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**Rethinking realism: Early women novelists in England and
France**

O'Driscoll, Sally, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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RETHINKING REALISM:
EARLY WOMEN NOVELISTS IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE

by
Sally O'Driscoll

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York.

1991

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the following individuals and institutions for various kinds of support during the writing of this dissertation.

A generous grant from the Newberry Library, a Women's Studies Research Grant from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, a Gilbert Chinard travel grant from the Institut Français de Washington, and a Dissertation Fellowship from the City University of New York allowed me time to complete the research and writing.

I am particularly grateful to Nancy K. Miller for her insight, careful readings, the generosity with which she shared her time and ideas, and her friendship. I am also deeply indebted to Robert A. Day and Vincent Crapanzano for their insightful comments on the manuscript and for continued support through the years.

To Paul, many thanks for contributions that I cannot begin to enumerate here.

I would like to acknowledge my family, who have always been supportive, and my friends, who have helped in many ways.

for my mother

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Introduction

A study that compares French and English novels from a broad period -- my earliest work is an English novel from 1684 (Behn's Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister), my latest a French novel from 1784 (Charrière's Mistriss Henley) -- needs to justify itself. The question presents itself immediately: Why does it make sense to compare works from two countries, over such a long period?

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there was an enormous trade in fiction back and forth across the English Channel, particularly among women writers. This was the era when women began to write in large numbers; they published, many made their living from their writing, and many became famous from it. Women, for reasons that will be detailed below, also became particularly involved in translation between French and English. In this study, I juxtapose works by women writers from both countries according to theme. I claim that they treat the same matters, with techniques that are comparable. In this introduction, I will show that there was enough contact between the writers of both countries -- and especially the women writers -- to make that claim justifiable.

Evidence for a Bilingual Literature Market

Historical evidence shows that there was a constant market for French writing of all kinds all over England throughout the eighteenth century. One of the best sources for this information is accounts of booksellers' stock in various parts of the country. In an article on "Reading in Provincial England," Roy McKeen Wiles surveys the types of books being bought outside London; he demonstrates that private individuals and circulating libraries listed in their catalogues "select Novels in the French language" and "French Books in every department of Polite Literature" (103). Those who could not afford to buy their own books borrowed them from the circulating libraries; Wiles has demonstrated the existence of a readership for all kinds of French literature in the original as well as in translation.

In France, Jacques Gury has documented a certain "anglomania" that swept France, especially during the second half of the eighteenth century.¹ This passion for things English included a devouring of novels, which some critics saw as so pervasive as to produce some undesirable effects:

En effet la lecture des productions anglaises n'a guère servi qu'à introduire parmi nous des bizarreries et des maximes qui, n'étant analogues ni au caractère ni au gouvernement de la Nation, n'ont produit que de très pitoyables effets, comme l'expérience le prouve tous les jours.²

According to this critic, the behavior produced by reading English literature was widespread and harmful. This attests to its influence if not to its merits.

Female Education in Languages

Women's education, such as it was, prepared an audience of women to read those novels and translate them. In her popular history of English women in the seventeenth century, The Weaker Vessel, Antonia Fraser describes how girls at school, although deprived of Latin, Greek, and much else, were nonetheless encouraged to learn French:

Dainty French was however thought to be a desirable female accomplishment at court and elsewhere. An early seventeenth-century French grammar was written to enable women to 'parlee [sic] out their part with men'. The arrival of a French Queen -- Henrietta Maria -- in 1625 continued the trend. The influx of French Protestant (Huguenot) refugees into London resulted in the establishment of a few French schools, and provided a number of French teachers. French maids and French nurses were to be found in fashionable households. Later French romances began to flood into England and were read avidly, sometimes in the original: Brilliana Lady Harley, ordering a book from her son at Oxford, in 1638, asked for it in French: 'for I would rather read that tongue than English'. (139)

The idea that French was a suitable accomplishment for women continued to hold currency in the eighteenth century. Wiles cites a 1771 advertisement for a school for young ladies

that describes their education as follows:

Before breakfast the girls heard prayers, had lessons in French and English -- 'spelling and pronouncing properly' -- and from two to five in the afternoon worked at their needles and read French or English Authors, as the History of England, Addison's Spectators, the Preceptor, &c.'" (109-10).

For the well-bred girl, then, French was an essential part of the curriculum.

In France, the same anglomania that made English literature and customs so admired in the later eighteenth century provided opportunities for expatriate English people in France willing to teach their language (Gury 197).

Translations

The story of cross-Channel translation is one of ebb and flow. At certain periods, notably the mid seventeenth century and the late eighteenth century, floods of French fiction arrived in England. In the first of those periods it was the long romances that were popular; in the second, it was the sentimental novel.

