mary Erskine, "Testament of Mary Erskine," (1707 [cited September 6, 2007]); available from <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/content/images/famousscots/fstranscript48.htm>.

⁹³ Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 6.

⁹⁴ Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 9.

steward/cook. They also explained the process and privileges of donors in presenting girls for admittance. The criteria for the admittance of poor girls were also laid out, along with that for tuition paying students.

The governess swore an oath that brought her many responsibilities, but also a secure future and a kind of pension for her service. First, it was stipulated that the candidate be at least forty years old and unmarried, and be a true believer of the “reformed Protestant Religion.” Her teaching duties included instructing the girls in “Prayer and Praises,” the catechism, and housewifery. She was expected to keep an inventory of the house, and maintain it in cleanliness. If, after ten years of service, infirmity interfered with her duties, and she was without other means, she would be welcomed to stay at the school in retirement with her needs met in so far as her lodging and meals.⁹⁵

School mistresses were hired as well; all candidates had to be at least twenty-five years old, unmarried, and without children. Each mistress would be responsible for twenty girls, and they were expected to teach the girls how to read, write, do arithmetic, and sing. In addition to these subjects, housewifery, especially cloth-work was central to the day’s work. As the regulations state, “And if Women cannot be got to teach the whole Art above mentioned, then the Governors are to provide an honest Man who shall come to the Hospital six hours, divided into three diets each week, to teach Arithmetick, Writing and Singing.”⁹⁶ The inclusion of this proviso alerts the modern reader to the scarcity of educated women who also happened to be unmarried, and to the firm belief that it was believed that the girls had the aptitude for these subjects.

⁹⁵ Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 120.

⁹⁶ As cited in Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 121.

Another instructor was employed by the Merchant Maiden Hospital, the Steward/Cook. This woman was to be at least twenty-five and unmarried, also. Charged with the duties of buying food and supplies for the school, she was instructed to “take some of the Children by turns to the Market, that they may learn the Art of Marketing.”⁹⁷ In addition to other household work, she was made an assistant in teaching the younger children.

The variety of children accepted at the Merchant Maiden Hospital is remarkable in comparison with the charity school in England which just accepted the poorest girls. While Erskine originally expected that only the poor orphans of the Merchant Company would attend, within the first decade of its founding, the Merchant Maiden Hospital was accepting all kinds of students. As long as the girls were at least seven years old, and not older than eleven, and in good health, governors and donors could present any girl for guaranteed admission. They were encouraged to stay until they reached age fifteen – seventeen. Also, families able to pay tuition could send their daughters or female relatives to the school for two hundred merks plus board. To preserve class distinction, tuition paying students bought the right to sit with the governess at mealtimes.⁹⁸

The standard procedure in admitting a poor girl to the school was for a parent or guardian to submit a petition to the governors. The following request of Sussanna Carmichael, age 7/8, was submitted in 1699. Sussanna’s mother had died and her father was not able to provide for her. The petition is not much different from Phillip Broad’s request of the Red Maids’ Hospital in Bristol which declared his poverty and ill circumstances, except it was written from Sussanna’s vantage point, and not her father’s,

⁹⁷ Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 121.

⁹⁸ Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 123.

which may have kindled greater mercy. From the document, it is not clear if Sussanna was a daughter or grand-daughter of someone belonging to the Merchants Company, but it is clear that she has some kind of patronage, as it states her admission would “obleidge severall persons off Respect” to the hospital. The petition reads,

Unto the Right Honourable the Master and Assistants of the merct Company the humble petition of Sussanna Carmichael lawll Daughter to James Carmichael. . .I am left destitute and have nothing either by my parents or otherwise wherewith to maintain me and educate me . . . your Hon are takeing notice of such orphans who are qualified according to the Constitution of the Maiden Hospitall. May it theirfour please your Hon for the Lords sake to take notice and present me to the sd, Hospitall, which will not only be ane great act off Charitie Bot will singularlie obleidge severall persons off Respect who have recommended me to your Care and may be friendlie to the sd Hospitall . . .⁹⁹

This document attests to the personal nature of admissions policy at the Merchant Maiden Hospital in comparison with its English counterparts.

Boarding schools. Besides the charity schools, boarding schools emerged in England to offer another kind of education for girls from higher-ranking families able to pay school fees. The girls in attendance were freed from the drudgery of working cloth, but at liberty to pursue fine arts and embroidery with gold thread and precious silks. The tuition-collecting boarding schools of the seventeenth century welcomed girls from the upper middle classes and the gentry to study everything from dancing and singing, to Latin and Greek, to Physick and Calligraphy. The schools were referred to as “publick schools” since they were opened to the public, though privately run.¹⁰⁰ The few surviving records show that this type of school for girls caught on quickly. Indeed, the boarding school became a lasting venue for educating the nation’s wealthy daughters who

⁹⁹ Sommerville, *The Merchant Maiden*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Batchiler, *The Virgins Pattern*.

were intent upon “finishing” their persons to be well-suited for marriage, motherhood, social life, and charitable works. A few young ladies also distinguished themselves in academics, preferring Latin to card games.

The majority of boarding schools clustered in Hackney (Middlesex County), a suburb to the north of London. There, several private academies became well-known for the training and education they offered young ladies, so much so, that the town was referred to as the “Ladies’ University.”

Hackney, the Ladies University
Of female Arts the famous Nursery;
Which in their kind at least, may well compare
With those of th’other Sex; what Arts so rare
Which are not liberally furnish’d here?¹⁰¹

The comparison of ‘female Arts’ to ‘those of th’other Sex’ specifically refers to the variety of subjects taught in Hackney. Underlying the wide subject offerings was the new opinion that young ladies could master most, if not all, academic subjects.

Typically, the schools were private houses run by a lady or gentleman well-skilled in several arts: cookery, music, dance, calligraphy, etc. Certain “masters” of either sex were also brought in for instruction in these areas, together with foreign languages, academic subjects, etc. Mrs. Winch ran one such school in the 1630s; the Perwich family ran one from 1643-1660. The early death of Susanna Perwich (1636-1661), who was first a student and then a teacher at the school, prompted her relative, John Batchiler to commemorate her “rare” learning and life in “The Virgin’s Pattern” (1661). Susanna’s father, Robert Perwich and his wife, Susanna’s mother, opened the school in Hackney, and there, Susanna together with many other pupils gained an education; some 800 girls

¹⁰¹ Batchiler, *The Virgins Pattern*.

attended the Perwich's school in the seventeen years it ran.¹⁰² Batchiler's piece provides an exceptional description of Susanna's experience at school. In it, he encouraged all young ladies to follow her pious and learned path. He hoped that her story would, "set a rare Pattern and Example to all that shall happen to hear or read of the Relation."

(Pattern)

According to Batchiler, in her childhood, Susanna's natural curiosity and ability induced her to enjoy learning. She mastered the treble viol with ease, and by age fourteen with the help of Masters Ives, Flood, Gregory, Bing, and Ashberry, she was a talented musician at "all sorts of Musick." *(Pattern)* To this achievement, Susanna also added a mastery of writing, dancing, needlework, housewifery, cookery, drawing, and accountancy. *(Pattern)* What Batchiler admires most and emphasizes to the reader was Susanna's superb moral virtues and devotion to prayer and Bible study. "Mornings and Evening she *never* failed, by her good will, to read *some portion* of *Scripture* (if not called away by *extraordinary* business on a sudden) and to *pour* out her heart to God in *private Prayer*." *(Pattern)* Additionally, he described her as a "diligent writer of Sermons," which refers to her note-taking during sermons. *(Pattern)* While portraying Susanna as an exceptional young lady, Batchiler uses her example to inspire the current female students in Hackney and elsewhere.

A list of boarding schools in and near London is provided in Table 2, and those schools outside of the London area are listed in Table 3. These tabulations represent a minimum of boarding schools operating in England. These insititutions were private and attached to residences and extant documentation is scarce.

¹⁰² Batchiler, *The Virgins Pattern*. Subsequent references appear in the text as *(Pattern)*; the microfilmed facsimile did not include pagination.

See Tables 2 and 3.

Virtually nothing is known about most of these schools, however, some information regarding Mrs. Kilvert's school in London, Mrs. Makin's school at Tottenham-high-Cross, and Mrs. Bellamy's School in Old Boswell Court can be gleaned from a few surviving documents pertaining to the schools. A dedicatory epistle to Mrs. Kilvert, written by the French language teacher she employed at her school for young ladies, attests to the existence and nature of the school in the 1650s. Claudius Mauger, who had taught French in Blois before coming to England, dedicated his book, *The True Advancement of the French Tongue* (1652) to Mrs. Kilvert and his "tres honorées écholieres" at her school. In fact, Mauger provides a list of students he worked with at the school in order to honor them in his publication.¹⁰³

Hailing from "the most Noble Families of England," the students included forty-three young pupils, and it appears that the majority, if not all of the students, were female. However, the names Francis and Th. (abbreviation for Thomas or Thomasine) may or may not have been female. Mauger taught French at the school, and he alludes generally to the other subjects that were taught at this "Academy of Vertue," namely "sage, prudent and religious Education."¹⁰⁴ This list of students is remarkable; the other schools lack

¹⁰³ Mauger, *The True Advancement*. Their names were: Marie Windham, Elizabeth Carleton, the three sisters Catherinne, Maguerite, and Marie Kinaston, the two sisters, Jeane and Catherinne Buckle, Susane Balam, Elizabeth Kaistian, Jeane Thornehill, Jeane Cold, Jeane Budorda, Benedicta Drake, Anne Warner, D. Cooper, Hampton, Pettus, Françoise Greene, and the two sisters, Anne and Marie Winschom, Beatrix Vavassor, Arabella Bencs, Anne and Catherine Amble (sisters), Elizabeth and Marie Fanshaw (sisters), E. Warner, Anne Methen, T. Japson, Madame Elizabeth Pope, Susanna Cocks, C. Enion, Elizabeth Doxon, Elizabeth Pincent, J. Harvey, D. Havell, T. Bellows, Luce Web, M. and Francis Allston, Catherine Okely, Th. Horner, and Marie Bridges.

¹⁰⁴ Mauger, *The True Advancement*, Epistle Dedicatory.

records of any kind. On account of her fame as a poet, it is known that Katherine Philips (1631-1664), also known as “Orinda,” attended Mrs. Salmon’s school.¹⁰⁵

Mrs. Bathsua Makin’s school opened some years later, and offered a robust curriculum. In Chapter One of this study, Makin was introduced as an advocate for girls’ education and schools. Her work, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673) which included an advertisement for her school, and the biographical accounts of her, suggest that her school was likely the most rigorous of its kind in the late seventeenth century. Tottenham-high-Cross, located four miles from London, was in some sense a beneficiary of Makin’s life’s work. She was the eldest daughter of schoolmaster Henry Reginald who had a school for boys in St. Mary Axe parish, as well as one in Chichester with two others masters that was founded by Samuel Hartlib.¹⁰⁶ Whether or not she studied alongside the boys at her father’s schools is not known, but Reginald certainly encouraged his daughter’s scholarship, which is confirmed by his will which left Makin all of his books in 1637.¹⁰⁷ Makin imbibed Comenian pedagogy from her father and his academic circle and used engaging techniques and illustrations with her own pupils.¹⁰⁸ As the tutor to Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, Makin concentrated on teaching foreign languages with great success. Her reputation as a master linguist was widespread, likely bringing her students.

¹⁰⁵ William Robinson, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hackney, in the County of Middlesex* (London: J.B. Nichols & Son, 1842), 263.

¹⁰⁶ Jean R. Brink, "Bathsua Reginald Makin: 'Most Learned Matron,'" *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1991): 313-326, 315, 317.

¹⁰⁷ Brink, "Bathsua," 318.

¹⁰⁸ Makin, *An Essay*, 37.

Table 2:
English Boarding Schools in the London and the
Vicinity¹⁰⁹

School Name (when known) and London Neighborhood (Suburb)	
1.	Ladies Hall, South of Greenwich in Deptford in operation in 1617
2.	Walbrook, opened in the 1620s
3.	Stepney, run by Mrs. Friend from 1628-1638
4.	Hackney, run by Mrs. Winch in the 1630s
5.	Hackney, run by Mr. Perwich from 1643-1660
6.	Hackney, initially run by Mrs. Salmon from 1640s-1700
7.	Putney from the 1640s-1650s
8.	Run by Mrs. Margaret Kilvert in the 1650s ¹¹⁰
9.	Islington, run by Esreal Tong in the 1660s
10.	Tottenham-high-Cross, run by Mrs. Bathsua Makin in the 1670s
11.	Gorges House in Chelsea, run by Mr. Josias Priest in the 1670s-1680s
12.	High-Wickham, Buckinghamshire (also known as Bucks County), Mrs. Bellamy's School, ca. 1723 ¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Data compiled from Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England*, 136-137; Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, 68-72.

¹¹⁰ Identified by the present author, as found in Mauger, *The True Advancement*.

¹¹¹ Identified by the present author, as found in Bellamy, *Miscellany*.

Table 3: English Boarding Schools outside of the London Metropolitan Area¹¹²

School Name (when known) and London Neighborhood (Suburb)
1. Norwich, in the year 1573
2. Canterbury, in the seventeenth-century
3. Windsor, in the seventeenth-century
4. Westerham in Kent, run by Mr. Isley, in the 1620s
5. Manchester, run by Mrs. Parnell Amye, in the 1640s
6. Mersham, run by Mr. Beavan, in the 1640s
7. Colchester, run by Mrs. Piggott, in the 1650s
8. Leicester, run by Mrs. Falkland, in the seventeenth-century
9. Leicester, run by Mr. Josias Priest, possibly contemporary with his Chelsea school (1670s-1680s)
10. Shrewsbury, in the 1690s
11. Bury, in the County of Suffolk, College run by Mrs. Wood (Mrs. Bellamy's sister-in-law) ca. 1723 ¹¹³

¹¹² Data compiled from: Charlton, *Women, Religion, and Education in Early Modern England*, 139-141; Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, 72.

¹¹³ Identified by the present author, as found in Bellamy, *Miscellany*.

As she describes in *An Essay*, Makin maintains that studies and, languages, in particular, need not be so difficult to obtain if one follows Comenius' system rather than the widely used Lilly's Grammar for Latin. Pointing to Comenius' *Janus Linguarum* and *Orbis Pictus*, Makin credited Comenius with a speedier "syncristic" system of learning, whereby the pupil learns by comparing knowledge in one realm to another.¹¹⁴ She found that in this way Latin could be taught in six months, and French in three months, if the student mastered English and Latin first. This testimony and description may be the only pedagogical explanation for girls' education of the period. Makin does not limit her methods to girls; in theory, her methods apply to all, and she locates the interest in learning in both sexes: "there is in all innate desire of knowing, in Women as well as Men: if the ways to the Temple of Pallas be so tedious and intricate, that they confound or tire her Servants; or, if you dress up Learning in such an ugly and monstrous shape, that you affright children; I have nothing to say to such, but that they should reform their Schools, or else we will think they have no desire any, either Male or Female, should be instructed."¹¹⁵ Deeply interested in engaging and efficient lessons, Makin's advocacy made no distinction between female and male intellectual capacity and natural tendency to boredom. She placed the onus for effective learning with the instructors.

Mrs. Bellamy's school may not have had the classical offerings that Makin made available, but her husband's writings show that the students at Old Boswell-Court in Buckinghamshire were studying uncommon and controversial subjects, like public speaking and the dramatic arts. In *The Young Ladies' Miscellany: or, Youth's Innocent*

¹¹⁴ Makin, *An Essay*, 38.

¹¹⁵ Makin, *An Essay*, 33-34.

and *Rational Amusement*, (1723), Daniel Bellamy (b. 1687) hoped to assist in the task of girls' schooling which he declared to be of "great Value and Importance," in doing so, he provides the richest document about the curriculum and aims of any of the early English boarding schools.¹¹⁶ The secondary works on girls' schools have thus far neglected this source, and it is discussed in detail here.

Dedicated to his sister, Mrs. Hannah Wood, who was the School Mistress of the College-Boarding School in Bury (Suffolk County), the work is a collection of short essays on girls' education and letters to his wife and her pupils. It is prescriptive as well as descriptive, because he purports to be writing about what his wife is already doing in her school, but hoping that others will use the methods described in the work. Specifically, he wanted his wife's pupils to have a written account of Mrs. Bellamy's thoughts on education, to "give your Young Ladies an Opportunity to read, and reflect on the Precepts (which as Occasion offers) you recommend to their Practice by Word of Mouth." (*Miscellany*, 168.) The title page announced that only Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Wood have the right to sell copies at their schools.

Repeatedly citing the late bishop of Cambray, Fénelon, as well as Erasmus, on the subject of girls' schooling and upbringing, Bellamy combined the leading theories of these important advocates from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to his own original ideas about girls' education for actual schools and pupils. Since, the "Rational Faculties" of girls and women were not yet being appreciated, he lamented that study and learning was often equated with "Imprudence and ill Conduct." (*Miscellany*, Preface.)

¹¹⁶ Bellamy, *Miscellany*, Dedication. Besides writing and publishing several plays, in 1737, Bellamy published, D. Bellamy, *The Christian Schoolmaster: containing, an abstract of scripture-history, by way of question and answer* (London: S. Birt, J. Hodges, and R. Baldwin, 1737). Subsequent references to this work appear in text as (*Miscellany*, 00.)

He rebuked parents for making this mistake, and quoting Fénelon echoed the belief that parents were “. . . too solicitous about the Ornament of their [children’s] Persons, and too remiss, if not wholly regardless, of the Endowments of their Minds.” (*Miscellany*, Preface.)

Bellamy wholeheartedly agreed with Fénelon about the ideal type of young lady, in fact, he included the section of *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699) that described Antiope, the Telemachus wanted to marry on account of her piety, industry, and virtue. Bellamy offered this idealized character “as the noblest Pattern for your Imitation” to the boarding school pupils as someone to emulate in her modesty, prudence, obedience, and grace. (*Miscellany*, 177.) Antiope managed her father’s house after her mother’s death, and exhibited skill in all things domestic – “the good Order of her Father’s House is her Glory.” (*Miscellany*, 180.) The Goddess Minerva commends Telemachus’ feelings for the girl and describes her virtuous qualities in great detail. She especially highlights Antiope’s power to inspire her father to “Justice and Compassion,” a power which will one day benefit her husband: “Thus Antiope, without Assuming any Authority, and without taking Advantage of her Charms, will one Day manage the Heart of a Husband, as she now touches her Lute, when she would draw from it the most melting Sounds.” (*Miscellany*, 182.) How this view of women’s influence presages Rousseau’s ideas in the *Émile* and *Julie*, the subject, in part of the Epilogue. Bellamy anticipates Rousseau in another way as well. In the *Preface to the Essay on the Art of Pronunciation*, Bellamy writes, “I am fully persuaded that if Learning was more frequently made the Object of Diversion, . . . we should find them more eager in the Pursuit of Knowledge The Ornaments of the Mind would be set before them in a much more agreeable Light, and be

pursu'd by them with double Industry and Application.” As Rousseau would contend in the *Émile* decades later, there was no reason to shroud learning in a gloomy method.

As mentioned above, Bellamy's admiration for pedagogues extended to Erasmus as well. In fact, in *Letter V* of the *Miscellany*, Bellamy stated that he translated Erasmus' *The Institution of Marriage* (1526) from the Latin for the students' benefit. Bellamy counted the transition from maiden to wife as a “very hazardous” shift because it bound husbands and wives until one spouse's death. He felt duty-bound to give his wife's pupils counsel on their grave, but not necessarily doomed course as they approached courtship and marriage proposals. He wrote that since the “best Precepts for the Advancement of mutual Love, and conjugal Endearments” are contained in Erasmus' writing. Bellamy advised: “If you can but Prevail on your selves to follow the Rules which are there prescribed, when Providence shall allot you your future Partners . . .,” love and happiness will reign during the married state. (*Miscellany*, 191-92.) In a “World of Calumny and Fraud,” each spouse must look to the other's “Interest and Happiness,” in order to merit love and esteem. (*Miscellany*, 192.) Bellamy embraced Erasmus' marriage model that situated two partners, companions, or friends in conjugal harmony rather than the traditional patriarchal model handed down from the Patristic tradition. This Erasmian innovation became a standard lesson for boarding-school girls entrusted to Mrs. Bellamy.

The Bellamy School's use of ideas from Fénelon and Erasmus' works distinguishes it as a place of learning that sought some pedagogical direction from above. For this dissertation and the history of education in general, Daniel Bellamy's *Miscellany* is extremely important because it demonstrates the readiness and fluidity of adopting

advocates' arguments for female education, as well as the type of education to be imparted in an actual school (and perhaps two schools, if his sister's boarding school is included). It also shows that English boarding schools, because of their private nature, could pick and choose what to adopt and how to enhance their curriculum in other ways. For example, the Bellamy School was likely a pioneer in offering lessons in public speaking and the dramatic arts to girls, as Mr. Bellamy offered a justification for teaching these subjects which had long been prohibited in any plan of female education in England.

Mr. Bellamy can appeal to no scholarly predecessor in his defense of public speaking for girls, because there is none before him. His defense of this subject is short and straightforward. People ought not to object to young ladies speaking in public and displaying strength of voice and mind because this sort of display is nobler than the public display already in fashion, dancing. Bellamy counts himself as a great admirer of the art of dancing, but in comparison, he thinks displaying the "Beauties of their Mind" in public speaking is an even better occupation for girls. (*Miscellany*, Preface.) He explains the most common objection usually given, and it is tied to fears about transgressions upon modesty and chastity:

There are too many, I know, are of the Opinion that the Art of Pronunciation is no Female Accomplishment; that the Ladies were design'd by Nature for the Objects of Sight only; and that to encourage them in Dramatic Representations is to offer Violence to their Native Modesty, and give them too early a Relish for the loose Entertainments of the Town. (*Miscellany*, Preface.)

Taking the objection seriously, Bellamy writes, "This would, I own, be a most heavy charge, was it as just as it is common, and the Custom I would here introduce, was the Danger they are so apprehensive of real, ought to be rejected with the utmost

Contempt.” (*Miscellany*, Preface.) Works can be selected for their moral content, and be “strictly virtuous” – Bellamy decries too cautious parents and guardians who keep their daughters from many amusements and subjects that are harmless and, to the contrary, instructive and innocent. He flatly states that “such Fears are merely imaginary, and altogether groundless,” and openly printed his methods for teaching young ladies to use “a firm, strong, articulate Voice.” (*Miscellany*, Preface.)

In Letter IV, “On Innocent Recreations” which was addressed to the young ladies attending his wife’s school, Bellamy suggests that instead of cards and gaming, that conversation, theater, walking, dancing, and reading become their regular pastimes. Reading, in particular, is singled out as the most agreeable and entertaining of the innocent recreations. The booklist he offers is purposely short so as not to overwhelm the pupils and lead to “a Confusion of Thoughts and Words,” instead he hopes to bring about their improvement and amusement with well-chosen titles. Starting with Scripture and religious commentaries, he adds to the list a few conduct manuals for Ladies, the poetry of Milton, some histories of England and translations of the *Adventures of Telemachus*, and *Don Quixote*. Plays are also enumerated, and include *Cato*, *Love and Empire*, *Tamerlane*, the *Mourning Bride* and others. More title could be suggested for those with “extraordinary Capacities,” but this short list was designed to make reading pleasurable and still contribute to the students’ edification: “Let them use these, as the Food of the Mind.” (*Miscellany*, 189.) His *Miscellany* shows us that the “Food of the Mind” served at the Bellamy School was a fusion cuisine that did not shirk from mixing new subjects like public speaking and drama with accepted and established subjects like religion, morality, reading, domestic skills, and painting, and dancing.

Quaker Schools. During the course of the late seventeenth century, the newly formed Society of Friends or Quakers opened boarding schools for their sons and daughters. Differing in core beliefs from the dominant Anglican doctrine, Quakers held that an Inner Light can be present in both sexes, and that the Inner Light is a gift and guiding force of God. Early modern Quakers argued for complete spiritual equality among the sexes, even if they gave males and female different roles in the leadership of the Society. Founder, George Fox, and his wife Margaret Fell Fox (1614-1702) were both outspoken proponents of women's spiritual and intellectual capacities.¹¹⁷ Their own children were educated by a private tutor, as were other children of wealthy Quakers.¹¹⁸

Fortunately, Fox and Fell were prolific writers, and their thoughts on female learning and related topics have been preserved. In 1656, George Fox wrote a tract entitled, *The Woman Learning in Silence*, which was followed in 1666 by Margaret Fox's *Womens Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed by the Scriptures*, (three years before their marriage). Margaret Fox answered the Pauline injunction on women's speaking in church, "God hath put no such difference between the Male and Female as men would make . . . all this opposing and gainsaying of Womans Speaking, hath risen out of the bottomless Pit, and Spirit of Darkness."¹¹⁹ A woman's capacity and privilege to speak, preach or teach was derived from her spiritual importance as one of God's creation and

¹¹⁷ Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Cathy Diane Nunamaker Ream, "Margaret Fell as Educator: A Woman who Learned and Led," (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1998); Mary Ann Schofield, "Womens Speaking Justified": The Feminine Quaker Voice, 1662-1797," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 6, no. 1 (1987): 61-77.

¹¹⁸ William A.C. Stewart, *Quakers and Education as seen in their Schools in England* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 37.

¹¹⁹ Margaret Fell, *Womens Speaking Justified* (Los Angeles: The Augustan Reprint Society, 1979).

Light. In keeping with this philosophy, then, was the need for schools, not just for Quaker boys, but also for their girls.

The first school for girls was initiated and set up by George Fox in 1668 in Shacklewell, a district in Hackney, despite the Act of Uniformity which was issued in 1662 to prohibit anyone from running a school that did not adhere to the Anglican liturgy.¹²⁰ The first school mistress was the Quaker widow Mary Stott, and Jane Bullock, also a Quaker woman, took over in 1677.¹²¹ By 1671, there were at least fifteen Quaker boarding schools in England. The new schools at Warrington and Brighton were exclusively for girls, and those at Ramsay in Hampshire and Thornbury in Gloucestershire were co-educational.¹²² Quaker schools were not set up directly through the rulings of the Yearly Meetings, individual schoolmasters and mistresses had to gather support from within the community and be willing to run the risk of imprisonment for their actions.

A group of Friends in Warrington decided at the Penketh Preparatory Meeting, on May 16, 1690 that: “whereas some poor Friends have children fit for learning and their parents not capable to be at the charge, it is agreed at this meeting that all such children that this meeting shall think fit to be put to school and the charge be raised by general collection within this meeting.”¹²³ By 1693, Gilbert Thompson I (1658-1719) had completed setting up the school, giving the schoolmaster quarters on the ground floor

¹²⁰ Lloyd Arnold, *Quaker Social History: 1669 - 1738* (London: Longmans, Green, 1950), 168.

¹²¹ Peter Daniels, "Quakers in Stoke Newington, Part 1: to the Mid-Nineteenth Century," (2007 [cited October 18, 2007]); available from <http://www.stokenewingtonquakers.org.uk/nbhist1.html>.

¹²² Kamm, *Hope Deferred*, 76.

¹²³ Thanks to Julia Hudson, assistant archivist and records manager of the Library of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, for directing me to this source. Warrington Preparative Meeting of Friends, May 16, 1690, 1690, Minutes, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, Warrington.

with a classroom upstairs.¹²⁴ The Penketh school had great longevity, running up through the twentieth century. By the eighteenth century, Quaker teachers were no longer harassed, and more and more non-Quaker families began sending their children to Quaker schools in greater numbers.¹²⁵

It is not clear if boys and girls were taught the same subjects and charged the same amount at the earliest Quaker schools. But, by the eighteenth century, teachers received more tuition for teaching boys, double in fact. In 1760, the *Report of the Meetings for Sufferings* on the Friends' schools recommended that teachers should receive ten shillings for each Quaker boy and five shillings for each Quaker girl in the schools.¹²⁶ Presumably, the boys had an enhanced curriculum for the additional shillings. While some members of the Society of Friends voiced concerns for advanced learning arguing that it could make people proud and vain, they did not dislike learning itself. So long as the children were encouraged to speak plainly and not put on airs about their learning, education, even advanced education, was seen as practical and beneficial. Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were recognized as the Biblical languages and were studied by some.¹²⁷

In the American colonies, Quaker parents often taught their own children to read and write, and seventeenth-century Philadelphia had a "Dame School" where widows and older women taught girls how to read and write.¹²⁸ In their more rural settlements, however, poor Quaker children were often completely unlettered. According to Joan

¹²⁴ Friends, Minutes.