It is notoriously difficult to pinpoint the exact number of translations, and often impossible to identify their translators. Many translations were never identified as such by the publisher; since there was no functioning

copyright law, especially an international one, novels could easily be pirated without the original being acknowledged. As Josephine Grieder says, "the [French] fiction lay there to be plundered at will" (25). Translators, unless they were well known, were often not listed; the nature of the book trade was such that translators were paid a lump sum for their work, and had no further rights to it.

Translations were often done as quickly as possible: Grieder cites a Mr. Tooke, who complained of hasty, bad translations and quoted the excuses of a bookseller who told him that "the public curiosity is screwed to its highest pitch, and must be gratified; and that to provide a better translation would demand a greater expence of time and money, without procuring the sale of one additional copy."³

The translation of fiction provided a very unregulated arena in which to work. Any French novel in England, any English novel in France, offered an opportunity for an enterprising bilingual writer to make some money. Josephine Grieder has studied a particular period, 1760-1795, during which French sentimental fiction was popular in England and was massively translated. She notes:

Translating presented, in fact, one great advantage: it did not require as much time and effort as an original piece of fiction. That this was the case is indicated by the number of professional authors, generally women, who alternately produced translations of French novels and their own original works. (27)

She lists the prominent English female translators from this period (who also wrote their own fiction) as Elizabeth Griffith, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Brooke, Charlotte Smith, Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, Susannah Minifie Gunning and her daughter, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Pilkington (Grieder 40-41). Yet although Grieder notes this astonishing preponderance of women translators, and points out that they were far more successful than their male counterparts, she does not speculate on what caused this disparity.

Quantities of Translations

Various critics have tried to ascertain the actual numbers of translations made between French and English works during the eighteenth century. There is no single, definitive number for all fiction, but the figures cited below give some idea of the amount of translation undertaken in different genres.

Since I am most concerned with the traffic in fiction between women writers, I have compiled a preliminary bibliography of translations from English to French and French to English of fiction by women writers. This bibliography is attached as an appendix to the current study. It gives some sense of what I am claiming here: that women writers in both countries, through translation of each

other's works, were able to influence each other throughout the eighteenth century. The sheer volume of the translations, even in this preliminary bibliography, demonstrates the possibilities that existed for exchange of ideas, techniques, and plots even for those women writers who were not fluent in the other language.

French to English:

Grieder gives figures (37-8) on the translation of French fiction (of all sorts, by both men and women) into English for certain decades. Her information comes from the bibliographies of William H. McBurney, Jerry C. Beasley, and Andrew Block. She excludes reprints.

For 1700-1709, 18; 1710-1719, 10; 1720-1729, 31; 1730-1739, 25; 1740-1749, 51; 1750-1759, 16.

She then breaks down those figures into sentimental fiction only: 1760-69, 21; 1770-79, 23; 1780-89, 34; 1790-1800, 46.

In Told in Letters; Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson, Robert A. Day gives figures for epistolary fiction translated from French to English. In his survey of 203 epistolary fictions, he says 57 are definitely translations, and notes that "this proportion corresponds fairly closely to that found for all types of fiction in the years 1700-1740." From 1660 to 1740, of approximately 500 epistolary works, about 150 are translations (29). Day

points out that this figure is probably an underestimate, because the sources of some works have never been identified.

Among the works Day surveys, he also calculates what proportion were by women writers: of the same 203 epistolary novels, 72 were by men, 54 by women (29 of those by Eliza Haywood!) and 68 anonymous (it is often assumed that many anonymous works are by women).⁴ Day explores the importance of these translations on the development of narrative technique in the English novel, especially on such writers as Delariviere Manley, Eliza Haywood, Daniel Defoe, and Jane Barker.⁵

English to French:

The most comprehensive bibliography of translations from English to French is by Charles Alfred Rochedieu, who lists works translated between 1700 and 1800. Of the prose fiction works he includes, 118 are by women, 95 are by men, and 70 are unidentified or anonymous. These numbers are approximate, since it is not always possible to identify the nature of a work by its title alone.

Selecting, Translating, Changing

The very selection of a work for translation is indicative of the translator's understanding of the taste of the moment. Writers popular in one country were sometimes ignored in the other because their work did not suit. Grieder has pointed out that taste in late eighteenth-century England ran heavily toward the moralistic, and French works without that tone, or that were considered too "gloomy," were avoided.⁶

Once the novel had been selected, the work of translation itself continued to be selective in the eighteenth century: no translator felt him or herself bound to honor the intentions of the original writer. In England, Grieder notes, translators left out what they considered boring parts or added footnotes to excuse anything they thought immoral (31-36). She also gives details of specific changes that are instructive in the context of this study: for example, Percival Stockdale noted in his translation of Riccoboni's Letters from Lord Rivers, the "conduct herein inculcated to young ladies is almost as immoral as the manners of a Brothel" (Grieder 35). In a more serious case, "R. Roberts found it necessary to add another whole volume to Mme de Graffigny's Peruvian Letters (1774) because she 'was not indeed altogether satisfied with the conclusion, being desirous the Indian Princess should become a convert

to Christianity through conviction; and that so generous a friend as Déterville might be as happy as his virtues deserved'" (Grieder 35). Translators, then, saw their job as modifying the original to suit the taste of its new public, rather than faithfully adhering to the original as conceived by the author. A translator needed to understand the taste of her times in order to be successful: that is partly why translators were almost always successful novelists in their own right.