¹²⁵ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, 20.

¹²⁶ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, 47.

¹²⁷ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, 30.

¹²⁸ Joan M. Jensen, "Not Only Ours but Others: The Quaker Teaching Daughters of the Mid-Atlantic, 1790-1850," *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1984): 3-19, 6.

Jensen's study on female Quaker teachers and students, it was not until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that Quakers in Pennsylvania resolved to open charity schools for girls and boys, reaching out to "negro" students in addition to those of European descent. In 1796, the Philadelphia Quakers formed a group expressly for female education called the Society for Free Instruction of Female Children.¹²⁹

While divine knowledge and light was prized above all else, the Quakers welcomed secular learning that did not endanger one's spiritual state. A watchful eye was kept in order to prevent profane classical authors like Ovid from corrupting the children's lessons.¹³⁰ Fox and many other Friends printed books for children, catechisms, primers, advice manuals and other textbooks. Like other English groups opening schools in this period, the Quakers believed that education would be a moral aid and keep children from idleness and sin. "The [London] Yearly Meeting of 1697 advised that, '... your children may not only be instructed in the languages and sciences, in the way of Truth, but likewise in some profitable and commendable labour or industrious exercises which may prevent many temptations attending idleness and instill principles of Truth.'"¹³¹ Keeping children busy at school and work was a shared strategy transcending all Christian creeds.

Underscoring all of these groundbreaking schools was a reevaluation of female worth and ability. Members of English society trained their daughters with hopes that education would help the girls as individuals, future wives and mothers, and as

¹²⁹ Jensen, "Not Only Ours," 6, 8.

¹³⁰ Arnold, *Quaker Social History*, 169.

¹³¹ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, 30.

contributors to the public good. Some groups, like the Institute of Mary studied below, looked to education for spiritual renewal as well.

The Schools of Mary Ward's Institute

The Yorkshire recusant, Mary Ward (1585-1645), attempted to carve out a new role for religious women within the Counter Reformation church, which included running schools for girls. Her schools combined elements of the English charity schools and boarding schools, because each house offered a free day school for poor students and a boarding school for students who could pay tuition. Ward's mission bears some similarity with the Ursuline project; however, its autonomous structure and ancillary functions made it controversial in a way that the male-managed Ursulines were not. This contentious seventeenth-century Catholic Institute had its roots in Yorkshire, but began its girls' schools on the Continent, as England was intolerant of all Catholic Orders. The history of the Institute and its schools is significant not only because of its great geographical scope, from England to Hungary, but also for its remarkable curriculum for girls pursuing secular or religious lives.

The name of Mary Ward's Institute has changed many times since the early seventeenth century. In the early years, the group was known as the *English Ladies*, a name that connotes their nationality and upper-class standing. At the same time, critics often called them *Jesuitesses*, but it seems some friends may have used this name as well. The formal name used in the earliest plan of 1612, and in Bishop Blaise's *Relatio*, was the Institute of Mary (IM). The name, *Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, was used

from 1877 onward, to clarify that the Institute's name referred to Mary, Christ's mother and not Mary Ward. The growth of the Institute during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not a unified movement. Therefore, independent branches adopted different names. The Irish branch used the name *Loretto Nuns*, and continues to do so. In the 1990's, the Institute was permitted to use the name of Jesus, and they styled themselves the Congregation of Jesus, which, of course is very close to the Society of Jesus.

As the Institute of Mary was a massive undertaking, several sections of analyses are necessary. First, Mary Ward's early life in Yorkshire is recounted. Next, as her religious vocation took shape, the history of how she established the Institute is examined. In 1631, the Institute was condemned in a Papal Bull; a new interpretation about the nature of the suppression is offered. The Institute's history from the time of suppression to the end of the seventeenth century shows how the schools of the Institute were its saving grace, when all else was lost.

Sources for the Institute of Mary's schools are scarce, and most have been used in various studies conducted by Institute members, or members of the Society of Jesus. In an effort to learn more about the Institute's schools, this chapter successfully probes documentary sources consulted at the Bar Convent, York. They include Mary Ward's autobiographical fragments, letters, and retreat notes for information referring to her schools. While some of these sources have been used in other studies, they have not been combined for an inclusive study of the girls' schools and interpreted with sufficient relation to the intellectual context.

Begun in 1609, Ward's Institute was outwardly repudiated by the Roman Church when Urban VIII formally suppressed it in 1631. The Institute was denounced for its proposed Jesuit-like hierarchy, its assumption of proselytizing among heretics and the Infidel, and its oxymoronic desire to be both a female religious order and remain unenclosed in the wake of Trent. What the sources show, however, is that the application of the Papal Bull was uneven, and while a number of houses were closed down, suppression of the Institute itself was temporary, lasting only from 1631-1634. Instead, because the Institute's schools for girls were so highly valued in Catholic Europe, Ward and her associates were permitted to regroup as seculars and carry on with this one "proper" function, the schooling of girls.

Other works erroneously view the suppression of the Institute as a wholesale renunciation of Mary Ward's vision, which, it is true, the Bull of Suppression claims to be thus.¹³² Instead, it is argued here that the Bull represents the Church's attempt to root out the Institute because of its non-educative aspirations. The events that followed in the 1630s, despite the Bull's directives, show that Ward's schools for girls were valued and permitted by Catholic leaders everywhere. Even Pope Urban VIII, who affixed his name to the very Bull that aimed to exterminate the Institute, made allowances for Ward's schools. In Protestant England, the schools were welcomed and supported by the Catholic nobility and gentry, and all hints of Catholicism were concealed from the public eye.

Mary Ward's Life. Reading Ward's writings and other sources about her, one is

¹³² Cameron, *A Dangerous Innovator*; Mary Catherine Elizabeth Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward (1585-1645)*, vol. 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1882); Peter Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the*

struck by her steadfast commitment to the full vision she had for the Institute as a cadre of women devoted to a diversity of religious and educative works. Her firm resistance to suggestions that the Institute be limited in any way is remarkable. Biographies of Mary Ward abound, and all rightfully portray her strength in the face of adversity and challenges; most have been written by members of her Institute or the Jesuit Order.¹³³ Their work restores Ward to her Institute, for in 1749, Benedict XIV forbade the Institute from recognizing Mary Ward as its founder when he issued a decree known as *Quamvis iusto*. Members who joined the Institute over the next one hundred sixty years often did not know about Ward at all. In 1909, the papal order was reversed; the Sacred Congregation for Religious declared in a *Rescript* dated April 20, 1909, “. . . that there is nothing henceforward to prevent the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commonly called the English Virgins, which has so excellently deserved of the Christian Commonwealth, from acknowledging Mary Ward, even publicly, as its foundress, due regard being had to the Decrees of the Holy See.”¹³⁴ The twentieth-century studies of Ward thus made it their task to introduce Mary Ward to the history of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sympathetic scholars, like Father Grisar, S.J., also researched Ward’s life and Institute as a contribution to the canonization process that was

Continent 1558-1795 (London-New York: Longmans Green, 1914); Littlehales, *Mary Ward*; Peters, *Mary Ward*; Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*.

¹³³ Cameron, *A Dangerous Innovator*; Chambers, *The Life*; Joseph S.J. Grisar, "Vani tentativi di Maria Ward di fondare scuole femminili a Napoli, 1623-1628," in *Studi in onore di Riccardo Filangieri* (Naples: L'Arte Tipografica, 1959) 525-549; Littlehales, *Mary Ward*; The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, ed., *The Heart and Mind of Mary Ward* (Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke, 1985); Mary Oliver, *Mary Ward, 1585-1645* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959); Peters, *Mary Ward*; Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*.

¹³⁴ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 217.

underway.¹³⁵

Since Ward's life is now well-researched, it will suffice to offer a brief account here that explains her decisions early in life that led her away from traditional family life and to an innovative religious vocation. Mary Ward was born to a landed family of gentry standing in Yorkshire, England in 1585, during Queen Elizabeth's reign. The Wards were ardent Catholics and soon came to bear hardships recusants felt in this period, financial and otherwise. The Act of Uniformity (1559) required that people pay a fine of twelve pence for not attending the Book of Common Prayer Service of the Established Church of England. Other laws were put in place to prevent the harboring of priests, such as a statute issued the year Mary Ward was born (1585) that made protecting priests a capital felony. The Wards and some other forty "core recusant families" of York were subject to these laws that aimed to have all English subjects conform.¹³⁶

Family and friends were jailed, including Mary Ward's maternal grandmother, Ursula Wright, who spent fourteen years in prison on account of her allegiance to Roman Catholicism. The lives of local priests and other Catholics were taken for committing "acts of treason" in practicing their faith. Viewed as heroic and saintly martyrdoms by Yorkshire Catholics, the executions did little to deter them from their faith. As Ward recounts in her *Autobiography*, as a young woman of sixteen years or so, she often had ". . . burning desires to be a martyr and my mind for a long time together fixed upon that happy event; the sufferings of the martyrs appeared to me delightful for attaining to so

¹³⁵ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 136.

¹³⁶ Marie B. Rowlands, "Recusant Women, 1560-1640," in *Women in English Society*, ed. Mary Prior (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 149-180, 150.

great a good, and my favourite thoughts were how? And when?"¹³⁷ With age, Ward came to believe that working for God's glory was better than martyrdom: "It is a greater grace to help save souls than oneself to suffer martyrdom."¹³⁸

The Wards sent Mary at age five to live with her maternal grandparents, Robert and Ursula Wright at Ploughland Hall, Welwick (Yorkshire); she remained with them for five years.¹³⁹ Under her grandmother's tutelage Mary began a life-long love of learning and religious practices. For five years she returned to her parents' house, and then, in 1600, she was sent to live with a kinswoman of her mother's of the Babthorpe family. The Babthorpes also ran an underground Catholic household. Ward writes in her autobiography that when she was between fifteen and sixteen years old, a devout maid that was a servant of the house strongly influenced her, that "by some speeches of hers I found myself moved to love a religious life."¹⁴⁰

Although Ward received honorable marriage proposals that had her parents' endorsement, she announced her preference for a religious life and persuaded her parents to support her vocation. Over the next couple of years, Ward struggled with her religious path. Like other Catholic English young women of her time and her means, she traveled to the nearby haven of Saint-Omer in 1606 and inquired about joining a religious order.¹⁴¹ She approached the Jesuit College there, and Father George Keynes, S. J. directed her to the Poor Clares. Due to an influx of English women, regular admission had been capped and Ward was only offered lay sister status by the Poor Clares. She

¹³⁷ Mary Ward, "Second Letter of Instruction: Mary Ward's Autobiographical Fragments," (unpublished, n.d.), 3.

¹³⁸ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 1:467.

¹³⁹ Mary Ward, "First Letter of Instruction: Mary Ward's Autobiographical Fragments," (unpublished, n.d.), 8-9.

¹⁴⁰ Ward, "First Letter of Instruction," 18.

¹⁴¹ Ward, "First Letter of Instruction," 22.

accepted this status and remained with them for approximately ten months. Seeing a need for a Poor Clares convent for English nuns at St. Omer, she worked with Bishop Jacques Blaise to establish one between 1607 and 1608. Through a compromise, the new convent was established in Gravelines so as to be within a fortified town (a stipulation reflecting the Church's renewed protectionist policy since the Council of Trent).

By April 1609, as a novice of the Poor Clares, Ward still had misgivings about her own vocation. Her confessor, Father Roger Lee, S.J., counseled her during this period and witnessed her profession of a vow of chastity. Inspired by a mystical experience, Ward felt that she "was not to be of the Order of St. Clare," but that there was "some other thing I was to do, what, or of what nature I did not see, nor could I guess, only that it was to be a good thing, and what God willed."¹⁴² Ultimately, in early September of 1609, she left the Order of St. Clare, having decided that it was not the best way for her to serve God, and she freely pursued another path. Upon her return to England that October, as described in her autobiography, Ward experienced a mystical encounter whereby she became devoted to promoting the *Gloria Dei* – a key Jesuit concept since the Order's inception.

Inspired by this fresh vocation, she gathered several English virgins and they traveled to Saint-Omer, where she founded the first house of her Institute, complete with a boarding school for English girls and a day-school for local girls in 1609. It was in 1611, that Ward's mystical experiences came to a head when, as she recalled in a letter to the Nuncio Albergati, ca. 1621, "I heard distinctly not by sound of voice, but intellectually understood, these words "Take the same as the Society."¹⁴³ Hence forward,

¹⁴² Ward, "Second Letter," 16.

¹⁴³ Mary Ward, "Fifth Letter of Instruction," (unpublished, n.d.), 11.

she directed herself toward establishing a female order that mirrored as closely as possible the Society of Jesus.

Given Ward's background and exposure to Jesuit priests, which brought her great familiarity with the Ignatian mission and the Spiritual Exercises, she knew a great deal about the Order. Gaining papal approval for a female Jesuit-like order became Ward's mission. The Counter Reformation Church relied upon the Jesuits to work amongst the people for the salvation of souls; Ward's life became a grand attempt to have women formally join this effort.

Ward and the founding members of the Institute of Mary were convinced that an active apostolate for women in an unenclosed environment was a divine imperative. As English Catholics, they were distraught at the diminished number of their co-religionists and wanted to work for conversions and prepare people to receive the Sacraments, seeing that Catholic education was all but eradicated in England. In doing so, they risked their lives and underwent legal trials and prison terms. Hardship and risk also plagued them in Catholic domains because of the radical nature of their society. Persistence inspired by faith proved to be a good match for all of the Institute's opponents, and within her lifetime, Ward opened ten foundations with attendant boarding schools and day schools. The first foundations of the Institute were at Saint-Omer (Spanish Netherlands), Liège (Belgium), Cologne and Trier (Rhineland/Germany), Rome, Naples, and Perugia (Italy), Munich (Bavaria/Germany), Vienna (Austria), and Pressburg (Hungary, modern day Bratislava in Slovakia).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ See Table 4: Institute of Mary, Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Foundations.

Establishing the Institute, 1609 – 1616. The first foundation of the Institute was made at Saint-Omer between 1609 and 1610. When Mary Ward and her first companions arrived at this veritable haven for English Catholic refugees, they found themselves in a very auspicious place for the opening of girls' schools. The Spanish branch of the Hapsburg Empire controlled Saint-Omer. The ruling couple, Archduke Albert of Austria and Archduchess Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia were great patrons of Catholic Orders and education. Ward's warm reception at Saint-Omer may have been prepared, in a sense, by the late medieval Beguine tradition of teaching girls that still took place in parts of the Netherlands and other continental locales in the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁵ Certainly, Ward did not introduce the concept of schooling girls at Saint-Omer, but she did expand it to include English Catholics and poor local girls.

In 1612, Ward with her companions, Barbara Babthorpe and Anne Gage, submitted a petition to the Archduchess which stated the purpose of their work in Saint-Omer and asked for her favor and protection. Presumably, this was a formal request made after the Archduchess had already approved of Ward's initiative, as Ward refers to some of the pupils enrolled at the time,

Most Serene Lady, - Barbara Babthorpe, Anne Gage and Mary Ward declare that, seeing the necessities of the Catholics of England, and the difficulty they lie under of bringing up their children in the Catholic Faith, which cannot be done in that kingdom without great risk to the children and parents; and desiring to offer themselves to the service of God, for the education and instruction of such children as Catholics may wish to live in these States, they have settled themselves with other young English ladies in the town of St. Omer, where they have already received two nieces of the Earl of Shrewsbury and another young lady of the family of the Earl of Southampton . . .¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Bowie, *Beguine Spirituality*; Simons, *Beguine Communities*.

¹⁴⁶ As translated and cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:273-274. from *Papiers d'Etat et de l'Audience at Brussels*. Liasse, Sept. 8, 1612, 466.

After showing that families of high social and political standing were entrusting their Catholic daughters to their care, the women report to the Infanta that many more of noble birth will be arriving from England. It is striking to note that the petition specifically mentions the choice of careers that the pupils will have, religious and secular paths.

and they understand that many Catholic nobles intend to send their daughters to the said town to be brought up as Catholics under the care of the said ladies, in the Faith and good manners, in order that they may either be Religious in these parts, or, returning to marry in England, may there maintain what they have learned.¹⁴⁷

In closing, the women ask for the necessary letters of recommendation that will ingratiate them to the powerful men of Saint-Omer, religious and civil.

For this cause they humbly beg your Highness to send a letter in their favour to the Bishop and another to the Magistrates of St. Omer, that they may favour them and allow them to live in peace and without molestation, under the protection of your Most Serene Highness, in the city, which grant they would consider a very special favour.¹⁴⁸

In the person of the Bishop, the English Ladies found a solid supporter. Jacques Blaise, served as the Bishop of Saint-Omer from 1608 – 1618, and his benevolent assistance was crucial for Ward to establish the Institute and expand it in other Catholic territories. Bishop Blaise had long been an advocate for education. He welcomed the Daughters of St. Agnes, and assisted Marie Aubrun's circle, known as Our Lady of the Garden; both groups provided education to the poor girls of the city.¹⁴⁹ When Ward proposed to begin a boarding school for English girls and a free day school for local girls, it was Blaise and the Archduchess who facilitated the opening. This support, together

¹⁴⁷ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:274.

¹⁴⁸ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:274.

¹⁴⁹ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 72.

with that of Ward's spiritual director, Father Lee, S.J., was crucial for Ward's first foundation.

The English girls were recruited by Mary Ward and her companions to board at Saint-Omer and receive both a Catholic and liberal education. Despite a serious bout with the measles epidemic of 1611, which infected many of children and Ward too, the community thrived in the early years, and provided a springboard for new foundations.¹⁵⁰ By 1615, the number of boarders increased to thirty English girls, making additional accommodations necessary. Besides the boarding school, Ward opened a school for local girls in 1618.¹⁵¹ Each local girl could receive lessons for three years without charge. The subjects offered included: religion, morals, reading, writing, French, Latin, household management, music, painting, and sewing, spinning, and tapestry weaving. Morning lessons were from 8:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., and the afternoon session went from 2:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. The school was dependent on a host of "sisters" in order to function properly. Bishop Blaise describes the offices the community had at the Saint-Omer foundation,

Superior, her Vicar, a Procurator, mistresses to train and instruct their pupils in letters, in the genteel accomplishments of embroidery, singing, music, &c. [. . .] a person to superintend household matters, a dispenser, a doorkeeper, a sacristane for the chapel, a gardener, a prefect of health, an infirmarian, besides those required for the several household offices of baking, brewing, cooking, tailoring, and mending for the laundry, and so on.¹⁵²

This enumeration of positions signals the seriousness of the venture. In order to offer a quality experience to boarders and day school pupils alike, a specialized staff was required. It should be noted that there were different levels within the membership. A professed sister made three vows: chastity, obedience, and poverty, while a lay sister did

¹⁵⁰ Ward, "Fifth Letter."

¹⁵¹ For the details of the first school at Saint-Omer, I rely upon Peters, *Mary Ward*, 164-165.

¹⁵² As quoted in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:300.

not make a profession. Novices underwent screening and training, before being accepted into the sisterhood as full members.

An office not aforementioned is the role that Father Lee, S.J., Mary Ward's Spiritual Director had within the Institute. Ward had taken a vow of obedience to Lee, thus it follows that everything within the Institute had Father Lee's approval. His involvement with the community's daily life is uncertain, but he instructed the children in religion on occasion. For example, he exhorted them to be Christ-like and listen to God's directions in their own lives. He said, "Now to these little ones, I speak to learn to carry the yoke of our Blessed Saviour in their youth."¹⁵³ In a different address to the pupils, he advised them as follows, ". . . children, look you always follow that which God hath called you to, whether it be religious or any other vocation." We can see that this particular Jesuit priest had direct access to the children, and perhaps it is a marker of the trust and spiritual closeness Ward felt for the man and his Order.

From Saint-Omer, the first plan for the Institute emerged in 1612; it was to be called the *Schola Beatae Mariae* (School of the Blessed Mary) (SBM). Ward scholars suspect that Father Lee was the author, perhaps with some assistance from other Jesuits.¹⁵⁴ Ward may or may not have collaborated on the plan, as she replaced it four years later. Parts of the *SBM* may have functioned as a working plan for the Institute prior to 1616. For example, the list of subjects it proposed remained constant. The curriculum demonstrates that Ward valued a combination of academic, spiritual, and domestic lessons for the pupils. The school mistresses taught: ". . . a sense of duty, Christian doctrine, good morals, how to serve God, reading the common and Latin

¹⁵³ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:323-324.

¹⁵⁴ Peters, *Mary Ward*; Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*.

languages, writing, household management, liberal arts, singing, painting, sewing, spinning, curtain making, in a word, all those liberal exercises which are more suitable for every state of life.”¹⁵⁵ Some of the girls taught by the Institute would follow a religious calling, and others would marry; Ward planned an educational program that would suit these eventualities, and was adaptable to a range of socio-economic conditions.

The *SBM* gained approval from the Belgian theologian, Leonhard Lessius, S.J., as well as other members of the Society of Jesus, including Giles Schoondock who was the Rector of the English College at Saint-Omer. According to its tenets, the Institute was construed as a localized group under the authority of the Bishop. It also placed the community in a partial cloister where they could receive their pupils, in a kind of “mixed life,” as termed in the *SBM*.¹⁵⁶ A close reading of the text reveals that the sisters of the Institute would be very nearly completely cloistered according to this plan.

. . . far from having the house open to all, we desire rather to have cloister so strictly observed that no access is to be allowed to any extern whatsoever in the chapel and schools, with everyone present and that for legitimate reasons and with the express permission of the Bishop. But necessary and serious conversations will be referred to the grille destined for that purpose, and no one shall go to the grille without the permission of the Superior who shall be present at the conversation. . . .¹⁵⁷

As such, the religious men reviewing the plan found it to be innocuous and praiseworthy. It was not, however, what Mary Ward settled upon to propose at Rome. She would, “Take the same of the Society,” by rejecting the cloister in an effort to pursue

¹⁵⁵ Mary Ward, “Schola Beatae Mariae,” in *Till God Will: Mary Ward through Her Writings*, ed. Mary Emmanuel Orchard (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 34-38, 37.

¹⁵⁶ Ward, “SBM,” 34.

¹⁵⁷ Ward, “SBM,” 35.

God's work in the world, like the Jesuit Order.¹⁵⁸ Eventually, she created an adaptation of the Jesuit *Institutes* for her English Ladies.

In formulating the Rule for her Order, Ward maintained that she was divinely inspired to use the *Formula Instituti* of 1539, that Ignatius of Loyola and some of his earliest companions created for their Society. The *Instituti* received papal approbation in 1540, and full approval in 1550.¹⁵⁹ In 1616, Ward modeled a plan that was based upon these *Instituti*. She made a few key changes that she felt were proper for a woman's order, according to Church law, and called the document the *Ratio Instituti*. The plan eschewed the cloister completely, "by this means we more easily instruct virgins and young girls from their earliest years in piety, Christian morals and the liberal arts that they may afterwards according to their respective vocations profitably embrace either the secular or the religious state."¹⁶⁰

Moreover, while the primary work to be done by the Institute was girls' education, it was not limited to that alone. The *Ratio* opens up other possibilities for missionary work, ". . .to procure the salvation of our neighbour, by means of the education of girls, or by any other means that are congruous to the times."¹⁶¹ The reconversion of England, and other missionary work that Ward wanted to conduct was implied under the phrase "other means that are congruous to the times." Furthermore, in the 1616 *Ratio*, Ward eliminated any Episcopal authority over the Institute, and following the Jesuits, placed her Order under the direct authority of the Pope.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Ward, "Fifth Letter," 11.

¹⁵⁹ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 14.

¹⁶⁰ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 1:375.

¹⁶¹ Mary Ward, "Ratio Instituti," in *Till God Will: Mary Ward through Her Writings*, ed. Mary Emmanuel Orchard (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 43-46, 44.

¹⁶² Ward, "Ratio," 45.

In a prefatory letter to the Pope Paul V, Ward described the work she had done with the company for the past seven years at Saint-Omer. She offered some detail on the work going on in England, too,

Others of our Society and some externs are likewise laboring in England in conjunction with us, both actually and in desire, and send here [Saint-Omer] noble young virgins to be educated and others of more mature years to be prepared for holy religion, while they save others from the jaws of the imminent death of heresy and vice. [. . .] Among these persons, are many of good birth, noble family and large fortune. Good God! What instruments will they not be in gaining souls, in bringing to the Faith their relations, connexions, friends and equals, in procuring dwellings, residences, and stipends for priests.¹⁶³

In an effort to persuade, Ward emphasized the potential help wealthy Institute members would offer in the re-conversion of England. Was this the kind of religious work that the popes and other religious men within the Catholic Church had in mind for women?

Ward's papers show that she hoped so and that the founder put her trust in God for a successful outcome. In describing her reliance on God, she wrote: "I saw there was no help or comfort for me but to cleave to him, and so I did, for he was there to help me."¹⁶⁴

A supporter of the Institute, Thomas Sackville, agreed to go to Rome with Ward's new *Ratio Instituti* and a letter of support from Bishop Blaise, in order to present them to the Papal Court and gain approbation.¹⁶⁵ During this time, in the year 1616, Ward waited to hear from Rome, and a response from Cardinal Lancelotti was forthcoming; it granted provisional approval to her Institute on April 10, 1616. In Lancelotti's letter, Bishop Blaise of Saint-Omer was asked to protect and support the group while formal approbation was being deliberated.¹⁶⁶ Ward was encouraged by this response, and hastened to found other houses. Over the course of the next century, approval would

¹⁶³ Chambers, *The Life*, 1:389.

¹⁶⁴ Ward, *Writings*, 46.

¹⁶⁵ Ward, *Writings*, 56.

come and go and come again. The schools were not problematic, but an unenclosed mission like that of the Jesuits posed significant difficulties for the seventeenth-century Church.

Still, in 1624, Ward had not been notified of the acceptance or denial of her plan, and she revised it. The third and final plan for the Institute, written by Ward, was submitted to the new head of the Church, Pope Urban VIII in 1624. Known as the *Institutum II*, it repeated the Jesuit's *Formula Instituti* almost word for word. Aspiring to this plan, with its special organization and rule, Ward would ultimately be disappointed in the Pope's flat refusal.

Association with Jesuit Priests. The close association between this new female Institute and the Jesuits enraged some of the English secular clergy, who did not appreciate the Jesuit Order's independence.¹⁶⁷ Some of the Jesuits themselves opposed any connection between the Institute of Mary and their Society. Father General Claudio Aquaviva (1543-1615) of the Society of Jesus, much like his predecessor Ignatius Loyola, did not want his Jesuit Order entangled in a women's order. Aquaviva pronounced a prohibition on Jesuits directing the Institute. The next Father General, Mutius Vitelleschi (1563-1645), echoed the prohibition because several Jesuits continued to involve themselves with the Institute's happenings.

In 1619, Vitelleschi responded to a letter from the Rector of the House of the Society in London, Father Blount, S.J., that described the intermixing going on between the Jesuits and Mary Ward's Institute. Vitelleschi was grateful for the information and

¹⁶⁶ Chambers, *The Life*, 1:383.

¹⁶⁷ Ward, *Writings*, 48.

acted promptly. He removed Mary Ward's Spiritual Director at the time, Father Gerard (alias Tomson), from the Institute by transferring Gerard to Madrid.¹⁶⁸ Vitelleschi asked Blount to stay on guard, so as to "forbid any of ours to teach Catechism in their schools, until your Reverence shall receive notice to the contrary from me."¹⁶⁹

Gerard was not the only English Jesuit working with Ward. For example, at least one Jesuit aggressively recruited English girls for the Institute, much to one parent's dismay. Here, the father of the potential recruit describes the actions of a Jesuit priest he was lodging,

Now the one who is remaining with me is striving with all his might and main to promulgate this new Institute. He has besought me several times to allow the only daughter whom I have at home to be admitted to this Sodality. I refused, because these Virgins detained amongst them another female relation of mine, almost by force, and by urgent persuasions, so that I was obliged to use several artifices in order to get her back.¹⁷⁰

That Jesuits assisted Mary Ward's Institute, despite warnings from their Father General, should not surprise. The men who became Jesuits in England were the brothers and cousins within the core group of recusants, that is, many were the close kin of Ward's circle. Others, who were not related to Ward and her company, likely viewed Ward's girls' schools as a boon to the cause of Catholicism in England and promoted the Institute for that reason.

Andrew White, S.J. (1579-1656), later known as the "apostle of Maryland," who had no known familial connection with Ward, assisted the Institute before he went to America for missionary work. His testimony regarding the Ward's "holy Institute" shows that he was a true supporter of the English Ladies' work. In fact, he facilitated a

¹⁶⁸ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 273.

¹⁶⁹ As quoted in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:13.

¹⁷⁰ As quoted in Chambers, *The Life*, 1:445.

generous donation to the Institute on behalf of two English gentlemen.¹⁷¹ White wrote of the Institute's divine origin, and Ward's devout nature, "... out of His infinite goodness and tender mercy the Holy Ghost hath inspired to His devout servant and spouse, the illustrious virgin and most Reverend Mother Mary Warde, chief Superior of the sacred beginning Society of Jesus for Women."¹⁷² White supported the Institute's preference for being unenclosed so as to secure "the help of neighbours, the conversion of souls, [and the] education of children in schools"¹⁷³ In time, even Father General Vitelleschi, himself, was drawn in as a supporter and did much to help Mary Ward while she was in Italy, as will be explained in this chapter.

On the other hand, the voices of critics were heard as well. Foes of the community at Saint-Omer circulated defamatory material about the English Ladies which accused them of loose living and immoral behavior for religious women. One such anonymous tract appeared in the Spanish Netherlands *circa* 1614 and was entitled, *De Virginibus Anglis (Concerning certain English Virgins)*. One of the heaviest charges the tract levied against the Institute was that members were doing the work reserved for priests. Clearly, it was dangerous to the community's reputation and future prospects, for it prompted Bishop Blaise to pen a defense. His *Relatio* (1616) shared his observations of the type of edifying life the *English Ladies* lived, and it answered the attacks and objections to the Institute that were in circulation.¹⁷⁴ Coming from a well-respected Church leader, the bishop's words lent a great deal of strength to the newly formed

¹⁷¹ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:54.

¹⁷² As quoted in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:54-55.

¹⁷³ As quoted in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:55.

¹⁷⁴ Ward, *Writings*, 48-49.

Institute.

Expansion, 1616 – 1625. That same year, 1616, Ward formed another foundation in the city of Liège, Belgium. With a letter of recommendation from Bishop Blaise, Ward gained the good graces of Prince-Bishop Ferdinand toward expanding the Institute in his city. Blaise’s letter concentrated on the benefits that Ward’s “sisters” could bring to the people of Liège through teaching. His promotion of the institute was worded as follows: “. . . I think I shall do a thing most pleasing to your Serenity, if you hear from me on this occasion what kind of guests you have in your city, and how worthy of the favour and patronage of your Serenity, especially if they betake themselves to teaching others. And this, indeed, it is my intention to promote. . . .”¹⁷⁵ Ward and the Institute were received with honor and began their work soon after. She obtained a house in 1616 which was used for training novices. By 1618, under the Superior of the foundation, Barbara Babthorpe, a separate boarding school and day school were in operation.¹⁷⁶ It followed the pattern of the original house at Saint-Omer, where the boarding school was for English girls and the day school was for the local girls. In 1621, Anne Gage succeeded Babthorpe as Superior. The community welcomed Edward Burton, S.J. (d. 1624) as the Spiritual Director of several of its members at Liège.

Ironically, while the schools attracted pupils, the enrollment did little to prevent the serious indebtedness and troubles the community bore. To be brief, a house which Count Thomas Sackville purchased for the Institute was accepted, but neither Ward nor

¹⁷⁵ See translated “Letter from Blaise to Prince-Bishop Ferdinand” in Chambers, *The Life*, 1:501.

¹⁷⁶ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 346.

the other members at Liège were aware that it was encumbered by debt.¹⁷⁷ The poverty that followed on the heels of this debt proved to be a serious problem for the community. First, not all of the membership was prepared for that kind of harsh life where even one meal a day was difficult to obtain. The extreme deprivation made some of the members question the integrity of the plan Ward had for the Institute. For example, a lay sister from Ardennes, Praxedis, with Father Burton's support, was able to persuade other members to withdraw from the Institute on account of visions that showed her that Ward's Institute was following an incorrect path.¹⁷⁸

The dissension and desertion at Liège caused Ward to briefly question her mission, as evidenced by a letter she wrote to her confessor Father Gerard (Tomson) in 1619, in which she grieved that she was "in a sea of uncertainties."¹⁷⁹ After engaging in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, she was strengthened in her conviction that her mission came from God, and she challenged Praxedis regarding it. Ward claimed God told her to, "Take the same as the Society. Father General will never permit it. Go to him."¹⁸⁰ On these instructions, Ward shared a reflection with Father Gerard, "These are words, whose worth cannot be valued, nor the good they contain too dearly bought; these gave sight where there was none, made known what God would have done, gave strength to suffer what since hath happened, assurance of what is wished for in time to come."¹⁸¹ In an effort to prevent a mass exodus from the community, Ward introduced an oath that all sisters had to take. In essence, it was a civil contract, and while its legal utility may have

¹⁷⁷ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 233.

¹⁷⁸ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 215; Ward, "Fifth Letter," 4.

¹⁷⁹ Mary Ward, "Letter to Father Gerard," in *Till God Will: Mary Ward Through Her Writing*, ed. Mary Emmanuel Orchard (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 60-61, 60.

¹⁸⁰ Ward, "Fifth Letter," 7.

¹⁸¹ Ward, "Fifth Letter," 7.

been null, it served to reinforce the personal loyalty that members had to the Institute and Ward, as the Superior General.

The following excerpt, taken from one such contract ca. 1625, displays the strong emotional and spiritual language used to instill an unswerving personal commitment in the sisters.

Being moved with these just reasons, and greatly desirous in our Lord that this work of God in me and others may be brought to the ripeness and perfection of a religious Order by the confirmation of the See Apostolic, I do therefore make promise, and covenant with our Chief Superior, and the rest of the whole company, that I will live and remain in the same, notwithstanding all oppositions and difficulties that may occur . . .¹⁸²

In this next section, the signee was expected to agree that neither contract nor vows should be rescinded until after the confirmation of the Institute.

. . . and never to seek to be freed from this obligation or from my vows, by Superiors, or by other means, until God grant the confirmation of our Institute, that I may renew my religious vows therein.¹⁸³

A reliable membership was necessary to convince the Pope and Congregation that the Institute was internally sound and worthy of official sanction.

With a return of confidence and purpose in founding the Institute, Ward set out to found two more houses, this time in German speaking lands, one at Cologne (1620), and one at Trier (1621). Little is known about these communities, but it is likely the curriculum and daily schedule were comparable, if not identical, to those in place at the earlier foundations at Saint-Omer and Liège. After setting up the two new communities, Ward turned her sights on Rome; gaining the endorsement of the Holy See was the focus of Ward's attention. The Institute's confirmation would encourage parents of prospective members to submit the necessary dowries for their daughters. Pending approbation,

¹⁸² As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 1:371.

many parents withheld payments so as not to sink their daughters' prospects if the Order was rejected.

Traveling to Rome with her sister Barbara Ward (who died there in 1623), Winifred Wigmore, Mary Poyntz, Margaret Horde, Father Henry Lee, and her cousin Robert Wright, as well as two servants, Mary Ward arrived there on Christmas Eve.¹⁸⁴ She was eager to meet with Pope Gregory XV, and obtained an audience with him on December 28, 1621. The Pontiff explained that a special Congregation of Bishops and Regulars was appointed to review the case. As business in Rome proceeded extremely slowly, and Ward suspected the deliberations were not going in her favor, she petitioned the Secretary of Bishops and Regulars with a profound request on July 1, 1622.

And because these Ladies think that they shall not leave Rome so soon, in order that the decision may be made beforehand upon what they ask, therefore they humbly entreat your Lordship to grant that, in the interval while they remain here in Rome, they may, at their own expense, do the same things which they have done in other places where they have been, in order that your Lordship may better see and understand their habits and manner of living.¹⁸⁵

Her request was granted on August 19, 1622, and the Roman school was opened.

Privy to the talks was the Reverend John Bennett, who opposed the Institute. Some of Bennett's observations survive and can be used here to balance Ward's own perspective on the deliberations. Bennett refers to the English Ladies' Plan for the Institute as "fooleries" and "ridiculous petitions." In 1622, he knew that the basic tenets Ward proposed for approval were untenable for a women's order. In February of that year, Bennett wrote to another churchman, Dr. Bishop, to explain what Ward and the Ladies sought:

¹⁸³ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 1:371.

¹⁸⁴ Ward, *Writings*, 62.

¹⁸⁵ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:63.

The Jesuitrices have exhibited ridiculous petitions, which have scandalized this Court. They would take a fourth vow to be sent among the Turks and infidels to gain souls.¹⁸⁶

Bennett and his associates disapproved of women asking to be considered for what was arguably the most perilous type of apostolic work at the time. Furthermore, as Bennett observed, Ward and her company were trying to develop an Order that was contrary to the prescriptions issued from Trent.

Briefly, clausure they must embrace, and some Order already approved, else dissolve. But of clausure they will not hear. And in other Orders there is not the perfection they aim at: and this they have not been ashamed to answer to these great prelates, who think of them accordingly.¹⁸⁷

From Bennett's vantage point, Ward's endeavor was rightly doomed. His disapproval had nothing to do with conducting schools for girls, but centered on the refusal Ward made to enclosure. He criticized not only Ward, but her advisors, "I marvel what madmen advised them hither with these fooleries."¹⁸⁸

At this time, Bennett circulated a document known as the *Memorial of the English Clergy* within the Curia, and which suspected author was William Harrison, Archpriest of England.¹⁸⁹ The criticism of Ward's project was expanded, "That such an Institute seems to be directly opposed to the decrees of the Council of Trent," and that it would "usurp ecclesiastical offices" from men, were two of the major points announced therein.¹⁹⁰ The *Memorial* likely reached key decision makers involved in the case, and in light of the following documentation, influenced their actions to some degree. In the following letter, written by W.E. to Dr. Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon, it becomes clear that the

¹⁸⁶ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:60.

¹⁸⁷ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:60.

¹⁸⁸ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:60.

¹⁸⁹ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 339-340.

¹⁹⁰ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:183-185.

Congregation disapproved of Ward's wider mission, but did not want to completely reject her proposal; rather, they wanted the Institution to have as its sole task girls' education.

Mrs. Ward is sayd here to bee gone up to R.[ome] with a certainty of having her order confirmed-*revelationibus animate divinitus*: but as I here, *los Padres* advise her to lay downe her imaginary pretended mission, and to apply her ayme only to a confirmation of her Institute to bring up feminine youth. . . .¹⁹¹

This advice was merely encouraged at first, but as the machinations of the court unfolded, it became Ward's only option. Ward, of course, could not accept this limited educational role and remain faithful to her true mission. Once the matter was out of her control, the schools themselves were the only remnant of Ward's vision to survive the suppression of the Institute. From a secure footing in girls' education, the Institute (post-1631, the time of the suppression) could only bide its time in expanding its mission to be akin to the Jesuits.

Hopeful of gaining full approval, Ward and her companions continued their work in the Roman school. On account of Ward's drive to open more schools, two new Italian houses were erected in Naples (1623), and Perugia (1624). The day schools in Rome and Naples focused on teaching reading, writing, morals, sewing, knitting, and embroidery to the pupils because of the dire need for these poor children to earn money.¹⁹² According to one account, Ward did not include religious instruction in the curriculum for the school in Rome, in order to avoid any criticism that the Institute was trying to replace the priesthood.¹⁹³ A letter from the Spanish Ambassador Vives to the Secretary of State Carlos de la Faille in Liège reported the school's progress to be passed along to the Infanta, and claimed that the school had as many as 120 day pupils by February of 1623,

¹⁹¹ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:412.

¹⁹² Peters, *Mary Ward*, 334.

¹⁹³ Littlehales, *Mary Ward*, 116.

and 150 by April of that year.¹⁹⁴ Its boarding population was also high.¹⁹⁵ Still, the Roman foundation was extremely poor, relying on its richer sister house in Naples for basic sustenance.¹⁹⁶ The poverty of the house is perplexing at first glance, because of the high number of boarders. However, the boarders were the daughters of Catholic English exiles and refugees living in Rome, who had likely been stripped of their wealth.

In 1623, Naples had a burgeoning population of 300,000, and it was hurting from war, famine, pestilence, and economic peril.¹⁹⁷ Unhindered by fear or doubt, Ward introduced the first school for girls to this troubled urban center. She shared her plans with Princess Constanza Barberini, the Pope's sister-in-law, who became an instant supporter of the initiative for girls' schools. Also, Father General of the Jesuits, Mutius Vitelleschi, who had formerly tried to distance the Order from Ward's Institute, after having met Ward, drastically changed his approach. Vitelleschi was instrumental in garnering support for Ward in Italy. He provided Ward with a letter of support and recommendation addressed to Father Francesco Corcione, S.J., who then became a confessor to the Institute and one of its greatest supporters.¹⁹⁸ Ward appointed Susanna Rookwood as Superior, but her death six months after prompted Ward to appoint Winifred Wigmore, who was followed by Mary Ratcliffe until the foundation was closed in 1628.

The school advanced quickly and attracted a robust student body. The curriculum mirrored that of Ward's other schools in the north, but with a heavier emphasis on domestic work for the poor day-schoolers, so that they could escape a future of begging

¹⁹⁴ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 335.

¹⁹⁵ Guilday, *Catholic Refugees*, 210.

¹⁹⁶ Littlehales, *Mary Ward*, 129.

¹⁹⁷ For information about the Naples Institute, I rely upon Grisar, "Scuole femminili," 532-544.

in the streets. They learned Latin, Italian, Spanish, catechism, and literature. The noble girls attending were given lessons in household management.

The first members of the Naples house included eight teaching sisters, and some lay sisters who were responsible for the housework. In time, the house accepted novices for training, and a young widow who brought a sizable dowry that stabilized the community's financial position. The teaching members adhered to the following daily schedule: the day began at 4:00 a.m. with an hour of meditation, then a private recitation of the Grand Brevario, work at the school, close with prayer, lunch, communal recreation and spiritual readings. The afternoons were used for religious devotions and confession at Chiesa dei Gesuiti. The Institute's way of life and service to the community gained them many supporters; from such a positive reception, it is clear that the introduction of girls' schooling in Naples was greatly appreciated. Indeed, when the suppression of the house and school was ordered, a group of prominent citizens sent a petition to Cardinal Baberini praising the Institute's educational work for girls and begging him to intercede. The signers were all men, perhaps some were the grateful fathers of students: Don Josepo Sanfelice, Francesco Strambone, Giulio Cesare Sangori, Francesco Caraviole, and Francesco Savietto. Ward's school had deeply affected girls' lives in the city, and these men were actively trying to prevent its demise.

In 1624, Mary Ward went to Perugia to make another foundation. In a major gesture of support, the Bishop, Monsignore Napoleone Comitoli gave a house for Ward's community and school.¹⁹⁹ Writing to Father Coffin, S.J., who may have been the Confessor to the group at this time, Ward said, "The house and church which the Bishop

¹⁹⁸ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 380.

¹⁹⁹ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:102.

hath given us we have seen, and I wish that ours had the like rent free in Rome.”²⁰⁰

Despite, this gracious gift, the school started off slowly with only seven day students and no boarders. Its fifteen-month history lacks many details; it was suppressed in April 1625.

As Ward worked to set up additional houses from 1622 – 1624, she enlisted her supporters to write to the Pope and Cardinals about the Institute. A letter from Ferdinand of Bavaria, Prince-Bishop of Liège, announced that he was their guardian and protector while they awaited approbation. Ferdinand praised the work Mary Ward’s group was doing in his city, “. . .the noble English Virgins . . .disseminated the greater glory of God, edification of their neighbor, as well as ecclesiastical as secular instruction of young ladies and of female youth (according to the capacity of their sex, and the measure of grace of God which works in them) in the rudiments of the Catholic faith, and education of the same in very many praiseworthy and holy habits of piety and modesty, and other like seeds of Christian virtue.”²⁰¹ Ward hoped the reports would sway the deliberations in her favor.

Regardless of such noble sponsorship, on July 23, 1624, a Decree of Propaganda was issued against the "Jesuitesses."²⁰² This decree prohibited the Institute from acting like a religious order. They were to wear secular dress, and abstain from holding private masses, ringing bells, and pretending to have solemn vows. Ward was not aware of the decree or its contents, and was on her way to Bavaria to make a foundation in Munich. Following that, on April 11, 1625 the Decree of the Regular Congregation was issued for

²⁰⁰ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:116.

²⁰¹ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:187.

²⁰² As printed in M. Tierney, *Church History of England: From the Commencement of the Sixteenth Century to the Revolution in 1688*, vol. 4 (New York: AMS, 1971), Appendix 46.

the suppression of the English Ladies in Italy, which led to the closing of the Roman house. The parents of the day school children protested *en masse* by visiting the Cardinal Vicar's Palace.²⁰³ But, all of their demonstrations and complaints fell on deaf ears. As mentioned above, the community at Perugia was also suppressed on the authority of the decree. Since, of course, Naples was not part of the Italian states, but rather a kingdom within the Spanish Empire, it escaped suppression for another three years. When Ward heard of the closings in Italy, because she was not given any official notice, she did not think the closings were legitimately mandated by the Pope. She then turned her sights to the north.

Later foundations, 1626 – 1631. Forging on in the Catholic stronghold of Bavaria, Ward took with her letters of recommendation from Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany, the sister of the Electress of Bavaria, and made a good impression with the ruling couple, the Electress and Elector, Maximilian. The Elector accepted Ward's plan in 1626 and offered her a house known as Paradeiserhaus in Munich's center. Mary's former spiritual advisor commented on the Elector's favor; Father Gerard wrote in a letter dated March 8, 1627, "Therefore all endeavours must be used to give him full satisfaction and choice persons placed in that house."²⁰⁴ The house accommodated forty boarders, plus the members themselves. An annual stipend was also arranged for the community because the Elector sincerely valued the educational offerings of the Institute: Catholic religious instruction, morals, reading, writing, languages, and drawing. Ward was a step ahead of Gerard's advice, scrambling to start the school properly, albeit with a small

²⁰³ Poyntz and Wigmore, *The Brief Relation of Mary Ward's Life*.

²⁰⁴ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:228.

number of members. In February, Ward had written to Winifrid Wigmore, “My dear Winn – What want have I of people!” and “Send me hither to Monaco [Munich], with what speed you can, that disputation you composed for your novices, when they were scholars of charity and humility, and the rules of how your novices spend the day- a copy, I mean, of that I brought you from Rome, with what addition you have found by experience.”²⁰⁵ The English Ladies were building on their experience in the Spanish Netherlands and Italy; and once Ward secured enough teaching sisters, they program blossomed.

The Elector was pleased to host the English refugees, and receive a free school for Bavarian girls in his city. The free day school was opened the same year and attracted a growing number of local girls. In 1635, the English Ladies at Munich also cared for female orphans of the city. They supported the children, and taught them religion and sewing.²⁰⁶ From this service, they gained even greater esteem from the Elector and Electress, who did nothing to hinder them in 1631 when the suppression was ordered.

Once the Munich foundation was secure in 1627, Ward went on to further her reach on the Continent. In large part, sponsorship of these new communities came from the Holy Roman Emperor and Empress. The Elector Maximilian, the Emperor’s brother-in-law, acquainted him with the English Ladies’ work in Munich. Through the Elector’s letter of recommendation, Ward’s Institute was presented to Ferdinand II, who welcomed Ward with a house and income to begin a school in Vienna. It was founded in the

²⁰⁵ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:239.

²⁰⁶ Mary Roswitha Etscheit, “The Place of Mary Ward in the Education of Catholic Girls During Penal Times, in England and in German-Speaking Countries, 1558-1688,” (PhD diss., Girton College, Cambridge, 1986), Ch. 5, 24.

summer of 1627, and Margaret Genison was made Superior.²⁰⁷ The house at Vienna was a gift from the Emperor, and by 1629 eleven members resided there.²⁰⁸

Then in 1628, Ward settled a community and opened a school at Pressburg, Hungary, which was the capital of the Habsburg monarchy (known today as Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia). An imperial annual income of 400 Hungarian guilders was given to the community for their work in Pressburg, and 1000 guilders for the Viennese foundation. Two other figures assisted the community in Pressburg; Countess Maria Pálffy gave money, and the Archbishop of Gran (Estergom), Cardinal Peter Pázmány helped them secure a house. In Bohemia, Prague, despite gaining the approval of Emperor Ferdinand in 1628 for a foundation, Ward had to abort her efforts because of political tension with the bishop. The bishop was not opposed to a girls' school *per se*, but he was not consulted about the foundation and protested its existence in his diocese.

The mission statement at Munich was mirrored at Vienna and Pressburg. It announced the Institute's intention of helping parents give their daughters a Christian education.

This Institute's highest aim is first of all, to inculcate in children of the female sex the fear of God, to make known to them the mysteries of our Faith and to instruct them in good morals, and in whatsoever will promote true virtue, and also in reading, writing, sewing, embroidery, cooking, housekeeping, and in addition to teach them the French language; our aim being to assist parents who either do not know how to give their children a Christian education or who are not in a position to do so.²⁰⁹

Toward this end, to help Catholic families in England, Institute members disguised themselves and traveled to England on a regular basis to recruit girls and transport them to the boarding school.

²⁰⁷ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 166.

²⁰⁸ For information about the Institute at Vienna and Pressburg, I rely upon Peters, *Mary Ward*, 446-496.

For Munich, the average age of entry to the boarding school was eight years old, with a minimum age at entry set at six.²¹⁰ Tuition and boarding costs are not known for the earliest years, but in 1665, the fees totaled 100 florins per annum, and in 1700 they decreased to 85 florins. At Vienna, from the start, the boarders were charged 120 guilders per annum.²¹¹ These rates made the boarding school strictly for the wealthy. The students were asked to bring their own household necessities like linens, china, and clothing.²¹²

The daily schedule at the boarding school in Munich was as follows: rise at 6:00 a.m. in the summer, and 6:15 a.m. in winter; attend Mass at 7:00 a.m. After Mass, breakfast was served. Lessons began at 8:00 a.m., and concluded for the morning at 10:15 a.m. Lunch was served at that time, and recreation was permitted until noon. From noon until 1:00 p.m., there was French conversation, after which lessons ran until 4:00 p.m. Snack time and recreation time completed the school day. At five o'clock the Office and the Rosary were recited. Dinner was at six o'clock with free time until 8:00 p.m., which was bedtime. On Thursdays, the pupils would not attend lessons, but spend time studying and doing their "homework" and needlework.²¹³ The boarders almost never went home, not even for holidays. Sometimes, parents visited their daughters at the school.²¹⁴

The day school students were admitted at age six or seven, but some very poor families sent their daughters even younger, so that they could finish sooner and start

²⁰⁹ As cited in Etscheit, "The Place of Mary Ward," Chapter 5, 4.

²¹⁰ For details about the Munich Institute, I rely upon Etscheit, "The Place of Mary Ward," Ch. 5, 6-24.

²¹¹ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 487.

²¹² Marion Norman, "Mary Ward as Educator," (unpublished, n.d.), 11.

²¹³ Oliver, *Mary Ward, 1585-1645*, 227-228.

²¹⁴ Oliver, *Mary Ward, 1585-1645*, 228.

working. The rules regarding their admission were strictly adhered to: students were forbidden to beg in the streets; they had to wear shoes and have decent clothing, and their attendance was expected to be regular at Mass, lessons, and (later) Sunday school. At the Munich day school, as in the other day schools, two courses were offered. The first consisted of religion, reading, and writing, and the second was in religion and needlework. The latter was more popular because parents wanted their daughters to be able to earn money when they finished school. Their schedule closely resembled the boarders' schedule. They attended Mass at 7:00 a.m. with their teachers, had lessons from 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Prayers concluded the morning session. Pupils went home for their mid-day meal and returned to school at 12:30 p.m. Lessons lasted until 4:00 p.m. and were again conclude with prayers before the students went home.

The Institute members at Munich ran a Sunday school as well, from 1680 onwards; adults were encouraged to attend for lessons in religion, reading, and writing. With this rigorous program carried out by a small number of teaching sisters, each foundation was enjoined to permit each teacher one afternoon free for relaxation per week, so that they would not become too fatigued.²¹⁵ In 1629, Munich alone was teaching between 400 and 450 students daily, perhaps with a teaching staff of only five.²¹⁶ That same year in Vienna, 500 day students were enrolled.²¹⁷ The Pressburg foundation saw their students irregularly; Winifrid Wigmore related the movements of the student body to fellow member Barbara Babthorpe in a letter dated July 20, 1628: “. . . for the poor goes to work in the vineyards, the rich comes unconstantly, so as how many

²¹⁵ Oliver, *Mary Ward, 1585-1645*, 229.

²¹⁶ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 487.

²¹⁷ Guilday, *Catholic Refugees*, 187.

we have we cannot tell”²¹⁸ Wigmore went on to share Archbishop Pázmány’s assessment of the populace, he encouraged the community to have patience and said, “They are very backward here and ignorant”²¹⁹ Initially, the inhabitants of Pressburg saw little or no utility in girls’ education. Compared with the other cities where the Institute had schools, the lack of steady interest and commitment is striking. With only seventy students in 1628, the Pressburg school lagged behind the others.²²⁰

During her travels in making these foundations, Ward wrote letters to her companions, directing them from afar and keeping abreast of community matters. In a letter dated July 16, 1627, Ward wrote to the Mistress of Schools, Winifred Bedingfeld, to praise her efforts in Munich. “These are indeed chiefly to congratulate you on the unexpected progress of your Latin schools. You cannot easily believe the content I took in the themes of those two towardly girls.”²²¹ Ward directed Bedingfeld to encourage “all such as are capable” to work on their Latin, claiming that “no talent is so much to be regarded in them as the Latin tongue.”²²² According to her, a humanist education for girls in the early seventeenth-century was highly valued. Whether her pupils pursued secular or religious lives, Ward maintained that education was critical for their roles in society. Her schools provided a space for girls to flourish in new ways.

Suppression, survival, and growth. Over twenty years, from 1609 – 1629, Ward successfully created an Institute that served English Catholics and local European families by educating their daughters. However, Ward’s formulation of the Institute as a

²¹⁸ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:256.

²¹⁹ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:256.

²²⁰ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 452.

²²¹ Ward, *Writings*, 95.

female religious order akin to the Society of Jesus stirred up formidable opposition to her entire project. There was an attempt to stop her work, which nearly succeeded; ultimately, though, Ward and her companions managed to survive the accusations and decrees that were aimed at them, and the Institute began to flourish again before the close of the seventeenth century.

In 1629, Ward returned to Rome to advocate for the Institute's approval. A Congregation was assembled to hear Mary's case; it included Cardinal Borgia, Cardinal St. Onofrio (Antonio Baberini), Cardinal San Sisto or Zacchia, and Cardinal Scalia.²²³ They allowed Ward to plead her own case explaining the mission of the Institute. Upon hearing Ward's proposal, Borgia reportedly withdrew from the Congregation, ". . . on relating the whole to the Pope, [Borgia] added 'that he held it to be of God, and that he neither could nor durst be against it, nor was his power enough to assist it, such and so powerful were her enemies. Therefore he humbly entreated His Holiness he might deal no more in it.'"²²⁴ Borgia judged that the Institute was waging a losing battle and his conscience prevented him from being a part of the machinations that were to seal its imminent fate. The Institute had already been expelled from Rome and Perugia in 1625.

After Ward made her request, she traveled back to Munich in the summer and carried on with the daily life of the Institute. Soon after, in November of 1629, the Decree of the Congregation called for the suppression of the "Jesuitesses." First, the community at Naples was dissolved. Cardinal Buoncompagno, the Archbishop of Naples, delayed for as long as he could, being an avid supporter of education, but in the

²²² Ward, *Writings*, 95.

²²³ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:290.

²²⁴ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:294.

end, he was compelled to obey Rome.²²⁵ Of the eight members, four were Italian, and they returned to their families; the other four were English and likely went to Munich or dispersed among the other flourishing houses.²²⁶ Action against the Institute at Saint-Omer, Liège, and Vienna ensued.

In response, Mary Ward did two things. She sent Wigmore to Liège in order to salvage the community because she did not believe the suppression was at the Pope's command, and she wrote to Urban VIII, asking for his help: "[Because of] all that has been said and done at the present time against ours in Flanders and some parts of Germany . . . I now write before you for your paternal consideration." She then declared that "if your Holiness commands me to desist from these practices [namely operating the Institute], I will not fail to obey."²²⁷ That command came on January 13, 1631, in Urban VIII's Bull, *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis*.

The *Pastoralis* clearly and unequivocally called for the suppression of the "pretended Congregation of women or virgins called Jesuitesses."²²⁸ In the following section of the document, the perceived ills of the Institute are described and condemned on the basis of the Institute members' gender:

Free from the laws of enclosure, they wander about at will, and under the guise of promoting salvation of souls, have been accustomed to attempt and to employ themselves at many other works which are most unsuited to their weak sex and character, to female modesty and particularly to maidenly reserve - works which men of eminence in the science of sacred letters, of experience of affairs and of innocence of life undertake with much difficulty and only with great caution.²²⁹

²²⁵ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:305.

²²⁶ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 471.

²²⁷ Littlehales, *Mary Ward*, 252.

²²⁸ "Pastoralis Romani Pontificis," in *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*, ed. Mary Wright (Sydney: Crossing Press, 1631), 190-193, 191.

²²⁹ "Pastoralis," 191.

With this document, Urban VIII reinforced the rulings of the Council of Trent regarding female religious. Although Ward sought an active apostolate for women to assist in gaining souls for the Roman Church, no such vocation was permitted in the seventeenth century. Not only did the *Pastoralis* run counter to everything Ward prayed for and believed was part of God's plan, it was likely also insulting to Ward because it impugned the abilities and character of women in general. Since the Institute's inception, Ward had been teaching the members of her Order to regard the female sex as capable and full of potential in all kinds of works. In a 1617 speech at Saint-Omer, she had told her daughters, "And I hope in God it will be seen that women in time will do much."²³⁰ Now fourteen years later, her hopes were dashed, and she was prevented from realizing the fullness of her mission because women were not permitted to "do much." Still, the Institute was able to scrape by on the utility and good name of its schools, and Ward's hopes and prayers for a fuller mission that respected women's rational capacity and abilities were eventually fulfilled after her death.

The following month, in February, both Ward and Wigmore were imprisoned. While in prison at the Anger convent in Munich, on March 27, 1631, Ward expressed her readiness to conform to the Pope's will:

. . . if that which was at the first allowed and authorized by the Supreme Pontiffs, or Sacred Congregations of Cardinals, in which according to my poor capacity I have desired and sought to serve the Holy Church, should be, by those to whom the decision of such things belong, determined (the whole truth being heard), to have been in any way repugnant to the duty of a true Christian and to the obedience due to His Holiness, or to Holy Church, I am, and ever shall be, with the help of God's grace, most ready to acknowledge my fault, to ask pardon for the offence, and, together with the public dishonor already laid upon me, to offer my poor and brief life in satisfaction of the said sin.²³¹

²³⁰ Ward, *Writings*, 57.

²³¹ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:368.

After paying bail, in April she arrived in Rome to answer the charges against her, which were rebellion against the Church, heresy, and schism. Once there, she was absolved of the charges, and she pled for Wigmore's release from the prison in Liège.²³² Her request was granted. Still, the Institute was ostensibly condemned and suppressed. At this time, in 1631, the Institute had approximately 250 members in England and on the Continent.²³³ The largest foundations were at Liège and Munich, the former had seventy members and the latter had forty. The sisters found themselves with their vows dissolved by *Pastoralis*, and they were ordered to join an existing and approved religious order, or to marry.²³⁴

While almost all of the communities were compelled to obey, the suppression was not fully effective. First, the twenty-five or so members living in England were able to carry on as discreet Institute members, as they were scattered about the country, dressed as secular people, and did religious and educative work in secrecy.²³⁵ They were outside of the Pope's purview, and lived in the households of Catholic patrons, friends, and family. Their shadowy existence in the Anglican kingdom enabled them to sidestep the censure.

From the language of the *Pastoralis*, the suppression was meant to be complete, no house or school was supposed to continue. However, the political situation in Bavaria provided a respite for the Institute at Munich. Elector Maximilian who was contending with the military might of the Swedes in his dominion, did nothing to close down the Institute. While the school could not run amidst a war, it held on and was not

²³² Peters, *Mary Ward*, 588.

²³³ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:385.

²³⁴ "Pastoralis"; Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 192-193.

suppressed. Food was scarce and the members turned to begging in order to survive from 1632-1633.²³⁶ They survived those trying years because the Elector permitted them to remain in the house, contrary to the Bull's directive. During this time, the Elector's financial support was suspended, likely because of his war with the Swedes. When Barbara Babthorpe reopened the school in 1634, his support resumed.

With nearly all of the schools vacated, and fearful of sending the boarders back to England, Ward decided to approach Urban VIII, once again, to work out an alternative residence for them. The Pope acquiesced and allowed them to live in Rome under his protection. The former superior of Vienna, Margaret Genison, brought the younger girls to the Eternal City in 1633. Ward set up a household for them on the Esquiline Hill; here, a total of thirty-two members and pupils lived as seculars and carried on their work.²³⁷ In this way, they were not contradicting anything in the Bull of Suppression, since they had the Pope's consent to live together.

Meanwhile, the foundation at Munich took in dislocated members expelled from their places in Vienna and Pressburg. In a letter dated November 26, 1633, Ward cautioned the Superior of Pressburg to don secular clothing becoming of a Christian woman, "In *Paradise* [Paradeiser Haus] our friends still live, and there you will be most welcome. When you come to Monaco [Munich], be sure to wear such clothes as Mrs. Winefrid and others in that house doth."²³⁸ With no outward signs of their former "Jesuitess" designs, these newly secular women operated two houses, where they lived in community, ordered their business, and educated girls. The Pope himself, on the heels of

²³⁵ Chambers, *The Life*, 2:386.

²³⁶ For events during 1633-1634, I rely on Chambers, *The Life*, 2:392-412.

²³⁷ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 591.

²³⁸ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:396.

his own document, *Pastoralis*, chose to accommodate Ward and her companions; his decision to allow a Roman house, and not pressure the Elector to close the house at Munich, shows that he had his own liberal interpretation of what “suppression” was to mean *de facto*.

Stripped of the mission to convert souls and conduct religious work amongst the people at-large, the English Ladies were left to the one aspect of their mission that did not threaten to usurp the role(s) of religious men - girls’ education. Although Ward made her way back to England and north to Yorkshire in 1639, it was from the “mother” house in Rome that the Institute was governed until the end of the century. Barbara Babthorpe became the Chief Superior after Mary Ward’s death in 1645 until 1653. The house would see two succeeding Superiors before it closed at the end of the seventeenth century, Mary Poyntz (1653-1667), and Catharine Dawson (1667-1697).²³⁹ In 1703, Pope Clement XI acknowledged the Munich house as the new administrative center.²⁴⁰ In time, the Institute evolved to have independent branches during the eighteenth century and remains as such today.

Significant developments were made in the latter part of the seventeenth century; six more foundations with boarding schools and day schools were made. As mentioned, Ward returned to England in 1639. Her movements took her from London, and then to Yorkshire in 1641. In London, under the protection of the Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria (1609-1666), wife of King Charles I, she attracted pupils and lived at the center of England’s Catholic life.²⁴¹ With the outbreak of Civil War, Ward was not able to open a

²³⁹ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 45-46.

²⁴⁰ "Inscrutabili," in *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*, ed. Mary Wright (Sydney: Crossing Press, 1997), 195.

²⁴¹ Peters, *Mary Ward*, 603.

school as she would have liked. Instead, she travelled to Yorkshire and retired to a quieter, if not pacific, locale. When she died in 1645, her companions continued the work of founding schools.

With anti-Catholic sentiment mounting in England, Mary Poyntz fled with Winifred Wigmore and Catherine Dawson to found a Parisian house in 1650. Poyntz's cousin, Edward the Marquis of Worcester, gave her a substantial donation, which she undoubtedly put toward the Institute. In an act of charity and thanks, he pledged, ". . . Five hundred Pistoles I oblige myself to pay within one year after the date hereof. Witness my hand and seal this 5th of January, 1649."²⁴² Joining Poyntz were Frances Bedingfield, Catharine Smith, and Isabella Layton who also spent time at the Paris foundation. The names of a few students who accompanied Poyntz are known, and Helen Thweng, the niece of a great benefactor to the future English houses, Sir Thomas Gascoigne (1595-1689), is among them.²⁴³ Also, Christina Hastings and Mary Portington, both of whom became members of the Hammersmith community, were scholars at Paris.²⁴⁴

The foundations in England were largely achieved through Frances Bedingfield's (1616- 1704) efforts. As an active Catholic and abettor of priests, Bedingfield was imprisoned in England three times for her religion. Trying to avoid the notice of authorities, she changed her name to Long, and covertly began a community at Hammersmith (a country suburb of London) in 1669, instituting a boarding and day

²⁴² Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 8.

²⁴³ Hanson, Joseph S., "The Nuns of the Institute of Mary at York (1677-1825)," in *Miscellanea*, vol. 4, edited by J.H. Pollen, (London: Catholic Record Society, 1907) 353-367, 355.

²⁴⁴ An eighteenth-century handwritten copy of the original seventeenth-century manuscript in Munich was consulted at the Bar Convent Archive. Register of Mary Ward Nuns at Hammersmith, (n.d.), Mary Ward Papers, Bar Convent, York.

school for Catholic girls.²⁴⁵ By borrowing money from a friend, Mr. Poulton, Bedingfield was able to buy a house.²⁴⁶ In time, Thomas Gascoigne, mentioned above, endowed the house with 30 pounds a year, thus providing a secure income to augment the boarders' tuition. Bedingfield herself had studied Greek, Hebrew, and astronomy, and her companions were also knowledgeable in languages and the humanities.²⁴⁷

Hammersmith's first community members were Mary Portington, Christina Hastings, Mary Austen, and Cecily Cornwallis. In 1672, Bedingfield appointed Cecily Cornwallis (1656-1723), daughter of one of Queen Anne's ladies-in-waiting, to become Superior of the house. She remained at this post until 1715, when she went to the York house.²⁴⁸

Well-studied in the humanities, Cornwallis' accomplishments in Latin, Greek, philosophy, Mathematics, and several modern languages were praised by contemporaries.²⁴⁹

The curriculum offered these subjects along with more basic lessons in reading, writing, and religion, and from 1681, Greek, Hebrew, and Astronomy were also taught. The male Spiritual Directors, instructed the members and teachers in some advanced subjects. Father Bede (Walter Joseph Travers), a Carmelite, and Father Pracid, S.J., both were active in the Hammersmith house from 1669-1678.²⁵⁰ Pracid taught the sisters Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.²⁵¹ For the next ten years, Father Lucian, also a Carmelite, assisted the community. His account of having to minister secretly, also relates that he

²⁴⁵ Denis Evinson, *Pope's Corner: An Historical Survey of the Roman Catholic Institutions in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham* (London: Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society, 1980), 6.

²⁴⁶ Evinson, *Pope's Corner*, 5.

²⁴⁷ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 63.

²⁴⁸ Register of Mary Ward Nuns at Hammersmith.

²⁴⁹ Sister Gregory Kirkus, "Hammersmith," (unpublished, 2006), 6.

²⁵⁰ Register of Mary Ward Nuns at Hammersmith.

²⁵¹ Kirkus, "Hammersmith," 5.

taught the girls religion, "We had to send out at night-time for the things we required, but during the entire year I was able to say Mass, to preach, and to instruct the pupils in Christian Doctrine."²⁵² Falling under suspicion, both Lucian and Cornwallis were arrested, questioned by the Privy Council, and then released.²⁵³ They returned to their concealed project at Hammersmith.

Out of fear, Cornwallis turned to Bishop Gifford (d. 1734) for his protection, judging the Mother-house at Rome to be powerless in aiding the community. In 1703, Cornwallis placed Hammersmith under Gifford's authority; he acknowledged the arrangement and pledged his protection:

Having found several pious gentlewomen assembled together at Hammersmith who seem very proper for the design we aim at (viz. the education of girls in the Catholic faith), we have taken them into our special care and by the instrument signed by us and sealed with our episcopal seal we constitute and own them for our Congregation, and accordingly will support and protect them both in spirituals and temporals as far as God shall enable us.²⁵⁴

Gifford, too, was an advocate for girls' education and religious instruction.

Most of the girls who boarded came from London, four miles away. A partial admissions list from 1669 - 1702 survives for the boarding school; it includes girls with last names beginning with A, B, C, D.²⁵⁵ In the first century of its operation, Hammersmith schooled approximately two-thousand girls.²⁵⁶ But, over the course of the eighteenth century, the community began to dwindle. By 1781, it had only three

²⁵² As cited in Evinson, *Pope's Corner*, 7.

²⁵³ Kirkus, "Hammersmith," 5.

²⁵⁴ As cited in Kirkus, "Hammersmith," 7.

²⁵⁵ Register of Mary Ward Nuns at Hammersmith. See Appendix VIII.

²⁵⁶ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 48.

members, and closed “for lack of teachers.”²⁵⁷ As the anti-Catholic Gordon riots nearly destroyed their building, perhaps the lack of safety was a factor.²⁵⁸

Two other English houses were founded in the seventeenth century -- one in London that had a very short life of three years, and the other at York, which still exists today. In 1685, the London house was founded by Mary Portington, who Bedingfield described as “having excellent judgment” and speaking “Latin, Italian and French like her mother tongue.”²⁵⁹ The Catholic King, James II, ascended the throne, and Catholics in London were hopeful of toleration and peace. James’ queen, Mary of Modena, gave the Institute a house in London on Whitefriars Street. The school flourished with approximately 300 students, but had to close hastily in 1688 when James II left the country. The members transferred to the Hammersmith house.

The history of the York foundation is much longer, as the house is the oldest surviving convent in England. In 1686, Bedingfield accepted an annuity of £50 from Thomas Gascoigne and founded the Bar Convent at York. Gascoigne, a Yorkshire man, had urged Bedingfield to found an Institute house there for years; in 1682 he signed a promissory note that stated his wishes:

I do hereby declare, that the donation I made I left and do still leave to the disposal of Mrs. Frances Bedingfield and that my intention is to have thirty pounds per annum applied to her house at Hammersmith, and the rest when it shall come all into her hands, to two other houses, which are to be erected where she shall think fit, either in or out of Yorkshire, and that in order to the maintenance of those who shall employ themselves in breeding up children in piety and learning. Witness my hand, THOMAS GASCOIGNE.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Kirkus, “Hammersmith,” 16.

²⁵⁸ Evinson, *Pope's Corner*, 15.

²⁵⁹ Kirkus, “Hammersmith,” 2-3.

²⁶⁰ As cited in Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 67.

In regard to his wish for a third house, it never came to fruition. Gascoigne had long lamented the lack of schools for girls in the north of England, and his benefaction allowed for the first girls' school in York.

Monies also came from Gascoigne's eldest son and widowed daughter, Lady Anne Tempest. Additionally, other heads of Catholic families in York made contributions: Robert Dolman Esq. of York, Sir Francis Hungate of Saxton, Charles Ingleby Esq. of Ripley, John Middleton Esq. of Stockeld, Sir Miles Stapleton of Carlton, Sir Walter Vavasour of Hazlewood, Dr. Peter Vavsour of York, Sir Thomas Haggerston of Haggerston in Northumberland, and Thomas Riddell Esq. of Fenham in Durham.²⁶¹ With these funds, Bedingfield purchased a house and garden just outside the walls of the city, at the Micklegate Bar (Gate). Among Catholics, it was called St. Mary's Convent, and came to be commonly called the Bar Convent. Yet, it was not a traditional convent. The sisters were not formally nuns, and as such were not cloistered. They went about town clad in secular dress, and they used worldly names. In private, however, they did all that they could to live a spiritual life.

To staff the new foundation with well-trained members, Bedingfield reached out to the German houses for teachers and members to administer the York convent. Father Pracid, S.J., who was active with the Hammersmith community, was also the first spiritual director at York. Christina Hastings, Isabel Layton, Elisabeth Vine, Anne Magdalen Hugalin, Dorothy Bedingfield (alias Paston, Frances' grand niece), Mary Cramlington, Mary Chester, and Catharine Stanfield were the first members.²⁶² These women began the work of educating generations of Catholic girls in religion and the

²⁶¹ Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 18.

²⁶² Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 77.

liberal arts. They also directed their pupils in French comedies and "calderonic" dramas.²⁶³ Until the penal laws granted Catholics relief in 1788, the school made a conscious effort to stay small, and accepted only about forty students per year.²⁶⁴

In 1693, Bishop Smith (alias Brown) wrote to Bedingfield and offered his assistance on account of the educative function the Bar Convent had taken on in the north. Students came even from Scotland.²⁶⁵ "Madam, - You have already my word for what assistance and countenance I am able to give, not only in the affair of your settlement, but also in all things else belonging to the business of your Institute. By character I am and by solicitude I will be a father to all your concerns. I have a more than ordinary sense of what importance it is to have youth well educated."²⁶⁶ Despite the Bull of Suppression issued in 1631, a man of the Church acknowledged the "importance" of the Institute and its schools.

Following her great aunt Frances' departure to Munich in 1699 and subsequent death there in 1704, Dorothy Bedingfield was Superior at York. During her tenure, which spanned over two decades, almost two-hundred girls were educated at the Bar Convent, in both the day school and boarding school. Dorothy, like Frances, received the approval of the Bishop. In 1699, Bishop Leyburne wrote to the Pope on behalf of the Institute: "I am able therefore to bear witness, as I now do, not from the testimony of others only, but of my own knowledge, to the virtuous lives of these ladies, and to their assiduity in the instruction of youth."²⁶⁷ No doubt, letters of recommendation like this one contributed to the approval of the Institute's *Constitutions* in 1703. In the early part

²⁶³ Norman, "Mary Ward," 13.

²⁶⁴ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 95.

²⁶⁵ As cited in Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 128.

²⁶⁶ As cited in Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 99.

of the eighteenth century, the Bar Convent was further subsidized by a former pupil, Lady Petre (Catharine Walmesley of Westwood, Lancashire), as well as by the heiress of Francis Stanfield, Esq., Elizabeth Stanfield who joined the community and pledged her inheritance to the Institute.²⁶⁸ The Ladies at the Bar continued their work in girls' education, and also trained members who subsequently founded other houses in Europe and abroad.

Beyond England, additional foundations were being made on the Continent in the seventeenth century. In 1662, Mary Poyntz founded another house in Bavaria, at Augsburg, and Helena Catesby (d. 1701) was made Superior. The first community consisted of Catharina Errington, Dorothy Fielding, Elisabeth Rantienne (who became Superior of the House in 1701), and Mary Portington – who were all members of the Institute and Isabella Layton, a laysister along with four English boarders, Mary Anna Barbara Babthorpe and Agnes Babthorpe, Christina Hastings and Mary Turner. Poyntz rented a house and was received by the Burgomeister of the City. Pupils, aged six to seventeen joined the schools; there was an elementary school for the poor, and boarding and day schools for middle class and upper class girls.²⁶⁹

In 1680, Bishop John Christopher von Freiberg offered the community an endowment and his protection if they would agree to certain stipulations, one of which was to become formal religious, and take a vow of chastity.²⁷⁰ Approximately fifty years after the Bull of Suppression, a house of the Institute was recognized as a formal religious order. Concentrating on girls' education, the English Ladies were exceedingly valuable

²⁶⁷ As cited in Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 52.

²⁶⁸ Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 126, 128.

²⁶⁹ Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 46.

²⁷⁰ For information about the Institute at Augsburg, I rely upon Chambers, *The Life*, 2:525-538.

to Bavarian Catholics. By 1686, the student population had increased at Augsburg, so that they transferred to a bigger house. Four years later, the members were granted citizenship. The Augsburg foundation became the oldest surviving Continental house when Munich was closed in 1809.²⁷¹

In 1683, the Superior of the Augsburg house, Helena Catesby, founded another house in Bavaria, at Burghausen, (Altötting district). Girls from other parts of Bavaria and Austria enrolled at the new schools. Here they learned to speak, read, and write Latin, German, French, English, and Italian, in addition to having classes in music, painting, embroidery, and morals. Catesby was overwhelmed and wrote to the Munich house for help in managing the “increase of youthful candidates.”²⁷²

Newly installed as the Augsburg Superior, Elisabeth Rantienne went to Mindelheim to erect another foundation in 1701. With the generous aid of the Duchess of Turkheim, Febronia, who was the wife of Maximilian Philip of Bavaria, Rantienne received a house and an annual income for the new community. Soon after, in 1703, Pope Clement XI issued his Brief *Inscrutabili*, which confirmed the *Rules* of the Institute, which had been submitted by General Superior Anna Barbara Babthorpe in 1701. “Lasciate governare le donne dalle donne,” Clement XI famously declared.²⁷³ In every foundation, except the English houses, the members began to wear the habit, and take three simple (not solemn) vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. The Brief did not actually recognize the Institute as a formal religious order, but it was more than a measure of toleration. In essence, Clement XI publicly legitimized the Institute and

²⁷¹ Etscheit, "The Place of Mary Ward," Ch. 7, 6.

²⁷² As cited in Etscheit, "The Place of Mary Ward," Ch. 5, 22.

²⁷³ As cited in Chambers, *The Life*, 2:296.

paved the way for a great expansion of houses across Europe and abroad. Appendix D lists eighteenth-century foundations.²⁷⁴

Especially in the German speaking lands, the eighteenth century saw many more houses founded with very popular schools. In Günzberg, which was founded in 1785, the magistrates announced the success of the schools in 1788:

We, the Mayor and Councillors of the town of Günzberg, cannot sufficiently praise either the sustained zeal with which they (the English Ladies), now in their third year here, instruct the female youth, or the excellent progress they have made, since great numbers of girls of tender age are most keen to attend their schools and by doing so acquire the best habits; they are then guided with such care towards true piety and virtue that they not only behave most commendably in public, but also show great perseverance in church and serve as a good example both outside and inside the home. In the Catholic religion and in matters of faith, they are so thoroughly grounded that children of nine years of age know what hitherto was partly unknown to grown women.²⁷⁵

Here the good effects of solid Christian Doctrine and catechism are stressed. The comparison between knowledgeable nine year old children and ignorant grown women demonstrates even the short term results the Institute was having after three years in Günzberg.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the institute had its greatest expansion. Approximately 110 new foundations were made in Europe alone, with 35 new foundations made worldwide in India, Canada, the United States, Australia, Africa, South America, and Mauritius.²⁷⁶

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Mary Ward had a wide vision for her newly founded Institute: the members were to convert heretics, catechize men and women, and educate girls. Her plan proved to be too radical for the Church, but because

²⁷⁴ Data compiled from Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 417-419.

²⁷⁵ As cited in Etscheit, "The Place of Mary Ward," Ch. 5, 22.

²⁷⁶ Coleridge, *St. Mary's*, 417-419; Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute*, 154, 162.

Catholic lands were desperate to educate girls, rather than eradicate the Institute completely, the Church forced Mary Ward to limit herself and the Institute to the education of girls by secular unenclosed orthodox Catholic mistresses. Thus after 1631, providing education to girls was the sole activity that kept the Institute afloat in the seventeenth century. What the survival of the Institute's seventeenth-century schools reveals, is the central concern that Catholic leaders in Rome and all over Europe had regarding girls' education. Despite the serious controversy in which Mary Ward's Institute was embroiled, the Prince Bishop of Munich, even Pope Urban VIII, and several other Catholic leaders supported Ward's schools for girls. In time, Church widened its view of what an appropriate religious vocation was for women, and the Institute expanded in Europe in the eighteenth century.

See Tables 4 and 5 below.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Institute was established abroad, opening schools in lands under European colonial or imperial control.²⁷⁷ Beginning in the early nineteenth century, foundations at Calcutta and Dacca in India were made; by 1845, there were nine foundations throughout India. Several foundations were also instated in Canada and the United States in the 1840s (toward the end of the century the sisters began teaching boys in North America, too). The Institute was then asked by a bishop in South Africa, to make a permanent foundation in Pretoria, which they did in 1877. At the same time, the Institute also established a foundation in Australia, and two

²⁷⁷ See Appendix IX.

in Mauritius. In the early twentieth century, the Institute opened foundations in East Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Korea, and Rhodesia, simultaneously with sustained expansion in Europe. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in 2004, Ward's Institute succeeded in encompassing all of the functions she had planned for it according to the Jesuit *Constitutions* in their entirety.

In conclusion, a speech that Mary Ward made to the Institute members in 1617 sheds light on Ward's confidence in women's intellectual capacity and potential for religious and educative work. The background to her teaching point in the speech relates to a conversation that Thomas Sackville had in Rome regarding her Institute, and later recounted to her. In 1616, Sackville was speaking of the Institute's righteous path and pious membership, and one of the churchmen replied, "It is true – while they are in their first fervor, but fervor will decay and when all is done, they are but women."²⁷⁸

Having reflected on this opinion, Ward addressed the community at the Saint-Omer Institute, she pointed to the characterization of women and their perceived weakness. She said,

It is true that fervor doth many times grow cold, but what is the cause? Is it because we are women? No, but because we are imperfect women. There is no such difference between men and women.²⁷⁹

Ward rejected the stereotyping of the churchman, and replaced it with realism concerning the human condition. She went on to caution her daughters about male counsel that belittles:

Heretofore we have been told by men we must believe. It is true, we must, but let us be wise and know what we are to believe and what not, and not be made to think we can do nothing.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Ward, *Writings*, 56.

²⁷⁹ Ward, *Writings*, 57.

²⁸⁰ Ward, *Writings*, 57.

Table 4: Institute of Mary, Seventeenth-Century Foundations

Town or City, Foundation Date	Region	Ruled by
Saint-Omer, 1609	Habsburg Netherlands (modern France)	Archduke Albert VII of Austria and Archduchess Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia of Spain
Liège, 1616	Prince Bishopric of Liège (modern Belgium)	Ferdinand of Bavaria, Prince-Bishop of Liège
Cologne, 1620	Rhineland (modern Germany)	Ferdinand of Bavaria, Prince-elector Archbishop of Cologne
Trier, 1621	Rhineland (modern Germany)	Lothar von Metternich, Prince-Elector and Bishop of Trier
Rome, 1622; Perugia, 1624	Papal States (modern Italy)	Pope Gregory XV
Naples, 1623	Spanish Empire (modern Italy)	Philip IV of Spain
Munich, 1626	Bavaria (modern Germany)	Maximilian I, Duke/Elector of Bavaria
Vienna, 1627; Pressburg (modern Bratislava), 1628; St. Polten, also in Vienna, 1706; Krems (modern Austria), 1722; Prague (modern Czech Republic), 1747	Habsburg Empire (modern Austria; modern Slovakia)	Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor, of the House of Habsburg
Hammersmith, 1669; London, 1685; York, 1686	England	James II (r. 1685- 1688) William and Mary (r. 1688-1694, 1702)

Table 5: Institute of Mary, Eighteenth-Century Foundations

Town or City, Foundation Date	Region	Ruled by
Mindelheim, 1701; Bamberg, 1717; Altötting, 1721; Aschaffenburg, 1748; Gunzburg, 1785	Bavaria (modern Germany)	Prince Electors of Bavaria: Maximilian II Emanuel (r. 1679-1706, 1714-1726) Charles Albert (r. 1726-1745) Maximilian III Joseph, (r. 1745-1777) Charles Theodore (r. 1777-1799)
Mainz, 1752	Darmstadt (modern Germany)	Archbishop Elector of Mainz, Johann Friedrich Karl von Ostein (r.1743– 1763)
Frankfurt, 1749	Hesse (modern Germany)	Louis VIII, Landgrave of Hesse- Darmstadt (r.1739-1768)
Meran, 1724; Brixen, 1739	The Tyrol (modern Austria)	Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor, House of Habsburg: as Archduke of Austria, Charles III (r. 1711- 1740)
Budapest, 1770	Hungarian area of Habsburg Empire (modern Hungary)	Maria Theresa of Austria, Holy Roman Empress, House of Habsburg (r. 1740-1780)
Rovereto, 1782	Italian Tyrol (modern Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy)	Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor, House of Habsburg (r. 1780-1790)

Ward lamented that counsel laced with that kind of misogynistic opinion prevented women from achieving self-confidence and realizing their goals.

I would to God that all men understood this verity, that women, if they will, may be perfect, and if they would not make us believe we can do nothing and that we are 'but women', we might do great matters."²⁸¹

In her lifetime, as she established and expanded the Institute, Ward would not flinch from criticism or ridicule. Her determination and the exceptional amount of confidence she displayed in regard to her mission were instrumental in developing girls' schools and education, not only in England, but worldwide.

In her *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, Retha Warnicke calls Ward the first English feminist.²⁸² While Warnicke does not give a detailed explanation for this characterization, it is clear that in addition to proposing a new female religious order outside of the normal male ecclesiastical power structure which was subject to the Pope alone, Ward also ascribed to a pro-feminine agenda philosophically, as evidenced in the above speech. In her capacity as a founder of an educational Institute run by women and for girls, she made a significant contribution to European society in opening up access to education among her sex, for Catholics of mixed economic backgrounds. While Ward's effort to create a female order akin to the Jesuits was thwarted in her lifetime, and the Institute's mission was nearly obliterated, her vision for the increased schooling of girls was not denounced and was heartily embraced by the Church from the latter part of the seventeenth century onward.

Without founders who believed that female intellectual capacity was suited to learning, the educational revolution in England would have been for boys alone. By the

²⁸¹ Ward, *Writings*, 58.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English society had embraced basic precepts that worked in tandem: intellectually, girls were fit for studies, and, morally, they were worthy of an education. To meet this new realization, schools for girls in England and abroad opened their doors to teach pupils up and down the social scale, no matter what their creed.

²⁸² Retha M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport, CT -London: Greenwood Press, 1983), 175-179.

Epilogue: Co-education and the Rights of Woman

By the late seventeenth century, advocates of schooling for women devised arguments from a variety of theoretical perspectives – moral, medical, economic, political -- for female instruction. These daring proposals, which culminated in the treatises of François Poullain de la Barre and Mary Astell (discussed in Chapter One), found a successor in the late-eighteenth century in the person of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), who moved the debate from literary commentary and philosophical inquiry to a call for political action.¹ Schooling for girls was firmly established in Western Europe by Wollstonecraft's time, with the Ursuline schools, Mary Ward Institute, and other institutions expanding also around the globe.² In Wollstonecraft's England, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (founded in 1698) became a driving force for the establishment of schools for both sexes.³ But, as Wollstonecraft, would note girls' schooling imparted a different and inferior academic program in comparison to boys' schooling. Also, Wollstonecraft believed that the limited amount of time girls attended schools often gave them only a superficial introduction to academic subjects. Such a state was not only injurious to girls as individuals, but also to husbands, future children and society itself--all victims of female ignorance, vice and folly, which Wollstonecraft identified with a lack of solid education. To combat this deplorable tradition, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792), Wollstonecraft advocated for a national system of co-educational schools, which would prepare girls alongside boys in integrated classrooms for the duties and privileges

¹ Gordon, *Vindication*, 370; Jacobs, *Her Own Woman*; Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*.

² See Appendices III and X.

of a civil society. Her argument rested on the Enlightenment conviction that only through the use of the rational intellect, the one faculty that distinguished human beings from the beasts, could women become fully human.⁴ Schools and equal education, she announced were the best route to equal rights and a virtuous culture.

Wollstonecraft is often called the first feminist, an apt epithet in many ways. But as Adrienne Rich and Penny Weiss have pointed out, this “honor” isolates Wollstonecraft, orphaning her from the tradition in which she succeeded.⁵ This epilogue addresses that issue by showing which aspects of Wollstonecraft’s arguments about women’s worth and intellectual capacity relied on the earlier tradition (discussed in Chapter One) and which aspects of her arguments were new and visionary. For example, whereas her call for universal schooling came well after Vives’ and Comenius’, her call and plan for co-educational state schooling was pioneering. Wollstonecraft is a pivotal figure in the debate about women’s education stretching back to the late Middle Ages and forward toward modernity in the West, where educational opportunity, along with political liberty and the recognition of human rights, would extend in time to all people.

The first section of the epilogue focuses on Wollstonecraft’s radicalization, culminating in the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which contained the theoretical framework for the justification of co-education. Her earliest work, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) posits her belief that girls’ rationality could and should be developed, and contains other valuable, but certainly not revolutionary, ideas about girls’ education and schooling. In the coming years, as the

³ Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898*; Cooling, *A Christian Vision for State Education*.

⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 8, 39.

political revolution in France stimulated much debate in England, Wollstonecraft was one of the first and the most ardent supporters in print of the universal rights of man, publishing *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in November, 1790. The social and intellectual circles she was a part of helped to shape her egalitarian position; she, quite uniquely, soon argued for the extension of “the inherent rights of mankind” to women.⁶ Influences upon her formation and her main arguments in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* will be examined; in doing so, a re-evaluation of Wollstonecraft’s political theory is offered, one that properly positions her educational platform as the keystone in achieving equality between the sexes in a just society.

The second section of the epilogue analyzes Wollstonecraft’s feisty challenges in the *Rights of Woman* to Jean Jacques Rousseau and other prominent authors of the day whom she thought detrimental in girls’ education and upbringing. One of these latter was the French statesman, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754-1838), whose plan for the new French Republic’s educational system Wollstonecraft found disappointing. The minimal provision Talleyrand proposed for girls’ elementary schools will be compared with the plan of Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicholas Caritat de Condorcet (1743-1794) which, while it called for co-education, still affirmed women’s place as strictly in the home. So, even though Wollstonecraft was not the only vocal advocate for co-educational schools, she was the only one proposing the schools as the vehicle for a complete and bloodless revolution (in England, France, and presumably anywhere willing to follow her prescripts) to free one half of the human species through education.

⁵ As argued in Maria J. Falco, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 26.

⁶ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 175. Henceforth, references to this text will be given in parentheses following the quotation in this format: (*Vindication*, 00).

While the first section of this epilogue looks at the theoretical framework for co-education, the third section looks at Wollstonecraft's actual plan for schooling girls, together with boys. Her plan, complete with reforms for effective school administration boards, disciplinary review panels, curriculum, and other practical concerns, is presented and analyzed. Not only is her avant-garde proposal striking for leveling distinctions based upon gender, it also tackled class-based discrimination in the classroom.

Concluding the epilogue, a discussion of Wollstonecraft's distinctive contribution to the theory of female schooling is offered. She inherited much from earlier advocates of women's worth and education, but it was her own particular understanding and position in the early 1790s that inspired her to consolidate and crystallize a most enlightened and egalitarian plan for society.

The Radicalization of Mary Wollstonecraft

Two phases of Wollstonecraft's career are clear: her beginnings as a lady's companion, school founder, teacher, and governess up until the year 1787 comprise the first phase, and, from 1788, her increased radicalization as a writer and political thinker comprise the second. Many modern writers have chronicled Wollstonecraft's life, some in an effort to rehabilitate her image as a depressive type who attempted suicide twice and had children out of wedlock.⁷ Her reception in the nineteenth century was marred in large part because her husband William Godwin's publication, *Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman'* made public all of her private affairs.⁸ The brief summary of her

⁷ See: Gordon, *Vindication*; Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*.

⁸ Wollstonecraft and Godwin, *Memoirs*. Gordon, *Vindication*.

career offered here does not air the scandals in which Wollstonecraft found herself embroiled, but points to strong influences on her thinking.

Wollstonecraft's turbulent childhood does not seem to have prepared her to be the original and effective thinker she became. Her father, born to an upper-middle-class family, at first pursued a gentleman's lifestyle, living off of the rents of inherited properties in both the south of England and in York. Over the course of Wollstonecraft's youth, however, her father lost most of his holdings from a lack of business skill and a violent case of alcoholism.⁹ Of her childhood, she reported witnessing her father's repeated physical abuse of her mother, and her mother's weary and weak character. Wollstonecraft fetched her own education, sporadically, at day schools, with little or no encouragement from her parents. In 1778, when she was nineteen, Wollstonecraft became the paid companion to Mrs. Sarah Dawson, who resided in Windsor and, seasonally, in Bath. In this capacity, Wollstonecraft could closely observe the lives of the elite, whose affected manners she came to loathe. Mostly, as she wrote to her friend, Jane Arden, she longed for sincerity,

I am particularly sick of genteel life, as it is called, -the unmeaning civilities that I see every day practiced don't agree with my temper; -I long for a little sincerity, and look forward with pleasure to the time when I shall lay aside all restraint.¹⁰

Her position also enabled her to read in the evenings, and it is during this time that Wollstonecraft concentrated on developing her critical reading and writing skills.

In 1783, she tried a new profession, and began a school in Islington, which proved to be glutted with schools, and soon moved it to a more promising location at Newington Green in 1784, with assistance from her sisters Bess and Everina, and her closest friend,

⁹ For information about Wollstonecraft's family, I rely on Gordon, *Vindication*, 19-68.

Fanny Blood. Financial support for this endeavor came through a benevolent and childless wealthy widow, Mrs. Burgh; her late husband, Reverend James Burgh had run a successful school for decades. Mrs. Burgh was a source of continuous help to Wollstonecraft during the 1780s, and with Burgh's assistance, Wollstonecraft's co-educational day and boarding school took root within the vibrant and radical Dissenter community on the Green.

Wollstonecraft soon joined the leading circle, headed by Dr. Richard Price, who was a Welsh moral and political philosopher as well as a minister. Wollstonecraft enjoyed Dr. Price's sermons and weekly suppers, regularly participating in conversation and an exchange of ideas with her nonconformist neighbors who valued "self-mastery, industry, sobriety, and thrift."¹¹ As Dr. Price was an international figure, with friends like Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Priestly, he was probably the first notable thinker that Wollstonecraft knew personally. While Wollstonecraft did not become a Unitarian, she did become Price's friend, and Wollstonecraft adopted Price's unflinching rationalism and belief that only free citizens could be moral. At this time, Price was editing his treatise, *Review of the Principal Questions of Morals* (1758), in which he argued that morality and virtue necessarily required liberty and individual conscience.¹² In time, she would employ this line of thinking to argue for co-educational schools and women's rights. But, at the moment, she carefully listened and respectfully conversed with the eminent minister, whose honors including serving Prime Minister Lord Shelburne as an

¹⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 72.

¹¹ Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 58.

¹² Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 179.

advisor from 1782-1783.¹³ Meanwhile, her school's good reputation grew and attracted a solid student population.

Wollstonecraft's best friend, Fanny Blood, who was also the drawing master at the school, soon left to marry and went with her husband to Portugal. While there, she became pregnant and her health deteriorated; Wollstonecraft went to her in Portugal in order to nurse her and help with the newborn, leaving the school from November 1785 to January 1786. Although Wollstonecraft had plans to resume her post at the school, when she returned later that year, she was unable to revitalize the shrunken student population, and closed the school in June, 1786. In August, with Mrs. Burgh and Dr. Price's help, Wollstonecraft acquired a position as a governess to the Kingsborough family of Anglo-Irish descent, and she went to Dublin. She spent the year 1787 educating the children in the daytime, and writing her first work, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* in the evening. However, she "longed for a little peace and *independence!*" and returned to England to change her career again.¹⁴

At the advice of one of her Newington Green friends, the Rev. Mr. John Hewlett, Wollstonecraft sought out Dr. Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), a radical publisher in St. Paul's Churchyard, who by 1809, was eulogized as "the father of the book trade."¹⁵ Among many other Dissenter works, Johnson had published Dr. Price's widely successful *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* in 1776, which supported the American colonists in the War for Independence. Not only did Johnson agree to publish Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts*, he also agreed to help her become an independent

¹³ Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 53.

¹⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, Letter to Joseph Johnson, 159.

¹⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 124.

professional writer. He hired her to be a reviewer of his newly found *Analytic Review*, and employed her as a translator and editorial assistant.

In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, Wollstonecraft suggested that women had as much access to rationality as did men, although they were not yet trained to use it. “Reason must often be called in to fill up the vacuums of life; but too many of our sex suffer theirs to lie dormant.”¹⁶ She asserted women’s full ability to control the “passions” by using reason, and saw reason as the faculty that could render motherhood less burdensome for women. (*Thoughts*, 7) Arguing that a reasonable, tender and nurturing maternal parent was the perfect teacher for daughters, superior to servant tutors and schools, from whom “greater corruptions” were spawned (also in agreement with Rousseau), Wollstonecraft used relatively innocuous arguments to support female education. (*Thoughts*, 22.).

But even in this early and conventional work, Wollstonecraft was pleading for small changes. She thought girls should be taught more demanding subjects, because the superficial instruction they received was barely enough to arouse their interest and hold their attention. When girls were given a proper entree into learning, their minds were enlarged and they developed a “variety of character.” (*Thoughts*, 12.) She saw no subject beyond their reach as a group, and beyond specific lessons, she held that the most important skill to teach girls was critical thinking:

Above all, try to teach them to combine their ideas. It is of more use that can be conceived, for a child to learn to compare things that are similar in some respects, and different in others. (*Thoughts*, 11.)

¹⁶ Wollstonecraft, “Education of Daughters,” 32. Henceforth, references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text as, (*Thoughts*, 00).

Knowing how taxing mental tasks could be for children, Wollstonecraft suggested combining pleasurable elements to the “severe exercise,” a method no doubt inspired by Rousseau, together with her own experience as a teacher:

I wish them to be taught to think - thinking, indeed, is a severe exercise, and exercise of either mind or body will not at first be entered on, but with a view to pleasure. (*Thoughts*, 11.)

The education she recommended for girls in 1787 was comprised of reading, active employments, and a particular kind of civility that was courteous and authentic. She praised books for their value in children’s education. “Judicious books” offered the perfect combination of “instruction and amusement,” and Wollstonecraft held reading as the “most rational employment.” (*Thoughts*, 20.) Books are like food for the understanding, working to fortify both mind and body and “improve the heart.” (*Thoughts*, 20.) Added to that, she praised writing as the most useful of all the fine arts because “it teaches a person to arrange their thoughts, and digest them.” (*Thoughts*, 18.) There was a moral component to Wollstonecraft’s prescriptions, too. All people, not just girls, should be reared to be virtuous and have “a strict adherence to truth; a proper submission to superiors; and condescension to inferiors.” (*Thoughts*, 11.) Civility, she wrote, is due all, but regard or admiration should only be expressed when it is sincere. (*Thoughts*, 14.) Artificial manners and fake sentiment were wholly ruinous for children to mimic, and ran counter to the values of honesty and reason that Wollstonecraft sought to promote. Along those lines, girls should not spend too much time at toilet and dressing. “Simplicity of Dress and unaffected manners should go together,” no matter one’s class. (*Thoughts*, 17.)

Throughout her career, Wollstonecraft would come back repeatedly to the central place of reason in all educational endeavors that she announced in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*. Dr. Price's influence had staying power. Through the cultivation of reason and the employment of the mind, a fine character would be created. A girl's time, as well as a boy's, was best spent learning humility and how to control one's temper. "Most women, and men too, have no character at all," she offered a remedy: "It is reflection which forms habits, and fixes principles indelibly on the heart; without it, the mind is like a wreck drifted about by every squall." (*Thoughts*, 36.) Wollstonecraft would elaborate on this new notion of education for mental health and self-development in the *Rights of Woman*. She made rationality and intellectual pursuits more than a privilege; she identified them as tools for self-preservation and survival: "In a comfortable situation, a cultivated mind is necessary to render a woman contented; and in a miserable one, it is her only consolation." (*Thoughts*, 32.) Intellectual enrichment was not just polish in Wollstonecraft's thinking; it was the bedrock of one's humanity and that which made one capable of enduring life's challenges and duties.

Perhaps anticipating criticism that women's education would take up too much time and thus infringe upon running a home and raising a family, Wollstonecraft firmly stated, "No employment of the mind is a sufficient excuse for neglecting domestic duties, and I cannot conceive that they are incompatible. A woman may herself be the companion and friend of a man of sense, and yet know how to take care of his family." (*Thoughts*, 21.) Thus, in 1787, Wollstonecraft had solidified her pedagogy for girls as centering on the development of the most important intellectual faculties, *reason*. She argued that this program was compatible with domestic life, and hinted that an educated

and reasonable wife was a boon to her husband and family. Her phrasing of these ideas in *Thoughts* were not incendiary or controversial; however, Wollstonecraft would develop, in the next four years that teemed with revolution and innovative ideas, a more radicalized pedagogy that rested upon women's rationality.

At this time, Johnson's aid to Wollstonecraft was crucial for her personally and professionally--she called him "a father and a brother."¹⁷ Working with him enabled Wollstonecraft to do many things: she realized her goal of becoming a professional writer, assisted her family financially, met many radical writers and artists, and developed her own ideas about the revolutionary events taking place. Through Johnson, at his shop and home where he hosted regular dinners, Wollstonecraft also met many liberal thinkers. Johnson's friends and associates soon became Wollstonecraft's too: Thomas Christie, Thomas Paine, Joel and Ruth Barlow, the mathematician John Bonnycastle, the physician James Gregory, and the artists Henry Fuseli and William Blake, as well as Wollstonecraft's future husband William Godwin.

Amidst these intellectuals and artists, Wollstonecraft wrote her first novel, *Mary: A Fiction*, and a children's book entitled *Original Stories from Real Life*. *Mary* offered the world a female character that lived her life by the strength of her own reason. Wollstonecraft tried to prepare her reader for this new type, and explained that she was "neither a Clarissa, a Lady G-, nor a Sophie."¹⁸ Wollstonecraft's description of the story demonstrates that she wanted to persuade readers that women could indeed excel in mental exercises despite the current practice of abstaining from the life of the mind:

In an artless tale, without episodes, the mind of a woman, who has thinking powers is displayed. The female organs have been thought too weak for

¹⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 125.

¹⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Mary*, 1.

this arduous employment; and experience seems to justify the assertion. Without arguing physically about possibilities-in a fiction, such a being may be allowed to exist; whose grandeur is derived from the operations of its own faculties, not subjugated to opinion; but drawn by the individual from the original source.¹⁹

Three years later, Wollstonecraft would argue about “possibilities” in the real world, but in 1788, she developed a fictional character that despite an unwanted arranged marriage and troubling vicissitudes in her life, relied on her own learning and judgment to steer a course in life, generously giving care, support, and education to others. Mary, the character, also enchanted men by the brilliance of her mind more than any of her physical charms. Wollstonecraft had created her ideal woman.

In August 1789, when the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* instituted popular sovereignty in France, radicals in England rejoiced, including Wollstonecraft, who viewed the French Revolution with admiration and hope. Addressed to his fellow members of the newly formed Revolution Society, Dr. Price penned a sermon *Discourse on The Love of Our Country*, praising the Revolution in France and linking it to his hopes for greater political liberty in England, on the centennial of the Glorious Revolution (1688). This publication also contained a congratulatory address to the French National Assembly. Johnson assigned Wollstonecraft to review Price’s controversial sermon, and she did so, not surprisingly, favorably. Appearing the following year was Edmund Burke’s (1729-1797) *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (November 1, 1790). In it, Burke berated Johnson for his interpretation of English political history, which Burke held to be “a most unfounded, dangerous, illegal, and unconstitutional position.”²⁰ Burke disagreed that Englishmen had rights in deposing

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Mary*, 3-4.

²⁰ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event*. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), 97.

the current government or royal line. He asserted the privileges of the aristocracy and judged that the French Revolution had only damaged France's prospects and unduly endangered the monarchies of Europe. On the benefit of hereditary wealth, Burke wrote:

The power of perpetuating our property in our families is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself. It makes our weakness subservient to our virtue, it grafts benevolence even upon avarice.²¹

While his *Reflections* sold an estimated 35,000 copies in less than two months time, and a multitude of favorable reviews and essays were written on its behalf, Wollstonecraft firmly disagreed with Burke's prizing of elite privilege and with the general message of the work.²²

As a response to Burke, Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (published by Johnson in November 29, 1790).²³ Here, she defended Dr. Price, and denounced all hereditary power and privilege. The first edition was published anonymously, but the second edition followed in a few weeks and bore her name.²⁴ Tom Paine had the same low opinion of hereditary honors, and his response to Burke in the *Rights of Man* appeared three months later (February–March 1791).²⁵ Both Wollstonecraft's and Paine's critique of Burke attacked the characterization of aristocratic patterns of hereditary wealth as a bulwark to a stable prosperous nation.

A most revolutionary spirit is clearly articulated in Wollstonecraft's response to Burke, and it is in this work that she explains her position on "natural rights." She wrote that European progress had come to a standstill because of the retarding effect that

²¹ Burke, *Reflections*, 140.

²² Craig Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 197.

²³ Subsequent references to the work appear in text as (*Rights of Men*, 00).

²⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 37.

“hereditary property and hereditary honours” had on civilization. (*Rights of Men*, 67)

The system which granted aristocratic privilege was utterly unjust, she complained, and it prevented “mankind” from realizing God-given natural rights. These “natural rights” were for all “men” on account of their rationality, not their bloodline:

It is necessary emphatically to repeat, that there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights. (*Rights of Men*, 67)

Furthermore, she argued that “virtue can only flourish among equals” and until all could exercise their rights, society would be morally devoid. (*Rights of Men*, 81) Since Wollstonecraft used the words “mankind: and “men,” it is questionable in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* as to whether these “natural rights” were also intended for women. It is clear that Wollstonecraft held women to be “rational creatures” with “improvable faculties” alongside men, as argued in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and imagined in *Mary: A Fiction*. Consequently, it is likely that as she conceived of the “natural rights” in 1790, she understood them to be for human beings regardless of sex. She would make this principle explicit in her next published work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1791).

Afire with extraordinary events taking place in revolutionary France, Wollstonecraft undertook this new project of writing the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In it, many of the budding ideas Wollstonecraft planted in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, *Mary* and the *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* were further

²⁵ Nelson, *Thomas Paine*, 201.

developed and systematized to become part of a radical political program.²⁶ Asserting a host of Republican rights for both men and women in this groundbreaking work, Wollstonecraft stated that denying the use of reason and intellectual faculties was the most egregious violation of a sacred God-given human right. She appealed to enfranchised men to effect the necessary changes and release women from their unnatural bondage, by allowing them the life of the mind and equal co-education.

The *Vindication* caused an immediate sensation among the wider reading public and went through eight English language editions in the eighteenth century, and five more in the nineteenth century.²⁷ Furthermore, copies appeared in America, and in French and German translations.²⁸ The work had its adherents as well as detractors. In 1802, the American writer and future faculty member at Yale University, Benjamin Silliman wrote *The Letters of Shahcoolen*, a literary work aimed at teaching the people of India about American culture. In this work, Silliman characterized Wollstonecraft's aims as he understood them in the *Vindication*:

Not satisfied with masculine ideas, and masculine habits, Mary Wollstonecraft wishes, as the consummation of female independence, to introduce the sex into the Camp, the Rostrum and the Cabinet; and although she does not recommend a total dereliction of *the household good*, still she would not cramp the female energies by an occupation so much beneath their dignity, except so far, as stern necessity commands.²⁹

²⁶ Currently, the political program would be considered feminist because Wollstonecraft advocated for equality in political and civil matters.

²⁷ As documented in Ulrich H. Hardt, ed., *A Critical Edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing Co., 1982), 5.

²⁸ Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 184.

²⁹ Benjamin Silliman, "The Letters of Shahcoolen," in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 238. Wollstonecraft does not advocate for women in the military in the work.

Silliman had it right, in part. Wollstonecraft wanted to see women educated so that they could partake in all aspects of life, while maintaining family life which she did not belittle.

Her main argument in the *Vindication* is as follows: the current form of education for girls does not train them to be reasonable people; instead, it enhances their faults and endangers society's morality. To correct this deficiency, Wollstonecraft calls for a "revolution" in manners and education to ensure that girls develop their rationality and intellectual powers, rendering them worthy citizens, entitled to the "inherent rights of mankind." (*Vindication*, 175.) She envisions a major restructuring of schooling to achieve this end. A new national co-educational system that combines the benefits of domestic living and public schooling is devised as the best solution to the injustice and immorality that prevails in society. Through the analogous use of the "Rights of Man," rhetorically epitomized during the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft demanded that women be freed from "all restraint," properly educated, and made participants in the "virtuous equality" of a just civilization. (*Vindication*, 141, 175.)

These arguments are presented most clearly in *Chapter V: on Some of the Writers who have Rendered Women Objects of Pity, Bordering on Contempt*, *Chapter IX: Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise From the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society*, *Chapter XII: On National Education*, and *Chapter XIII: Some Instances of the Folly Which the Ignorance of Women Generates; with Concluding Reflections on the Moral Improvement That a Revolution in Female Manners Might Naturally Be Expected to Produce*. The entire work, however, promotes her brand of female education, which is co-education, as the conduit to equality. Rather than analyze the work in the order it

was written, presenting and reviewing her arguments thematically offers the reader a more digestible picture of her contribution in educational thought. In the passages that follow, what is original and innovative in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, her plea for co-education as the means to full personhood and deserved rights is discussed, but also, inherited ideas from the centuries-old debate about women are pointed out serving to anchor Wollstonecraft to the venerable tradition of advocacy for female learning.

Knowledge, Wollstonecraft argued is what can save society. Specifically, women needed the same type of education as men:

To render also the social compact truly equitable, and in order to spread those enlightening principles, which alone can ameliorate the fate of man, women must be allowed to found their virtue on *knowledge*, which is scarcely possible unless they be educated by the same pursuits as men. (*Vindication*, 173.)

She believed that female virtue was floundering because of its lack of a good foundation. She argued that until women are allowed to develop their reason through intellectual work, they will not see the importance of virtuous living, and indeed, they will undermine it.

There must be more equality established in society, or morality will never gain ground, and this virtuous equality will not rest firmly even when founded on a rock, if one-half of mankind be chained to its bottom by fate, for they will be continually undermining it through ignorance or pride. (*Vindication*, 141.)

Instead, if girls were educated as boys were, female virtue would make great gains. Truth, honesty, and simplicity would be pillars of her conduct, because Wollstonecraft persuaded, reason would lead women to champion these values over falsehoods, deception and affectation.

In an unprecedented motion, Wollstonecraft raised the prospect of women's participation not only in education, but also in government, the two being intertwined in

her eyes. Casting her proposal for co-education as a challenge to an “enlightened nation” to allow women the advantages of “education and government,” the logic of her design is made plain:

Let an enlightened nation then try what effect reason would have to bring them back to nature, and their duty; and allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man, see whether they will become better, as they grow wiser and become free. They cannot be injured by the experiment, for it is not in the power of man to render them more insignificant than they are at present. (*Vindication*, 167.)

Herein, Wollstonecraft justified women’s participation in government on the basis of their rational and intellectual capacity. Only by engaging a woman’s intellect would she become a full human being with rights duties and privileges in the *polis*. Aware that she was treading the line of what would be taken seriously, but frustrated that “. . . the whole system of representation is now, in this country, only a convenient handle for despotism,” Wollstonecraft bravely aired a radical idea about women’s representation in government. (*Vindication*, 147.)

I may excite laughter, by dropping an hint, which I mean to pursue, some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government. (*Vindication*, 147.)

Conceiving of women as full human beings rather than dependents without full rationality, Wollstonecraft justified giving them exactly what their male counterparts had. Otherwise, female oppression, which she likened to slavery in several places in her treatise, would impair the moral fabric of society. She explained: “When therefore I call women slaves, I mean in a political and civil sense. . . .” (*Vindication*, 167.)

With these bold observations and radical proposals, the *Vindication* maneuvered the debate about female education and schools into the realm of political action and

revolutionary change. Wollstonecraft ardently believed, like the humanists before her and many of her contemporaries, that education fostered solid virtues.³⁰ Co-education promised to instill a shared academic and moral curriculum that would benefit boys and girls as individuals and as a collective entity. She was petitioning for a society where all citizens would have a stake in the social and political health of the nation. Wollstonecraft described new institutions to welcome women as partners in the “inherent natural rights of mankind,” in doing so she confronted the opposition, living and dead.

Wollstonecraft Challenges Male Opponents

In this section, an analysis is conducted of the arguments of male opponents against women’s equal education whom Wollstonecraft singled out in the *Vindication*. The Marquis de Condorcet also authored a plan for co-education in 1791, and considering his system in comparison to Wollstonecraft’s, it is evident that the *Vindication* was the more radical of the two on account of what the schools were to do for women’s place in society. Of the opponents to equal or co-education, she found Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754-1838), Dr. John Gregory, and Dr. James Fordyce to be particularly injurious to society because of their characterizations of Woman and women’s roles in society, which she felt were adopted uncritically by her contemporaries. Wollstonecraft begins with Rousseau because he was the most formidable opponent, and this analysis follows suit in order to present Rousseau’s own ideas on female upbringing and education before considering Wollstonecraft’s fiery response.

³⁰ See Chapter One for Italian humanist advocates.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the most serious of *provocateurs* to Wollstonecraft. The fortune of this Swiss-born *philosophe* is well-known.³¹ Having offended religious and civil authorities, his works were burned in Paris and Geneva, and he was lambasted far and wide for his revolutionary ideas, particularly for the “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Priest” in *Émile*, Book IV. Rousseau’s notoriety only made his works more desirable across Europe, and he became one of the most popular writers of the eighteenth century. Historian Robert Darnton writes that “Richardson, Rousseau, and Goethe did not merely wring tears from their readers: they changed lives.”³² He explains, “that in an era when television and radio did not challenge the supremacy of the printed word, books aroused emotions and stirred thoughts with a power we can barely imagine today.”³³

Women’s education and its role in Rousseau’s plan for society have not been studied sufficiently.³⁴ Rousseau’s works are actually quite ambivalent about women, in the sense that he condemns them for flaws and inadequacies, while at the same time he identifies their systemic oppressors and many injustices. In this section, a close reading of Rousseau’s prescription for female upbringing and education is offered, primarily focusing on the novel, *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), and his treatise on education which offered his most fully articulated plan, *Émile ou de L’éducation* (1762). In these

³¹ Recent monographs include: Timothy O’Hagan, *Rousseau* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749-1762* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Robert Wokler, *Rousseau* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

³² Robert Darnton, “The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France,” in *The French Revolution: The Essential Readings*, ed. Ronald Schechter (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 106-137, 110.

³³ Darnton, “The Forbidden Best-Sellers,” 110.

³⁴ There exists only one full-length study on the topic: Misenheimer, *On the Education*. Misenheimer’s 95-page book is the best treatment of Rousseau’s conception of women’s education. She sees him as debasing of women because of his belief that women do not reason, but, upon sentiment. She does close readings of the *Émile* and *Julie*, but does not relate Rousseau’s ideas to anything concrete in the history of schooling or in the debate on women. Misenheimer does not see Rousseau as an enemy of women because, she says, he helped establish “the importance of woman in her role as a vital force in the post-revolutionary climate.”

two works, Rousseau's thinking about the place of women in society and their education emerges showing a new twist on patriarchy, where men eschew institutions, embrace Nature, and have minimally educated women to please them as wives and as mothers to their children.

Rousseau was already known for his *Discourses* and works on music, including an entry in the *Encyclopedie*, when in 1761 he tried his hand successfully at a moral novel, a true tear-jerker that women on the Continent and in England poured through and relished-- *Julie*.³⁵ The plot was set in a quiet Swiss town, and here, Rousseau idealized the simple life in contrast to Parisian culture and moral corruption. Like Heloise and Abelard, Julie and her tutor, Saint-Preux, become lovers. Julie's father prohibits their union and Julie eventually consents to marrying an older man, Monsieur de Wolmar. Wolmar is depicted as a noble creature, in his lineage and virtue, and although he inspires Julie, her deep-seated love for Saint-Preux persists.

With this marriage to Wolmar, Julie transforms herself, devoting herself to virtue in her familial duties and religion. She becomes a woman at ease in the domestic sphere and an able manager of her children. Despite this new attitude and seemingly happy façade, Julie continues to love Saint-Preux deeply, and her attachment makes her miserable until her end. In a spontaneous act, Julie rescues her drowning child but endangers her own life, willfully embracing a way out of her unhappy condition. As she lay dying, she gives Wolmar a letter for Saint-Preux, in which she reveals her true feelings. "Nay, I leave thee not; I go to await thee. The virtue that separated us on earth shall unite us in the eternal abode. I die in this flattering expectation. Only too happy to

The journal literature treats Rousseau and women more generally, only touching on women's education secondarily.

pay with my life the right to love thee still without crime, and to tell thee so one more time.”³⁶ Her dying request for Saint-Preux is to oversee her sons’ education (no mention of her daughter Henriette’s education), and to marry her widowed cousin Madame d’Orbe in order to “unite all” who are dear to her.

In essence, *Julie* is a love story that featured ideas on education and upbringing, and centered on familial duty and sacrifice. The epistolary format of the novel brought the characters to life for eighteenth-century readers, and many believed the characters were based on real people.³⁷ Investigating Rousseau’s educational ideas in *Julie*, two key passages inform the reader: the first deals with Saint-Preux’s plan for Julie’s education; the second concerns Julie and her husband Wolmar’s plan for their children.

The educational program that Saint-Preux developed for Julie while he was her tutor was intended to serve her as a noble woman in the household. Yet, how much learning was transmitted in their year together is in question; all the while, the pair of lovers was distracted by their growing attraction. Saint-Preux admits, “The eyes were ill fixed on the book, the mouth uttered the words in it, attention was always wanting.”(*Julie*, 46.) In order to make up for the loss of time, Saint-Preux sends her a program of study that she can continue on her own, during a brief separation. He outlines very few subjects so that her pristine morality would not be disturbed: the history of Switzerland (her country), Italian language, poetry (limited to Petrarch, Tasso and Metastasio), and French theater (especially Cornielle, Racine, Molière, Prosper Crébillon, and Voltaire). (*Julie*, 49.) He specifically rules out as irrelevant and potentially damaging

³⁵ Duffy, *Rousseau in England*, 17-20.

³⁶ Rousseau, *Julie*, 610. Henceforth, references to this work appear in the text as, (*Julie*, 00).

³⁷ Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Viking, 1984), 245.

the study of other languages, (which is to say Latin, the language of learning) algebra, geometry, and physics. (*Julie*, 48.)

Saint-Preux tells Julie to look *within* rather than to books: “The great mistake of those who study is, as I have just said, to place too much trust in their books and not draw enough on their own resources,” and, “Let us not go searching in books for principles and rules that we more surely find within ourselves.” (*Julie*, 47.) Since Saint-Preux believes virtue was the most important subject for Julie, he limits the “field of studies to books of good taste and morality,” and offers her examples of virtuous people to emulate. (*Julie*, 48.) Julie, as an enamored student, accepts her lover’s program, convinced of his good intentions in forming her character. (*Julie*, 50.)

After the break up, as the years go by, Julie is strengthened in her resolve to be a good wife to Wolmar and a good mother to their children. She and Wolmar decide to invite Saint-Preux to become the tutor of their children. When her former lover arrives, he is astounded by Julie’s way of educating her children without them even knowing it—according to Monsieur de Wolmar’s system (*Julie*, 473.) Julie does not actively constrain them, but she secretly guides them: “How many things were said without opening the lips!” (*Julie*, 459.) Thus, the children are not stifled, but allowed to live and learn according to their own “original character” or nature. (*Julie*, 464.) Saint-Preux, who had always used a more traditional form of education with his charges, gradually accepts the explanation Julie and her husband give for their unusual methods with their boys. Their daughter, Julie says, is educated in an entirely different manner and that important description would come at another time. Here Rousseau, who was simultaneously at work on the *Émile* foreshadowed the more comprehensive treatment he would give to

female education. (*Julie*, 479.) Saint-Preux, meanwhile, becomes a veritable champion of this new type of upbringing after watching the children, so full of life and curiosity, behaving so wonderfully in their mother's care.

The heroine Julie, as a dutiful wife and self-sacrificing mother, became a household name and a female exemplar for European society in the late eighteenth century.³⁸ No doubt her appeal as a character lay in her struggle to endure separation from her true love and still fulfill her obligations to a good husband. Rousseau makes Julie's success in raising a family central to her persona; admiration from other characters, notably from Saint-Preux, is expressed. Contemporary writer and salonnière Germaine de Staël, daughter of the Swiss statesman Jacques Necker, wrote a panegyric of Rousseau, commenting on the *Julie*'s power over women in particular: "This work was written for women; it is above all women that this work can either help or harm."³⁹

Building on the ideas for education in *Julie*, Rousseau imagined another idealized setting for a new way of raising and educating children in the *Émile*. As mentioned above, the book's popularity was practically unrivalled. Its condemnation made it more coveted. Divided into five books, *Émile*'s education and experiences comprise the first four; Sophie is introduced in Book Five and her program of study is briefer than her mate's. Sophie is but a complement to *Émile*. As such, the book primarily concerns the upbringing of a male child far from the influences of corrupting forces of society, who is guided by a tutor to let his faculties unfold "naturally." A deep critique of religious and civil institutions is at the heart of this semi-fictional educational treatise. Rousseau explained that only through education, deliberately divorced from societal institutions,

³⁸ Anna Attridge, "The Reception of *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, no. 120 (1974): 258.

could man achieve virtue and goodness. Émile, destined to live in a corrupt society, was raised to be a rational and moral citizen, an ideal man with the ability to withstand the decadence of civilization. Before an analysis of his wife's role in this "utopic" vision can proceed, Émile's education must be studied.

Émile's education is revolutionary for what it omitted and how it was made palatable to the boy. As a child, the character is not given books to memorize or recite, and religious education is withheld until adolescence, but he is encouraged to explore the rural countryside and make inferences about the world. Instead of introducing books to the child, the tutor introduces the child to the world.

When I thus get rid of children's lessons, I get rid of the chief cause of their sorrows, namely their books. Reading is the curse of childhood, yet it is almost the only occupation you can find for children. Émile, at twelve years old, will hardly know what a book is.⁴⁰

Rousseau's radical idea to eliminate this traditional staple of children's education comes with a full explanation of why it is better to introduce it later. Pedagogy ought to be easy on the child, even fun for him. In sum, the tutor argues that the child will only take to reading when he can use the skill for pleasure or to do something he wants to do.

How is it that this art, so useful and pleasant in itself, has become a terror to children? Because the child is compelled to acquire it against his will, and to use it for purposes beyond his comprehension. A child has no great wish to perfect himself in the use of an instrument of torture, but make it a means to his pleasure, and soon you will not be able to keep him from it. (*Émile*, 96.)

Forcing a child to read against his will is counter-productive and needless.

Issuing a new standard for learning, the tutor announces that Émile's education will be crafted around what interests the boy and what he takes pleasure in doing. His knowledge will be built experientially, and he learns a trade for its own sake and for the

³⁹ As cited in Trouille, *Sexual Politics*, 198.

worthy role model an apprenticeship will bring him. Rational critical thinking is encouraged, and Émile is admitted to all subjects that interest him at his own pace and at his tutor's discretion. Lastly and triumphantly, Émile is trained in morality to be virtuous and sympathetic to fellow human beings.

Once he reaches this apex of development, his future wife, Sophie, is introduced:

Sophie should be as truly a woman as Émile is a man, i.e., she must possess all those characters of her sex which are required to enable her to play her part in the physical and moral order. (*Émile*, 384.)

Her “part in the physical and moral order” excluded her from all spheres of life save the domestic. Rousseau idealized Ancient Greek society which he felt adhered to “nature and reason,” which were the two recurring explanations he offered for the many prescriptions on women:

When the Greek women married, they disappeared from public life; within the four walls of their home they devoted themselves to the care of their household and family. This is the mode of life prescribed for women alike by nature and reason. (*Émile*, 395.)

Rousseau reasoned that since women were “naturally” weaker than men in both physical and mental faculties, they should be excluded from the public realm. This conceptualization of woman echoed the centuries old picture of the female person, begun in Antiquity.⁴¹

In an original move, Rousseau's denied that women could effectively rise above the passions through the use of reason. Men and women always ran the risk of succumbing to “boundless passions.” But whereas, Rousseau claimed, men had superior

⁴⁰ Rousseau, *Émile*, 95. Henceforth, references to this work appear in the text, in this format: (*Émile*, 00.).

⁴¹ See note 28 of the Introduction, 9.

self-control because of their reliance on reason, women contained their passions only through “modesty” and the need for a good reputation in society. The realm of sentiment, a worthy realm, according to Rousseau, was the main site of female character and strength. Sophie’s father warns her at age fifteen about succumbing to sensations and passions, that because of her sex, easily dominate reason.

The most dangerous snare, the only snare which reason cannot avoid, is that of the senses; if ever you have the misfortune to fall into its toils, you will perceive nothing but fancies and illusions; your eyes will be fascinated, your judgment troubled, your will corrupted, your very error will be dear to you, and even if you were able to perceive it you would not be willing to escape from it. (*Émile*, 436.)

For women, this limited ability in reason degenerated into an ineffectual faculty when up against the power of the senses and female sentiment.

Rhetorically, Rousseau asked: “Are women capable of solid reason; should they cultivate it, can they cultivate it successfully?” (*Émile*, 413.) He admitted that reason may be cultivated to some degree in women, although it would never be a woman’s forte by any means. To paraphrase: men reason, women observe. (*Émile*, 419.) In both *Julie* and *Émile*, the female characters relied less on reason and more on feeling for their important actions in the tales. For Rousseau, this is not at all a flaw, but rather, just a fact of nature, that balances and complements the natural male deficiency of sentiment.

According to his theory of sexual difference, Rousseau designed female education to encourage her “natural” talents and assist her in her “natural” occupations as a subservient wife and caring mother. “They should learn many things, but only such things as are suitable.” (*Émile*, 392.) Rousseau felt he had convincingly demonstrated that men and women were “unlike in constitution and in temperament;” from that premise, he reasoned that women’s education must be different. (*Émile*, 390-91.)

The curriculum for girls in the *Émile* matched the subjects of study to women's "peculiar" feminine qualities and their daily responsibilities in the home. As such, Sophie's education lacked the depth and breadth of Émile's education. Fundamentally, everything about the program of learning was different. While Émile was taught beyond the oppressing force of institutions, Sophie was made to become accustomed to "restraint" and her subservient position.

All their [women's] life long, they will have to submit to the strictest and most enduring restraints, those of propriety. They must be trained to bear the yoke from the first, so that they may not feel it, to master their own caprices and to submit themselves to the will of others. (*Émile*, 399.)

She has to yield to authority, and accept male systems on faith rather than reason, because Rousseau said, abstract and systematic thought was out of her reach:

The search for abstract and speculative truths, for principles and axioms in science, for all that tends to wide generalization, is beyond a woman's grasp; their studies should be thoroughly practical. (*Émile*, 418-19.)

He continued an explanation for excluding women from the sciences by pointing to "natural" differences in men that made them the sole worthy investigators of natural laws and philosophy.

. . . for the works of genius are beyond her reach, and she has neither the accuracy nor the attention for success in the exact sciences; as for the physical sciences, to decide the relations between living creatures and the laws of nature is the task of that sex which is more active and enterprising, which sees more things, that sex which is possessed of greater strength and is more accustomed to the exercise of that strength. (*Émile*, 419.)

Instead, of serious academic study, Sophie, and women in general should be schooled in virtue, cleanliness, and natural grace. Rousseau deigned to give Woman an education primarily because of her future role as a mother of sons. "A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win

his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.” (*Émile*, 393.)

Furthermore, upon this goal of women’s education, Rousseau hinged the success of his entire social system: “The further we depart from this principle, the further we shall be from our goal, and all our precepts will fail to secure her happiness or our own.” (*Émile*, 393.) The right kind of women was crucial for men to thrive and for society to sustain itself. Suitable lessons, then, must be offered. The first subject a girl should be taught, Rousseau offered, is “ciphering” – for adding and subtracting practical items. (*Émile*, 397.) He enticed her with sweet treats: “If the little girl does not get the cherries for her lunch without an arithmetical exercise, she will soon learn to count.” (*Émile*, 397.) Because Rousseau saw no use for reading among children, and frowned upon the usual methods of compulsion used to teach the skill, he strenuously argued for teaching reading later, in early adolescence.

If I object to little boys being made to learn to read, still more do I object to it for little girls until they are able to see the use of reading. (*Émile*, 397.)

As long as it was not made to be “gloomy” or “tiresome,” religion was an appropriate subject for girls: “She should learn it thoroughly, and still more (that) she should learn to love it.” (*Émile*, 408.) Besides, ciphering, reading and religion, Rousseau did not offer a curriculum made up of regular academic subjects, but rather offered an assembly of activities for girls to engage in alongside their mothers. From the start, Rousseau advised mothers to make daughters their companions in attending social events, so that they would learn about society and enjoy honest and reputable festivities. Rural girls should be encouraged to appreciate their “simple” home and environs, and not made

to long for extravagant city life, that was rife with “corruption” and “evil.” (*Émile*, 422.)

At home, they should never be idle. Needle and thread were the most useful and productive tools for young girls to always have at hand, and edifying discussions should take place while sewing. An individual conscience had to be cultivated, so that they girl may choose “right conduct” and have “respect for public opinion.” (*Émile*, 413.)

If one follows this program, Rousseau claimed, and it is carried out by appropriate female role models, like virtuous and obedient mothers, it would yield young women well-prepared for their function at home. Thus crafted, Sophie was the ideal woman for *Émile* because she was smart enough to hold pleasing conversation, physically fit and attractive for marital relations and childbirth, and trained in virtue to be a good mother. The tale ends with *Émile* telling his tutor about his new wife’s pregnancy, with all the enthusiasm a young loving husband might have, pledging his commitment to educate the child the same way he was trained . . . clearly, he was hoping for a boy.

In *Julie* and *Émile*, Rousseau positioned women as domestic dependents, wholly subservient to men, and lacking the capacity for academic pursuits, as Nature intended. Some important differences exist between Sophie’s and Julie’s education: Julie pursued more formal subjects and even studied modern languages, while Sophie was limited to more practical and household matters. These variations are markers of class difference. Julie, as an aristocrat, could rise above mundane subjects for part of her program. Essentially, however, their lessons were formed to their roles as wives and mothers. Both of them display Rousseau’s principle that women are feeling rather than rational creatures. Their reigning passions distinguish them from men who have command over the emotions through the use of reason. This principle serves as the justification for

Rousseau's patriarchal utopia in both works, and it is the main point with which Wollstonecraft contends in the *Vindication*.

The exact effect that Rousseau's theory of sexual difference had upon society is difficult to ascertain, but historians Joan Wallach Scott and Robert Darnton suggest Rousseau's strong influence.⁴² Did people educate their daughters as Rousseau prescribed in the *Émile*? Letters from enthusiastic parents about having their individual boys and girls educated *a la Émile* or *Sophie* poured forth almost as soon as the book was printed; one such letter written by the Duke of Württemberg, Karl Eugen (1728-1793), mentioned the challenges of Rousseau's mandate for the virtual seclusion of his daughter, who was aptly named Sophie, pointing to practical limitations of the program.⁴³ But, it is clear that Rousseau's ideas on male pedagogy were intriguing, and among pedagogues like Swiss-born Johan Pestalozzi (1746-1827), whose fictional Gertrud educated her children on the model of Julie, he found a hearing.⁴⁴

Also, the fact that Rousseau's *Lettres élémentaires sur la botanique* (1770s), which he had written for his cousin Mme. Madeleine-Catherine Delessert, were used in nineteenth-century Britain to make science more accessible to women and children, suggests that Rousseau's presence in girls' education continued to loom.⁴⁵ Indeed, botany, as Rousseau represented it, was a beneficial subject for mothers to teach their

⁴² Darnton, "The Forbidden Best-Sellers."; Joan Wallach Scott, "French Feminists and the Rights of 'Man': Olympe de Gouges's Declarations," in *The French Revolution: The Essential Readings*, ed. Ronald Schechter (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 210-235.

⁴³ See *Memoir on the Education of the Prince of Wirtemberg's[sic] Infant Daughter Sophie* (1763), and *Extracts from Three Letters to the Abbé M., who had undertaken the Education of a Boy by the Method of the Émile* (1770) in William Boyd, ed., *The Minor Educational Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau* (New York: Teachers College Publications, Columbia University, 1962), 76.

⁴⁴ Baker, "Appointing the Canon," 11. For Pestalozzi, also Margaret L. King, "The Emergence of Mother as Teacher in Early Modern Europe," in *The Renaissance in the Streets, Schools, and Studies: Essays in Honour of Paul F. Grendler*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Nicholas Terpstra (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 41-86, at 72-75.

children. In 1771, he wrote to Delessert of its enriching power to calm the passions, “. . . persuaded that at any age, the study of nature dulls the taste for frivolous amusements, prevents the tumult of the passions, and brings the soul a nourishment which profits it by filling it with the most worthy object of its contemplations.”⁴⁶ Gradually, Rousseau’s appeal grew in the West, and by the late nineteenth century, teacher training programs in the United States and Germany introduced sections of Rousseau’s *Émile* to the required reading lists and it has come to be viewed as an educational classic.⁴⁷

In Wollstonecraft’s England, Rousseau had a mixed reception. Many pre-publication notices advertised *Julie* in the most glowing colors; the *Critical Review* (January 1761) wrote that the author, “lays the philosopher aside, and mixes in the cheerful ways of men, paints with the most luxuriant imagination, and interests every passion with the most bewitching art.”⁴⁸ With the coming of the French Revolution, though, the English stifled their enthusiasm for Rousseau, who was associated with radical departures and, even, bouts of madness.⁴⁹

Still, Rousseau’s ideas about sexual difference and gender roles in society troubled Wollstonecraft. In 1792, she feared that left unchecked, Rousseau’s ideas would exert a considerable influence upon European society and lead to the further degradation of women and demise of a just society. (*Vindication*, 91.) He was at the top of her list of authors who needed to be remonstrated for degrading books about women.⁵⁰ “The

⁴⁵ Ann B. Shteir, "Gender and 'Modern' Botany in Victorian England," *Osiris* 12, no. 2nd Series (1997): 35.

⁴⁶ Christopher Kelly and Roger D. Masters, et al., eds., *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker; Botanical Writings; and Letter to Franquières*, vol. 8, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, trans. Christopher Kelly, et al., (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), 130.

⁴⁷ Baker, "Appointing the Canon," 18.

⁴⁸ As cited in Duffy, *Rousseau in England*, 13.

⁴⁹ Duffy, *Rousseau in England*, 22.

⁵⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 217. Wollstonecraft singled out a particular strain of writers on “female manners,” who, like Rousseau, have “boasted the prerogative of man--the prerogative that may be called

pernicious tendency of those books in which the writers insidiously degrade the sex whilst they are prostrate before their personal charms, cannot be too often or too severely exposed.” (*Vindication*, 91-92.) In *Chapter V*, Wollstonecraft responded directly to Rousseau, because, although he had been dead for a decade, she feared his ideas with their “artificial structure has been raised with so much ingenuity that it seems necessary to attack [them]” in order to reveal the prejudices and falsehoods lurking under the guise of an innocuous sentimentality. (*Vindication*, 78.) She wrote, “I war not with his ashes, but his opinions. I war only with the sensibility that led him to degrade women by making her the slave of love.” (*Vindication*, 91.) The urgency and virulence that Wollstonecraft’s criticism displays comes from the pressing necessity to convince people of female rationality and educability so that women might be granted citizenship in the new revolutionary and reforming societies of the day (France, America, and Britain).

The criticism she offers of Rousseau, while not organized systematically, is a powerful combination of her supreme confidence in female intellectual powers and potential, and an astute, if acerbic, analysis of Rousseau’s description of women. The following quotation from *Chapter III: The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed, Continued*, captures the heart of Wollstonecraft’s position on female education vis-à-vis Rousseau: “not only the virtue, but the *knowledge* of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral, but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the *same* means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of *half* being-one of Rousseau’s wild chimeras.” (*Vindication*, 39.)

the iron sceptre of tyranny, the original sin of tyrants, I declare against all power built on prejudices, however hoary.”

In fact, when Wollstonecraft critiques Rousseau, she also critiques the *status quo* in society, which for all intents and purposes operated according to his theory of sexual difference by excluding women at almost every turn. Wollstonecraft posits an overarching counter-argument that women would be able to reason effectively (like men) if they were encouraged in school and in society to develop this crucial faculty. As this point underlies all of Wollstonecraft's assertions, her understanding of the mind as a sexless entity and reason as its ready tool is considered at length. Keeping this central point about women's rational capacity in mind, this section continues with an exposition of the two main corollary points Wollstonecraft advances in her critique of Rousseau (and contemporary society). First, she lambastes Rousseau's understanding of "Nature;" then, she unveils the immorality of accepting a system of sexual difference and inequality. Specifically, Wollstonecraft reviews the institution of marriage within such a system, and considers the plight of children entangled in the oppressive and hateful familial relationship. For each attack she issues to Rousseau, she offers a solution in the form of equal training, education, and schooling.

If Rousseau saw women as falling prey to their passions at the expense of their reason, Wollstonecraft believed female recourse to reason could lead to liberation. Repeatedly, Wollstonecraft hammers this point out in Chapter Five in direct opposition to Rousseau's characterization of women as creatures bound by a dominating emotional disposition. In order to persuade her readers women were worthy of equal treatment, especially in education, Wollstonecraft denounced the Rousseauan idea that women could not use reason effectively, and that their passions held sway over their every decision. She argued that until women are granted equal education, with reason and

critical thinking encouraged, they would fall prey to whims and sensations and continue to drift far away from virtue. “Besides, how could Rousseau expect them to be virtuous and constant when reason is neither allowed to be the foundation of their virtue, nor truth the object of their inquiries.” (*Vindication*, 90.)

Wollstonecraft faults Rousseau for letting his imagination and “ruling appetites” “inflame his passions” for women, which in turn prevented his reason from “enlightening his understanding” about women’s nature and abilities. (*Vindication*, 87.) Identifying Rousseau as a “sensualist” who advocated for a “male aristocracy,” Wollstonecraft criticized women for accepting his arguments: “He denies women reason, shuts her out from knowledge, and turns her aside from truth; yet his pardon is granted, because he ‘admits the passion of love.’” (*Vindication*, 87.)

Like the seventeenth-century Cartesian, Poullain de la Barre, Wollstonecraft believed that the mind had no sex.⁵¹ Almost a century earlier, her countrywomen, Mary Astell wrote about the identical measure of sense that men and women had, stating “For Sense is a Portion that GOD Himself has been pleas’d to distribute to both Sexes with an Impartial Hand, but Learning is what Men have engross’d to themselves. . . .”⁵² And, Comenius, who enjoyed great influence in seventeenth-century England, had advocated universal education in Chapter Nine of *The Great Didactic*, asserting, “They [girls] are endowed with equal sharpness of mind and capacity for knowledge (often more than the opposite sex)”⁵³ Also, Lockean and Cartesian theories concerning the way ideas were formed in the mind precluded sexual difference and may have been

⁵¹ Poullain de la Barre’s contribution is examined in Chapter One.

⁵² Astell, *Serious Proposal*, 78.

⁵³ Comenius, *Didactic*, 67. Laura Cereta and Lucrezia Marinella had also argued that women had rationality on par with men (see Chapter One).

Wollstonecraft's immediate sources of inspiration. As such, Wollstonecraft is certainly not original in her belief that a woman's mind was inherently capable of the same functions as a man's. Whether she benefited from the advocates mentioned here, or the new science, she certainly drew upon the exalted place that the Enlightenment had reserved for reason, making her critique of Rousseau a timely and fashionable combination of ideas about the mind and reasoning.

To undermine the strength of Rousseau's arguments about women, Wollstonecraft seized upon his account of "Nature." She wished to show that what the *philosophe* counted as women's nature was actually the product of custom, habit, "breeding," and lack of education. Wollstonecraft is not original in making this point either; many seventeenth-century advocates had covered this ground, namely Agrippa, de Gournay, de la Barre, and Astell. But Wollstonecraft was original in using this critique to bolster the claim for shared rights and responsibilities. She tried to undo the "erroneous conclusions" people had regarding women's nature, and pointed them to the central role of schooling in forming one's character, rather than any hodge-podge of innate ideas or instincts.

Reflecting on how debilitating habit can be, she was the first to point out that the degree of physical inferiority of women owes a great deal to conditioning and is not "natural" by any means. Weaving together the themes of physical ability and earning one's own subsistence, Wollstonecraft emerges as one of the first advocates for women's financial independence which she identified as being the foundation for true autonomy. She rejected Rousseau's "fact" that women are "naturally" inferior in strength and physical stamina, ". . . were it not for mistaken notions of beauty, women would acquire

sufficient [strength] to enable them to earn their own subsistence, the true definition of independence . . . let us then, by being allowed to take the same exercise as boys, not only during infancy, but youth, arrive at perfection of body, that we may know how far the natural superiority of man extends.” (*Vindication*, 85.) In her plan for education, she made physical education a keystone of the curriculum.

The other important corollary to her argument is the *caveat* she offers about the grave moral dangers that imperil society and the married state when women are denied reason and rights. Wollstonecraft charged that Rousseau’s theory of sexual difference produced a relationship between husband and wife that was akin to master and slave. She begins her critique by derailing Rousseau’s major premise on the subservience of women. She dared to question the traditional Biblical interpretation of the *Book of Genesis* that Rousseau employed, “I may be allowed to doubt whether woman was created for man” – even if “the cry of irreligion, or even atheism be raised against me.” (*Vindication*, 79.) Faithful to the Anglican Church her entire life, Wollstonecraft was no atheist, but she did not interpret the Bible literally.

What provoked Wollstonecraft even further was the following directive for women in the *Émile*: that women ought to “obey a being so imperfect as man, often full of vices, and always full of faults, she ought to learn betimes even to suffer injustice, and to bear the insults of a husband without complaint.” (*Vindication*, 83.) Her objection distinguishes between “the necessity of forbearance” and the dangers of complete obedience; she claimed that: “. . . all the sacred rights of humanity are violated by insisting on blind obedience,” and that “[t]he being who patiently endures injustice, and

silently bears insults, will soon become unjust, or unable to discern right from wrong.”(*Vindication*, 83.)

Using the abolitionists’ logic that the master of the slave, too, becomes degraded morally, Wollstonecraft would throw off hierarchical offices in marriage. To counter the traditional marriage model which she felt was a form of bondage, Wollstonecraft called for equal education as the best avenue (the only avenue) toward fellowship, “If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship . . .” (*Vindication*, 165.) From a practical standpoint, too, Wollstonecraft charged that an uneducated woman is never a suitable wife or mother for a man of sense; solid education and intellectual pursuits gave women an added efficiency in the household, “An active mind embraces the whole circle of its duties, and finds time enough for all.” (*Vindication*, 169.)

To cap off her argument about the moral dangers of a marital relationship based on force and domination, Wollstonecraft raised the issue of children. Oppression, she felt, reverberated through the generations and harmed the children. Acknowledging and lamenting the neglect that children often felt in her day, she observed that mothers were not caring for the children as the patriarchal system ordained they should. But, she argued, until women were educated to see the errors of their ways and endowed with rights, they would, would shirk their duties: “. . . the only method of leading women to fulfill their peculiar duties is to free them from all restraint by allowing them to participate in the inherent rights of mankind.” (*Vindication*, 175.)

This connection between virtuous living and the use of developed rationality for the cause of women’s education and political rights is at the center of her disagreement

with Rousseau who thought women could be virtuous, if only through an attachment or reverence for virtue itself. Wollstonecraft looked for the day when women would not use their sex as a bargaining tool, when instead women and men would approach one another as peers with whom they could reason and converse free from the trappings of seduction. “I will venture to predict that virtue will never prevail in society till the virtues of both sexes are founded on reason; and, till the affections common to both are allowed to gain their due strength by the discharge of mutual duties.” (*Vindication*, 165.)

Mothers, Wollstonecraft argued (as Bathsua Makin had in 1673), have tremendous power over the formation of their children’s characters, and because most women lacked education and a developed ability to use reason, she feared for the quality of future citizens being raised.⁵⁴

Besides, how should a woman void of reflection be capable of educating her children? How should she discern what is proper for them? How should she incline them to those virtues she is unacquainted with, or to that merit of which she has no idea? She can only soothe or chide them render them insolent or timid; she will make them formal coxcombs, or ignorant blockheads; but will never make them sensible or amiable. How indeed should she, when her husband is not always at hand to lend her his reason? (*Vindication*, 88-89.)

For society to be just and harmonious, Wollstonecraft posits that a companionate marriage of an educated couple is necessary to raise children appropriately. Otherwise, she exclaimed, “The weakness of the mother will be visited on the children!” (*Vindication*, 177.) Rather than perpetuate oppression and misery through the generations, she envisioned a different future:

Make them [women] free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous, as men become more so, for the improvement must be mutual, or the injustice which one-half of the human race are obliged to submit to retorting on

⁵⁴ Makin’s *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, which is examined in Chapter One, argues along these lines.

their oppressors, the virtue of man will be worm-eaten by the insect whom he keeps under his feet. (*Vindication*, 175.)

. . .for children will never be properly educated till friendship subsists between parents. (*Vindication*, 193)

Intertwining a critique of Rousseau's position on women's nature and roles in society, with a critique of the environment she experienced as a woman, Wollstonecraft presented an ultimatum: give girls and women equal education and enjoy a virtuous society, deny them their due and a much degraded society would fester.

In addition to critiquing Rousseau (who was safely beyond the grave when she wrote), Wollstonecraft's treatise called upon other prominent male contemporaries. A discussion of her message to Talleyrand and her critique of the works of Drs. Gregory and Fordyce demonstrates the audacious lengths Wollstonecraft was going to in order to promote her line of thinking on women's education. The *Vindication* itself was dedicated to Talleyrand, whose report on education, "Report on Public Instruction, made on behalf of the Committee on the Constitution to the National Assembly" was presented in 1791 to the French National Assembly.⁵⁵

Talleyrand's lengthy *Report* contained only eight one-sentence articles on the education of women. His plan, as it relates to girls' education, was reactionary for the times, offering significantly less education than many of the existing girls' schools in France (the Ursuline schools, for example; see Chapter Two) had provided since the early seventeenth century. Talleyrand called for primary schools to be erected in every village to teach reading, writing, and lessons on the national laws and *Constitution*. These schools, would welcome incoming students aged six – seven years of age, and would not

⁵⁵ Charles Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport sur l'instruction publique, fait au nom du Comité de constitution à l'Assemblée Nationale* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995).

be compulsory. While boys, according to merit, could rise to attend colleges and universities, girls would only attend elementary school for one or two years.⁵⁶ The first article pertaining to girls announced the brevity of their school years: “Girls may attend the elementary school until they are eight years old.”⁵⁷ It is not clear if Talleyrand intended girls and boys to be educated together or in separate facilities.

Talleyrand subscribed, as did many French politicians, to Rousseau’s belief of women’s nature and place in the domestic sphere of society.⁵⁸ Even narrower than Rousseau, who admitted that women with only basic skills would be a poor companion for husbands, Talleyrand sought to enact into law a program for the schooling of girls that was devoid of any academic subjects, in distinction to that of boys. After age eight, girls would return to their fathers’ houses and their upbringing would be left to the parents. Article IV proposed houses of education for girls whose upbringing was not provided for in their familial home.⁵⁹ At these institutions, Article VIII specified a wholly domestic education: “All the instruction given to [female] students in places of public education will aim particularly to cultivate in girls the virtues of domestic life and train those talents useful for the management of a family.”⁶⁰ Clearly, the *Report* denied any life of the mind to females, prompting Wollstonecraft to persuade Talleyrand of his folly.

Jumping into the political fray, and calling for no less than a full revision of the new French Constitution, Wollstonecraft inserted herself in the moment of state formation of a foreign country. This would be a curious action, but the universalism of

⁵⁶ Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport*, 26.

⁵⁷ Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport*, 210. “Les filles ne pourront être admises aux Écoles primaires que jusqu’à l’âge de huit ans.”

⁵⁸ Scott, “French Feminists,” 215-216.

⁵⁹ Talleyrand-Périgord, *Rapport*, 211.

Wollstonecraft's arguments about the human condition and human rights made such an action wholly justified in her eyes. As such, she engaged Europe's rising-star statesman in no uncertain terms, beckoning him to "reconsider the subject" and extend not only national education at the primary and secondary levels to girls, but also all of the "natural rights of mankind." (*Vindication*, 5.) In the "Dedicatory Letter" to Talleyrand of the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft directed her statements toward securing "liberty," "rights," "virtue," and "justice" for men and women. (*Vindication*, 3-6.) For her, the under-girding of these desirables rested upon equal and sound education for boys and girls. As such, she framed her address to Talleyrand in a tone of political urgency that made the issue of girls' education a matter of national and international importance.

The new French Republic would be in peril if women were not included as citizens. Speaking of tyrants "eager to crush reason," Wollstonecraft asked Talleyrand if he did not "act a similar part, when you *force* women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark?" (*Vindication*, 5.) In a quasi-metaphorical description, she prophesized a devastating effect on society for excluding women from exercising their rights: "They [women] may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent." (*Vindication*, 5.) This exclusion, she explained was completely unjust for the one simple fact, women possessed *reason* too.

Consider, I address you as a legislator, whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner calculated to promote their

⁶⁰ "Toutes les instructions données aux Élèves dans les maisons d'éducation publique, tendront particulièrement à préparer les filles aux vertus de la vie domestique et aux talents utiles dans le gouvernement d'une famille." 212.

happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason? (*Vindication*, 5.)

If, Wollstonecraft challenged, Talleyrand could not prove that women lack reason, then he must include them in the “natural rights of mankind” -- “else this flaw in your NEW CONSTITUTION, will ever shew [sic] that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant” (*Vindication*, 5.) Moving the *Debate about Women* from the literary world of ideas into the political sphere, Wollstonecraft demanded a hearing for what she saw as irrefutable arguments.⁶¹ She was clear that she was beyond self-interest: “For my arguments, Sir, are dictated by a disinterested spirit—I plead for my sex—not for myself.” (*Vindication*, 3.) For all of Wollstonecraft’s exertions, her plea failed to persuade Talleyrand and the new government in France to institute national co-education.⁶²

Her contemporary, the mathematician philosophe Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicholas Caritat de Condorcet (1743-1794), also proposed a system of national co-educational schools in a series of works from 1790-1792: *Five Memoirs on Public Education* (1790-1791), as well as in his “Report on the General Organization of Public Instruction.” A brief summary of his ideas on female schooling is offered here, although his recommendations to the National Assembly were turned down as well.⁶³ Known as an

⁶¹ “I have repeatedly asserted, and produced what appeared to me irrefragable arguments drawn from matters of fact, to prove my assertions” Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, 5.

⁶² In fact, Talleyrand’s own recommendations in the *Rapport* were not adopted until 1882, when Jules Ferry (1832 - 1893) finalized a system for free, compulsory public education to the Third Republic. For Ferry’s accomplishments see: Thomas F. Power, *Jules Ferry and the Renaissance of French Imperialism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 18.

⁶³ “Rapport et Projet de décret sur l’organisation générale de l’instruction publique.” Presented to the National Assembly on behalf of the Committee on Public Instruction, April 20-21, 1792. Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicholas Caritat de Condorcet, “Report on the General Organization of Public Instruction,” in *French Liberalism and Education in the Eighteenth Century: The Writings of La Chalotais, Turgot, Diderot, and Condorcet on Education*, trans. and ed. François de La Fontainerie (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1932), 313-378.

advocate for women's political rights, on account of his work *On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship* (1790), which argued for full political equality, Condorcet recognized the limited and poor quality of girls' education in comparison to boys.⁶⁴ His brand of co-education, like Wollstonecraft's, was designed for both sexes of every class as a boon to equality.⁶⁵ He claimed that his plan would "... establish among all citizens an actual equality, thus rendering real the political equality recognized by the law."⁶⁶

Yet, the plan he submitted to the National Assembly separated boys from girls in some of the primary schools.

In the villages where there will be only one primary school, children of both sexes will be admitted to it, and will receive the same instruction from the same teacher. If a village or town has two primary schools, one of them will be in charge of a mistress, and the children of the two sexes will be separated.⁶⁷

Perhaps, he was an early subscriber to the "separate but equal" argument. While this is the only provision he makes for girls education in the Report, his *Five Memoirs* go further in at least approaching equal education.

The disparity between the Report and his *Memoirs* is striking; in the *Memoirs* he declared, "Education should be the same for women and men."⁶⁸ Here, he emphasized the enhanced maternal role that educated girls would be able to fulfill in raising future male citizens. Interestingly, his argument for equality and open access to equal education did not compete with accepted ideas about sexual difference and women's "nature" or

⁶⁴ Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicholas Caritat de Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, trans. and ed. Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996), 120.

⁶⁵ Condorcet, "Report," 353.

⁶⁶ Condorcet, "Report," 323.

⁶⁷ Condorcet, "Report," 370.

⁶⁸ As cited and translated in Sotiropoulos, *Education Debates*, 99. "L'instruction doit être la même pour les femmes et pour les hommes."

maternal character. Condorcet accepted the idea that all men and women had an equal ability to reason, but he did not extend to women the right to pursue life in the public sphere as men did. His idealized woman was one who would receive her equal education and choose to use it in the home for her children's benefit and by extension, the benefit of the new Republic. Women, he claimed, were the natural caregivers and teachers of their children, and said her proper place was in the home. He never abandoned his position in 1790, as stated in *On The Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship*: "It is natural for a woman to nurse her children, to care for them in their infancy; attached to her home by these cares, weaker than a man, it is also natural that she lead a more retiring, more domestic life."⁶⁹ Ultimately, Condorcet believed that this type of education would "contribute to the general and gradual improvement of the human race."⁷⁰ His brand of co-education was more limiting than Wollstonecraft's because it did not seek to expand women's position in society beyond the domestic sphere.

At the same time that Condorcet and Wollstonecraft were pondering the nature and role of co-educational schools in a revolutionary society, Olympe de Gouges in the postscript to her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*, Olympe de Gouges addressed her countrywomen on the prospect of political enfranchisement, and she drew a connection to education. de Gouges stated,

Whatever the barriers put up before you, it is in your power to breach them; you have only to decide. Let us move on to the appalling tableau of what you have been in society and, since national education is presently being considered, let us see if our wise Lawmakers will think clearly about the education of women.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Condorcet, "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship," 121.

⁷⁰ Condorcet, "Report," 324.

⁷¹ Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Woman*, ed. and trans. Val Stevenson (London: Pythia Press, 1989), 14.

While de Gouges loosely links access to education to barriers to women's citizenship, she does not offer a critique or a proposal on the topic as Wollstonecraft or Condorcet did.

What is, of course, relevant for this study is the fact that this early political feminist counted women's education as an important concern while the National Assembly convened to deliberate on the topic.

Back at home in England, there were influential male voices that Wollstonecraft wanted silenced for their ill-effect on female upbringing, namely, Drs. Fordyce and Gregory. Dr. Fordyce was a well-known orator and clergyman in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, who penned a series of sermons specifically about female upbringing, entitled, "Sermons to Young Women." Wollstonecraft denounced the work, and labeled Fordyce as an imitator of Rousseau with regard to his condescension gilded with poetics (*Vindication*, 93.) She tells us that Fordyce's sermons were a popular printed source in young women's libraries, and she wished it was not so, on account of the "affected style" and pronounced sentimentality. (*Vindication*, 92.) Her issue with this type of communication was that it did not engage girls as reasonable people, but reinforced their *personae* as emotional and passionate females:

Florid appeals are made to Heaven, and to beauteous innocents, the fairest images of Heaven here below, whilst sober sense is left far behind. (*Vindication*, 94.)

In one of her own impassioned discourses, Wollstonecraft vented her frustration with Fordyce and his kind:

If women be ever allowed to walk without leading strings, why must they be cajoled into virtue by artful flattery and sexual compliments? Speak to them the language of truth and soberness, and away with the lullaby strains of condescending endearment! (*Vindication*, 94.)

She elaborated on the need for girls to be encouraged in their rationality, not deterred from it, reminiscent of Bathsua Makin's plea:⁷²

Let them be taught to respect themselves as rational creatures, and not led to have a passion for their own insipid persons. It moves my gall to hear a preacher descanting on dress and needlework; and still more, to hear him address the British fair, the fairest of the fair, as if they had only feelings. (*Vindication*, 94.)

Wollstonecraft also had a negative opinion of Dr. Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters*, claiming it has had a "most baneful effect on the morals and manners of the female world." (*Vindication*, 96.) Dr. Gregory was both a medical doctor and a concerned father. His wife's death in 1761, prompted him to write the *Legacy*, so that his daughters might have some counsel. The privileged place of "decorum" is what Wollstonecraft rails against, finding it to "banish all simplicity and variety of character out of the female world" in order to unnecessarily accommodate others. (*Vindication*, 98.) She was outraged that he advised his daughters to keep their good sense hidden, quoting Gregory's counsel, "But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and a cultivated understanding." (*Vindication*, 98.) To this,

Wollstonecraft answers, "There would be no end to rules for behavior, if it be proper always to adopt the tone of the company . . . It is this system of dissimulation, throughout the volume, that I despise." (*Vindication*, 99.) Wollstonecraft valued "simplicity" and "sober truth" in forging female education; neither Fordyce nor Gregory

⁷² Bathsua Makin, whose *Essay* is discussed in Chapter One, made a similar point: "I hope some of these Considerations will at least move some of this abused Sex to set a right value upon themselves, according to the dignity of their Creation, that they might, with an honest pride and magnanimity, scorn to be bowed down and made to stoop to such Follies and Vanities, Trifles and Nothings, so far below them, and unproportionable to their noble Souls, nothing inferior to those of Men, and equally precious to God in Christ, in whom there is neither Male nor Female."

could have a place in her reformed curriculum.

A Plan for Co-education

Wollstonecraft's plan for a national system of co-education was the vehicle she saw best fitted for bringing a virtuous and just foundation to the whole of society. Her contemporary and fellow critic of Rousseau, Englishwoman and writer Catharine Macaulay, also named co-education as the optimal type of schooling, but stopped short of formulating a plan for implementation.⁷³ Wollstonecraft promoted a series of "hints," realizing the plan lacked the formality and completeness required for a new national system, but the features of these "hints" were quite developed. (*Vindication*, 173.) A full description of her utopian school system is offered here, highlighting three aspects that make the plan truly visionary: her co-educational organization, her co-mingling of socio-economic classes and her adoption of peer reviews for disciplinary matters. Earlier in her career, Wollstonecraft praised private education and home schooling; she explained her change of heart: ". . . I have formerly delivered my opinion rather warmly in favour of a private education; but further experience has led me to view the subject in a different light." (*Vindication*, 158.) In the home, she felt children were "allowed to tyrannise over servants" and taught "the accomplishments of a gentleman" rather than the "virtues of man." (*Vindication*, 158.) Since she did not want to remove altogether children from their families, but because she had a low opinion of boarding schools, she offered a logical solution. Day schools, she counseled, should be erected in every parish, offering "absolutely free" lessons to all classes of boys and girls, ages five to nine, in co-

educational classrooms. (*Vindication*, 167.) Her choice in instituting day schools rather than boarding schools, she reasoned, stemmed from the belief that students should have an attachment to their home and families; they should sleep at home “that they may learn to love home.” (*Vindication*, 173.)

Wollstonecraft first describes a locally-based administrative structure that would govern this ambitious national system. Committees organized in each parish would hire masters and handle complaints, serving as a bare-bones administration. She does not allude to the funding source of this national venture, whether it would run on public monies or private philanthropy, but financial matters were a concern for her in a different sense. To minimize distinctions of wealth among the student body, she prescribed uniform dress and discipline across the board. (*Vindication*, 168.) This type of equal treatment was aimed at weakening hereditary privilege from the earliest possible moment. The public schools, she hoped would counter the “Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society.” (*Vindication*, 140)

While academic subjects were her chief concern, Wollstonecraft was careful that a lively and interactive sort of daily schedule be followed. First, she demanded that each school have ample grounds for exercise, and that the children should not be sedentary for more than an hour at a time. (*Vindication*, 168.) Second, the lessons at the primary school in botany, mechanics, astronomy, reading, writing, arithmetic, and natural history, would all be taught so that they “amuse the senses” and in no way turn the children off toward learning. Further, experiments in natural philosophy would also arouse the interest of the pupils. And, “The elements of religion, history, the history of man, and

⁷³ Catharine Macaulay, “Letters on Education,” in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 204-212, 205. On co-education, Macaulay advocates

politics, might also be taught, by conversations, in the Socratic fashion.” (*Vindication*, 168.) In this way, dry lectures and memorization by rote would be avoided and curiosity about the world and society encouraged. A striking addition to the curriculum, humane treatment to all living creatures, is also included: “humanity to animals should be particularly inculcated as a part of national education, for it is not at present one of our national virtues.” (*Vindication*, 172.) Extending ethical treatment not only for the sake of animals, but for the protection of human beings, she wisely connected cruelty to animals to a predisposition for “domestic tyranny over wives, children, and servants.” (*Vindication*, 172.)

At age nine, students proceeded to the next stage of education, with regard to which Wollstonecraft differentiated among groups of students. First she separated out students of ample economic means, allowing them to continue an academic course, together with any student showing intellectual prowess, no matter his or her sex or financial situation. The remaining girls and boys, who would be “intended for domestic employments, or mechanical trades, ought to be removed to other schools . . . the two sexes being still together in the morning; but in the afternoon, the girls should attend a school, where plain-work, mantua-making, millinery, etc. would be their employment.”⁷⁴ (*Vindication*, 168.) In this separation of the sexes for domestic and mechanical trades, it is clear that Wollstonecraft was not opposed to a division of labor based on sexual difference, at least among non-intellectuals.

For wealthy and intellectually gifted students, the co-educational model remained intact. She described how their training would proceed:

as follows: “Let your children be brought up together; let their sports and studies be the same.” 205.

⁷⁴ A woman’s garment, the mantua was a long, loose fitting gown, worn over a petticoat.

The young people of superior abilities, or fortune, might now be taught, in another school, the dead and living languages, the elements of science, and continue the study of history and politics, on a more extensive scale, which would not exclude polite literature. (*Vindication*, 168.)

To this classical education, she added arts and accomplishments, beginning with dancing, music and drawing, as students got older. (*Vindication*, 170.) Toward the end of the proposal, Wollstonecraft suggested that women receive additional instruction: “In public schools women, to guard against the errors of ignorance, should be taught the elements of anatomy and medicine . . .” not only for their own health – “But to make them rational nurses of their infants, parents, and husbands . . .” (*Vindication*, 177.) Increasing their knowledge base, Wollstonecraft intended to make women more competent in their domestic role, but differing from Rousseau and Condorcet, Wollstonecraft did not confine women to the domestic sphere.

Wollstonecraft, also, envisioned professional schools to instruct students on a part-time basis as a capstone to their education. “Those, who were designed for particular professions, might attend, three or four mornings in the week, the schools appropriated for their immediate instruction.” (*Vindication*, 170.) In Chapter IX of the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft emphasized the medical profession as being especially suited to women, as physicians and nurses. (*Vindication*, 148.)

The schools, upper and lower, “. . . would be schools of morality” keeping boys from being “ruined by the early debaucheries.” (*Vindication*, 168.) Wollstonecraft dreamed that the schools would foster warm and sincere affections between the young men and women, and that relationships would be formed on the basis of mutual understanding, respect, and love. If love marriages ensued, society would be better off. She considered the end result for children, often the damaged product of bad marriages,

“Virtue flies from a house divided against itself—and a whole legion of devils take up their residence there.” (*Vindication*, 193.) On potential love matches begun at school, she tempered her enthusiasm with realism, “. . . for it will be a long time, I fear, before the world will be so far enlightened that parents, only anxious to render their children virtuous, shall allow them to choose companions for life themselves.” (*Vindication*, 168.)

Fostering fairness at school between the sexes and up and down the class spectrum, she hoped, would lead the students to be just in adulthood. Giving them a hand in the judicial process at the schools would introduce them to representative and participatory government, rather than tyrannical modes of government. She shared her rationale for peer review boards: Discipline by peer review rather than by the masters “would be an admirable method of fixing sound principles of justice in the mind” rather than having the mind “soured or irritated by tyranny.” (*Vindication*, 170.) This pioneering mode of judicial hearings, like the other innovative strains in her proposal, shows Wollstonecraft’s talent for constructive measures.

In sum, although the implementation of Wollstonecraft’s plan would have required further development, especially for its administrative operation, the main features showed the way to encourage social equality and fellowship in the classroom as preparation for life after “graduation.” The public schools would not eradicate social distinctions, but would provide a wide avenue for upward mobilization based theoretically on merit, blind to sex and low class stature. This system would benefit all, Wollstonecraft believed, but it was crucial for women. Referring to economic disparity and social oppression, Wollstonecraft explained why women were more victimized in the current conditions, “women are more debased and cramped, if possible, by them than

men, because men may still in some degree unfold their faculties by becoming soldiers and statesmen.” (*Vindication*, 143) Schools, co-educational schools, were needed for female emancipation.

What has not been sufficiently emphasized in the works on Wollstonecraft’s political theory is the foundational importance she attached to co-education in effecting a just society. Janet Todd, a much respected Wollstonecraft scholar, has missed her subject’s most daring and revolutionary maneuver. Todd writes: “She could not be straightforwardly revolutionary like Paine, who wanted society transformed through a change in institutions; instead, she sought a basic psychological and personal reform that must come from change in individual attitudes.”⁷⁵ This statement ignores the primary agency that Wollstonecraft ascribed to the co-educational schools. Her plan claims that it is only through *equal access to institutions*, namely radically new educational institutions, that society could transform itself. Wollstonecraft was acutely aware that until girls and women had equal access to equal education, they would never gain ground.

Todd’s misinterpretation is representative of Wollstonecraft studies generally. The literature focuses on Wollstonecraft’s appropriation of Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals and rhetoric, concepts such as “rights” “freedom” and “equality,” in order to enshrine Wollstonecraft as the mother of feminism.⁷⁶ However, in doing so, the studies have failed to make clear that a national public co-educational system was first recommended by Wollstonecraft.⁷⁷ In the history of education, Wollstonecraft has not

⁷⁵ Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 186.

⁷⁶ Chandos Michael Brown, “Mary Wollstonecraft, or, the Female Illuminati: The Campaign Against Women and ‘Modern Philosophy’ in the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 3 (1995): 389-424; Falco, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft*.

⁷⁷ Wollstonecraft is the first English person to argue thus; Condorcet’s proposal predates Wollstonecraft’s by one year.

yet had recognition for her groundbreaking proposal. The focus has been on her call for freedom and the advancement of women's rights, but not the institutional means by which she thought these goals would best be achieved. Neither should Wollstonecraft's political claims for women be discounted as not as revolutionary as Tom Paine's, because she advocated for a place for women in government, whereas Paine "only" championed universal male suffrage.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Wollstonecraft's importance as a figure in women's history and the history of education rests upon her articulation of a rationalist educational agenda to make possible an enlightened type of liberalism that extended to both sexes equally. While other scholars have argued Wollstonecraft's significance on account of her insistence on women's rights, it has been emphasized here that Wollstonecraft's radical plan for co-education functioned as the necessary pre-condition of her plea for women's rights and their development as full human beings. Also, this dissertation shows that Wollstonecraft's beliefs about women's intellectual capacity and the role of schools for female emancipation were not original with her – although her articulation in 1792 bridged the early modern debates to the modern debates.

In closing, a portrayal of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as a watershed document in the history of women's education can be sketched. Two questions are able guides: What beliefs of earlier advocates did Wollstonecraft echo?

⁷⁸ A.J. Ayer, *Thomas Paine* (New York: Atheneum, 1988), 81.

How did she employ inherited ideas in new ways? In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft employs defenses of female rationality and intellectual capacity that stretch back to the female Italian humanists, specifically Laura Cereta as discussed in Chapter One. Cereta had announced that, “. . . nature imparts one freedom to all human beings equally – to learn.”⁷⁹ Other advocates too, like Juan Luis Vives, Moderata Fonte, Bathsua Makin, Poullain de la Barre, and Mary Astell, had wrestled with the obstacles that, since antiquity, blocked women’s access to education. They considered women’s souls, minds, and bodies, and their potential for basic skills in literacy and advanced learning; they debated about the sites for education, in the home or in schools. They worked to quell fears about female chastity, and addressed doubts about women’s intellectual capacity and their faculty of reason. Forcefully, they argued that positive character formation for girls could only be effected through humanistic and Christian curricula, and pinned the well-being of society to the upbringing of girls, as did Wollstonecraft on the eve of the nineteenth century. The early modern advocates’ premier role in gradually stimulating society on the topic of female education, and creating newly hospitable grounds for girls’ schools is crucial in the history of education and the proliferation of girls’ schools.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the first schools for secular girls emerged in rural and urban settings, governments, churches, and philanthropists orchestrated the initiative in Europe and the colonies, believing wholeheartedly that the moral and spiritual fate of society rested in educating girls, in large part for the girls’ future roles as wives and mothers. Founders of schools and teachers relied on the insights of philosophers and high-ranking clergymen, including Thomas More, Desiderius Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives and François Fénelon to further their goals with

⁷⁹ Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, 78.

girls' schooling. Some, educators, like Daniel Bellamy (discussed in Chapter Three), the husband of a schoolmistress in Buckinghamshire who, himself, taught girls drama and public speaking, specifically credited his sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century mentors in the cause of female education.⁸⁰ Increasingly, in the eighteenth century, from North America to the Russian Empire, founders of schools drew upon a range of advocates' justifications for their brand-new endeavor. The arguments for girls' schooling had grown powerful, and been applied successfully in Europe. This experience in turn conditioned the spread of European-styled girls' schooling in most corners of the globe in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Girls' schooling, on the early modern model, became a lasting European cultural export.

By gathering the many pieces of the debate on women into one work, critiquing established male sages on their prejudices and condescension, and radically relating the issues of education to inherent human rights and citizenship, Wollstonecraft created a new platform for the political stirrings that would follow in the next two centuries in the West and around the world. She was the first to argue that education and intellectual pursuits are fundamental to every human being's development and provide the basis for political selfhood which every reasonable person has a right to experience. Taking the advocacy for women's education to a higher plane, Wollstonecraft rested women's very humanity in the intellect, argued for its full range of motion, and saw political liberty and financial independence as the means to a moral and virtuous society. Co-educational schools, where girls would receive equal training and be introduced to the life of the mind, were the only secure route to these righteous heights. In the proper historical context, Wollstonecraft emerges as a pivotal figure not only carrying through ideas born

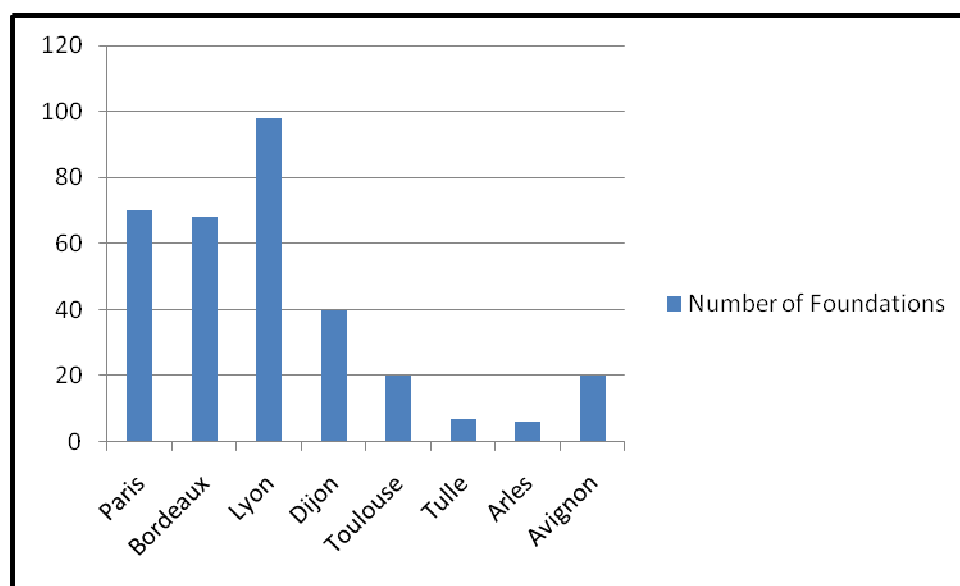
⁸⁰ See Chapter Three for a discussion of Daniel Bellamy.

in the early modern period, and responding to events in her own day, but also as a visionary theorist whose radical ideas would come to be accepted in later generations as liberalism and egalitarian feminism gained more ground in the West and around the world.⁸¹

⁸¹ Co-educational primary schools began in the early nineteenth century in the United States. Following in mid- to late-nineteenth century, some American colleges and universities began admitting women to co-educational programs. In late nineteenth-century Europe, Dutch schools were the first to become coeducational institutions. See: Nelleke Bakker and Mineke van Essen, "No Matter of Principle: The Unproblematic Character of Coeducation in Girls' Secondary Schooling in the Netherlands, ca. 1870-1930," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1999): 454-475; Edgar Wallace Knight and Clifton L. Hall, *Readings in American Educational History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951); Carol Lasser, ed., *Educating Men and Women Together: Coeducation in a Changing World* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); David B. Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot Tyack, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992).

APPENDIX I

French Ursuline Congregations of the Seventeenth Century

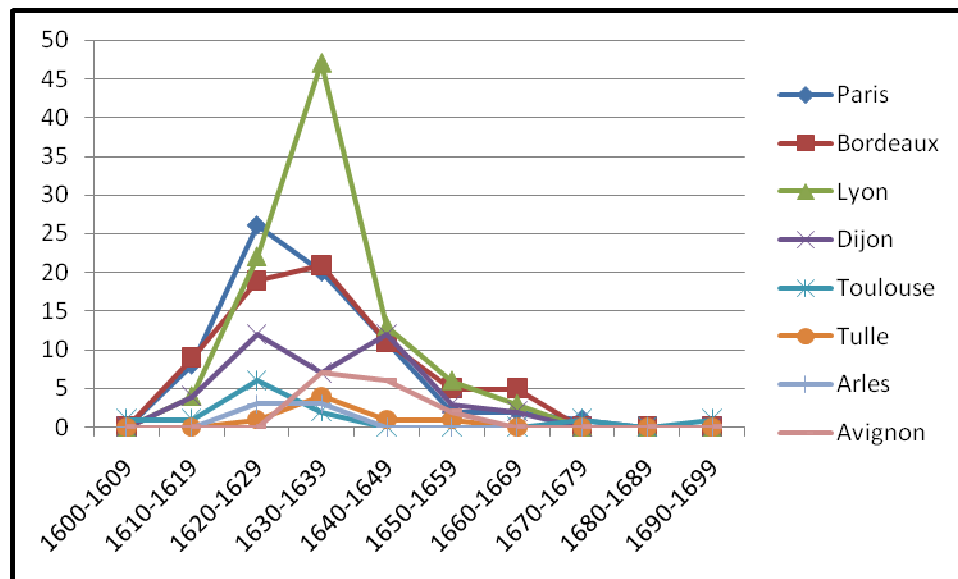


Generally, the foundations within each Congregation were in the vicinity of the city center, but not always. Increasingly, French congregations sponsored foundations abroad—Paris and Bordeaux collaborated for the foundation in Quebec, New France in 1639. The following congregations had multiple foundations in other parts of Europe and the wider world: Paris, Toulouse, and Bordeaux.

Data compiled from de Leymont, H. *Madame de Sainte-Beuve et Les Ursulines de Paris, 1562 – 1630*. Lyon: Vitte & Perrussell, 1890, 429-439.

APPENDIX II

Seventeenth-Century Foundations within French Congregations of the Order of St. Ursula

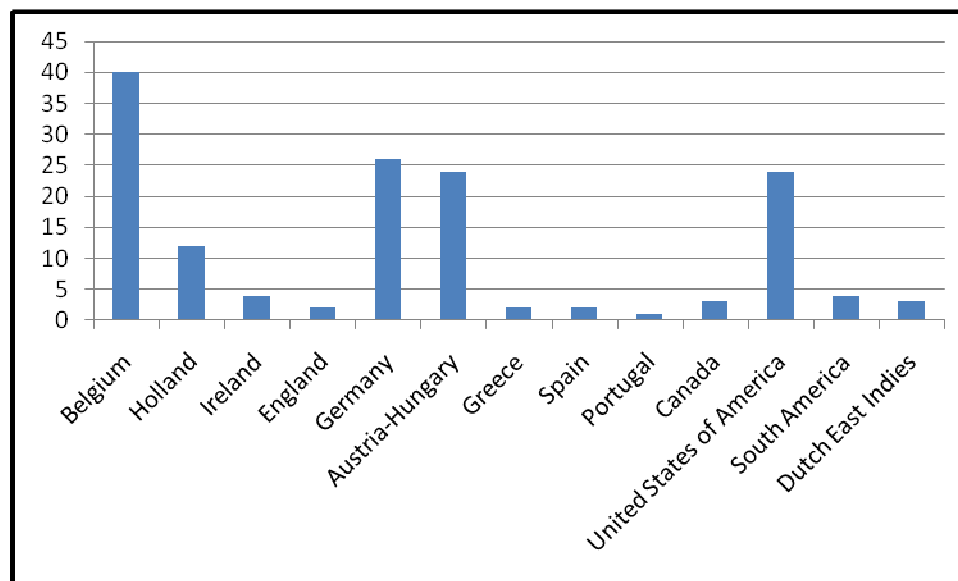


A dramatic increase in the number of French foundations is visible following Paul V's papal approbation for the Ursulines at Paris, beginning in 1612. The Pope encouraged the proliferation of the Ursuline Order in 1617-1618, encouraging French bishops to establish the Order of St. Ursula in their dioceses. In the most intensive period of activity between 1620 -1649, the total number of new French foundations with schools was 254. The post-1649 period, does not represent a decline in schools, only a decline in the number of new foundations established. In fact, most of these foundations survived suppression and renewal during the French Revolution and its aftermath, to continue educating girls into the late- nineteenth century.

Data compiled from de Leymont, H. *Madame de Sainte-Beuve et Les Ursulines de Paris, 1562 – 1630*. Lyon: Vitte & Perrussell, 1890, 429-439.

APPENDIX III

Ursuline Foundations in Europe and Around the World

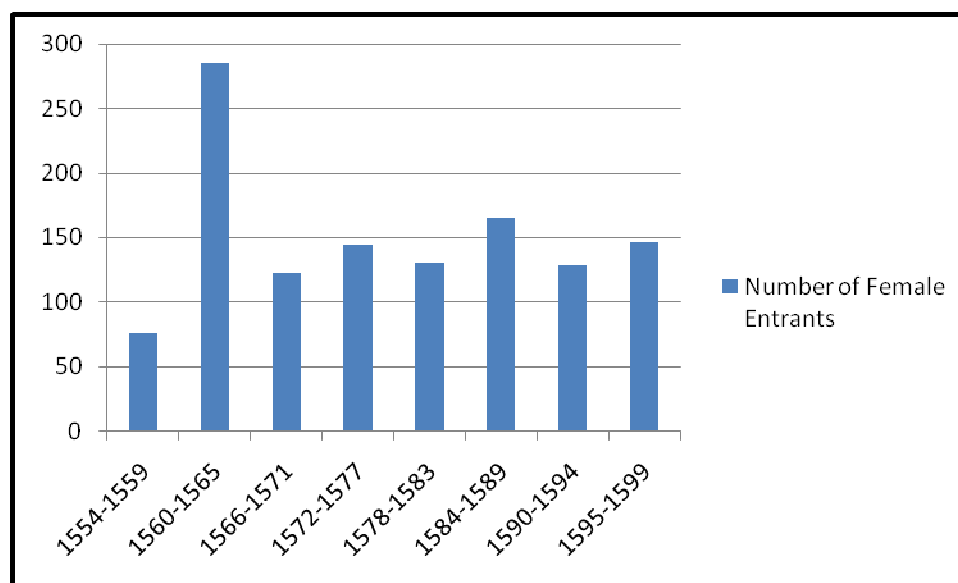


The foundations above were established beginning in the seventeenth century and remained in existence until at least 1878.

Data compiled from de Leymont, H. *Madame de Sainte-Beuve et Les Ursulines de Paris, 1562 – 1630*. Lyon: Vitte & Perrussell, 1890, 429-439.

APPENDIX IV

Christ's Hospital, 1554-1599 Female Entrants

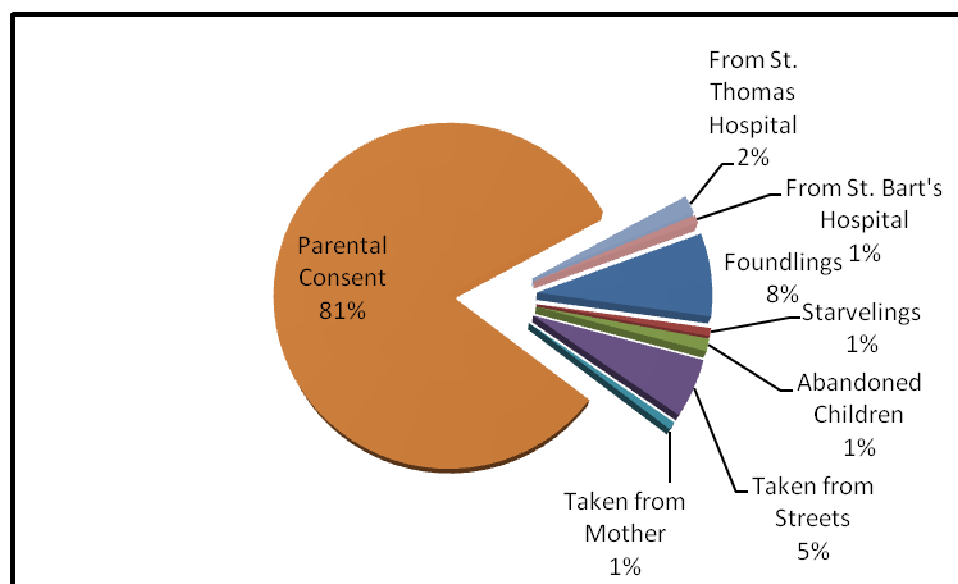


Note that the final two columns display entrants received in five-year intervals, whereas the preceding columns tabulate entrants in six year intervals.

Data compiled from: Christ's Hospital, ed., *Christ's Hospital*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison, 1937), 1-264.

APPENDIX V

Christ's Hospital, 1554-1578 Circumstances of Admission for Female Population

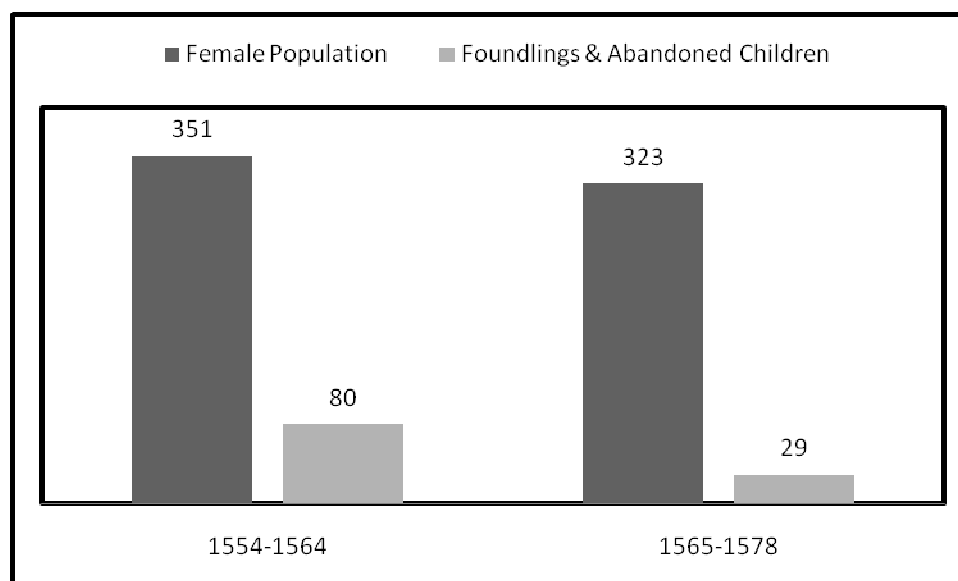


This chart presents the circumstances under which girls were admitted to the new institution of Christ's Hospital in London. The overwhelming majority of girls admitted between 1554 and 1578, were those willingly enrolled by parents (typically because of one parent's death in the family), a total of 81%. The difference between foundlings and starvelings in the source is not entirely clear; likely, it signifies the degree of hunger perceived and recorded by the administrators at the Hospital keeping the roster. In the source, there appears to be no meaningful difference between "foundlings" and "abandoned children;" age is not a consideration in differentiating between the two groups. Therefore, the total percentage of abandoned daughters (all ages) is 10%. The other significant group is the number of children taken from the streets, 5%; these children were seemingly unattached to a natal family or any form of guardianship.

Data compiled from Christ's Hospital, ed., *Christ's Hospital*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison, 1937), 1-151.

APPENDIX VI

Christ's Hospital, 1554-1578 Number of Foundlings and Abandoned Children within the Total Female Population

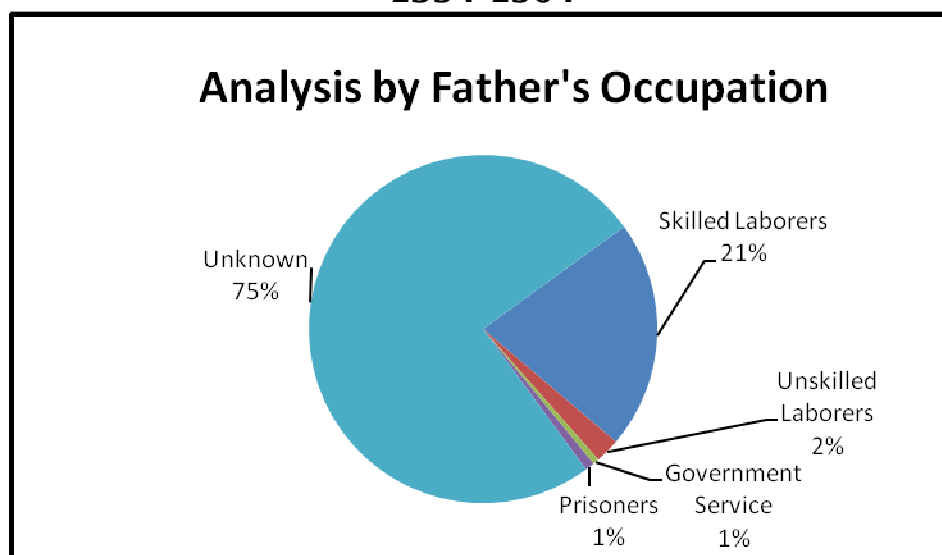


A decline in the number of female foundlings and abandoned children from the first period to the second is displayed in this comparative sampling. The total number of admitted girls drops by 28, and the number of foundlings and abandoned girls drops by 51.

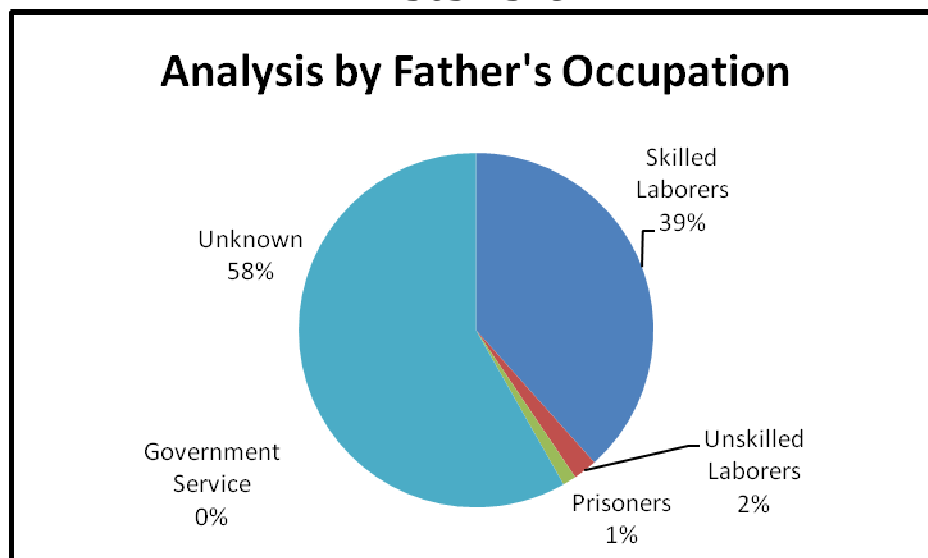
Data compiled from Christ's Hospital, ed., *Christ's Hospital*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison, 1937), 1-151.

APPENDIX VII

Class Origins of Christ's Hospital Female Admittants 1554-1564



1565-1578

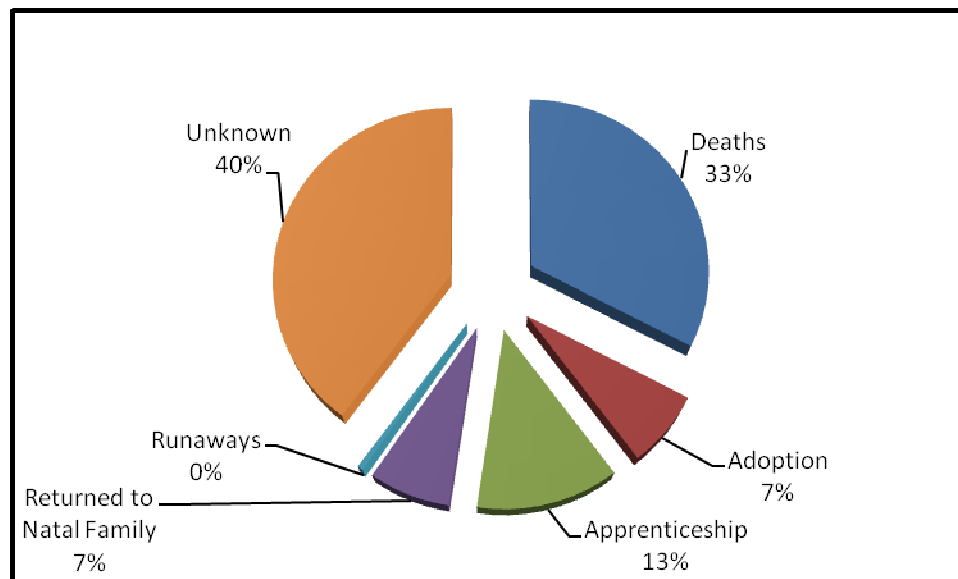


Attention to detail in the record keeping at Christ's Hospital improved between the years 1554-1578; as a result the occupations of admitted girls' fathers are better known in the second sampling. Strikingly, the percentage of skilled laborers increases by 18%, and the unskilled percentage remains constant at 2%. This suggests that, true to its mission, the Hospital catered to the children of the citizens of London, often skilled craftsmen and members of guilds, as well as day laborers. Between 1565-1578, presumably, the 58% of unknown occupations includes a sizable percentage of unskilled laborers who could not afford to raise their children.

Data compiled from Christ's Hospital, ed., *Christ's Hospital*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison, 1937), 1-151.

APPENDIX VIII

Christ's Hospital, 1554-1578 Outcomes for Female Pupils

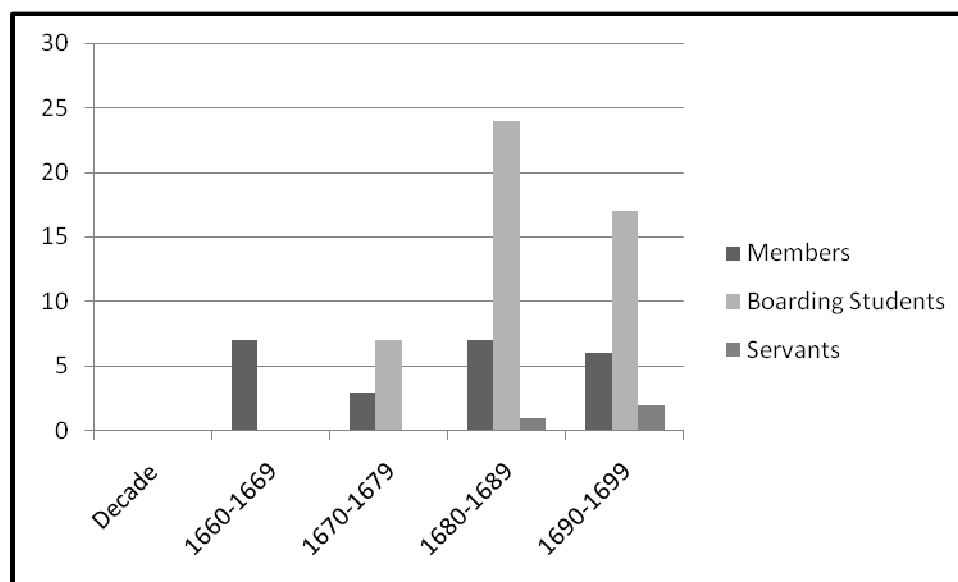


Presumably, the unknown segment of the population either left Christ's Hospital upon late adolescence to find employment, or went into service or apprenticeship without it being recorded.

Data compiled from Christ's Hospital, ed., *Christ's Hospital*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison, 1937), 1-151.

APPENDIX IX

Institute of Mary, Analysis of Hammersmith Community (1660-1699)

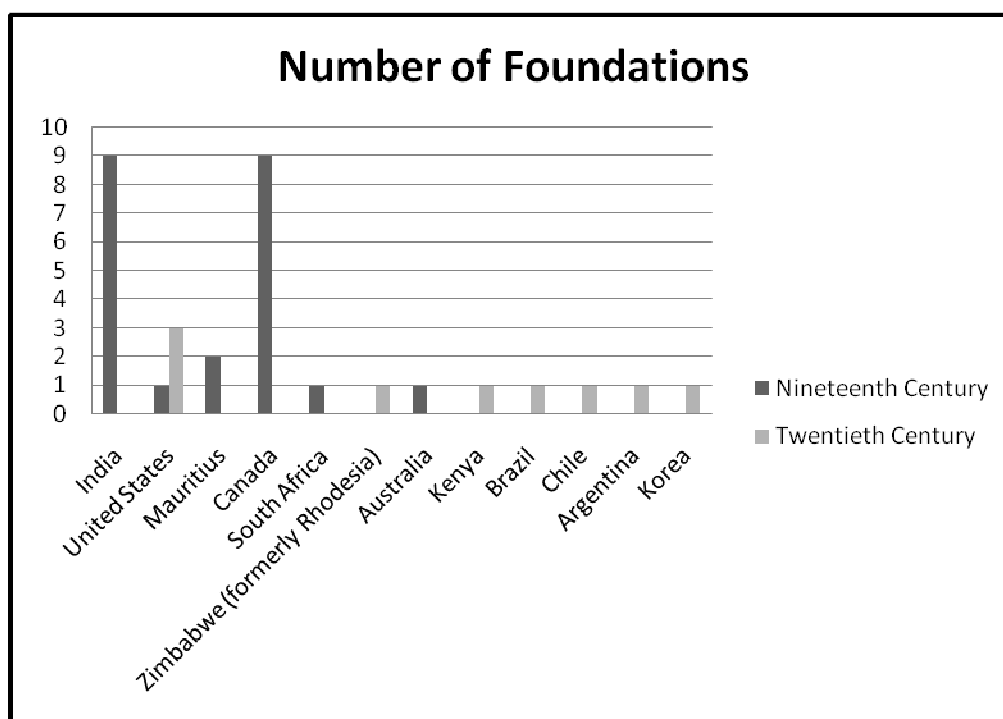


Although the manuscript source is an incomplete membership roster, a noticeable increase in the number of enrolled pupils occurs in the 1680s and 1690s. The Catholic king, James II ascended the throne in 1685, and ruled until 1688. In 1687, he passed the *Declaration of Indulgence* (or, *The Declaration of Liberty of Conscience*), which called for religious toleration. With the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and James' abdication, the *Declaration* was revoked. Although, in 1689, the Act of Toleration was passed by Parliament, it did not apply to Catholics and the Penal Laws were in effect. By secretly congregating at Hammersmith, the Institute of Mary was in violation of the Conventicle Act of 1664, which prohibited religious assemblies (other than those belonging to the Anglican Church) of more than five people. Recusant families associated with the Institute of Mary risked fines, arrests, and prison terms in pursuing a Catholic education and way of life.

Data compiled from the manuscript: Register of Mary Ward Nuns, (n.d.) Bar Convent: Mary Ward Papers, Hammersmith, England.

APPENDIX X

Institute of Mary Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Global Foundations



Data compiled from: Wright, Mary. *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*. Sydney: Crossing Press, 1997, 104-154.

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