French translators tended to concentrate on modifying the style of English writers. As F. C. Green notes, English novelists were thought by the French to be a little too coarse -- just as the English considered the French immoral. Discussing the French translation of Fielding's Joseph Andrews, Green says that "the translator of that work realised that Fielding's naturalism would offend French taste, and in the preface begs his readers to remember that in England nothing which represents nature is despised by the novelist, who in this respect may be compared to the Dutch school of painters" ("French Critic" 178). In another article, Green describes Prévost's attempts to tone down Richardson's language in his translations of Clarissa and Pamela: "Prévost points out that the English language is not so 'châtiée' as his own. 'On souffre dans celle-là des expressions qu'on ne souffrirait pas dans celle-ci'" ("Further Evidence" 260).

Social Differences

There was indeed a vital and continuing exchange of fiction between the women writers of France and England in the eighteenth century. But this does not mean that the conditions of producing fiction were similar in the two countries. In fact, this is very far from true.

A major difference between the women writers in England and France during the period studied here was social class. As Carolyn Lougee and Joan DeJean have documented, the scene of French women's writing during the seventeenth century was the aristocratic salon.⁷ Scudéry, Lafayette, and Montpensier, among others, had literary salons that inspired and nurtured their work. Although female salons did not have quite the same influence in the eighteenth century, they were still important, and were still identified with the upper classes. There was no such aristocratic tradition in England to produce and support women's writing. In the earlier seventeenth century, women writers tended to be titled (for example, Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle), since those were the women who had access to education. But toward the end of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth, the writers who made their mark were "classless" -- self-made women, so to speak, who came from nowhere and made their own

way. Aphra Behn, Delariviere Manley, and Eliza Haywood all fit that category. There were even several English working-class poets during the eighteenth century -- the milkwoman Ann Yearsley, or the laborer Stephen Duck, for example -- but they were exceptions.⁸

A brief survey of some of the better-known writers in both countries documents this point. In France, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, comtesse de Lafayette (1634-92) came from a titled family and had close connections with the intellectuals of the court circles.⁹ Her contemporary, Marie-Catherine Desjardins de Villegle (1632-83) was the exception to the general aristocracy of the writing community at the turn of the century: she supported herself by her writing and her personal life was considered scandalous.¹⁰ Claudine-Alexandrine Guerin de Tencin came from a powerful aristocratic family; her brother was a cardinal. She herself was famous for her wit and had her own salon. Françoise d'Issembourg d'Happoncourt de Graffigny (1695-1758) was the daughter of an officer at the court of the Duke of Lorraine; her connections were with Voltaire and the Guise family.¹¹ Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni (1714-1792) was of middle-class family, not very wealthy, and joined the theater as a young actress; she supported herself by her writings after she left the stage and was never rich.¹² Like Villegle, she is something of an exception to the literary rule of the aristocracy in France,

although by mid-century that was certainly changing.

In England, the picture is very different. The English writers considered in my study come almost invariably from families without wealth or connections, and most rely on their own writings to support themselves. Unable to use on class to help them, they move in intellectual circles that put them outside normal class boundaries. Aphra Behn's (1640-89) antecedents have never been thoroughly established; even her supposed marriage has never been confirmed. Some biographers have surmised that she was the daughter of a yeoman in Kent; others that she was the illegitimate daughter of a gentry family.¹³ Delariviere Manley (1663-1724) was a daughter of the gentry, and had connections with the Duchess of Cleveland that allowed her to live at Court and pick up much of the material for her writings, but she was never well off or respectable.¹⁴ Mary Davys (1674-1732) was the wife of a clergyman in Dublin, and a friend of Swift's; little is known of her family, but she ended up in Cambridge, running a coffeehouse and moving in a circle of literary friends.¹⁵ Eliza Haywood (1693-1756) was apparently the daughter of a London shopkeeper, but nothing is known of her early life. She seems to have left her husband, a clergyman, in 1721, and from then on supported herself.¹⁶ Charlotte Lennox (1729?-1804), probably born in New York where her father was stationed as an officer, lived a life of extreme poverty, despite the admiration for her

work and the friendship of intellectuals such as Samuel Johnson.¹⁷

These biographies illustrate the differences in working conditions for women writers in England and France. The differences, I would argue, are reflected in the kind of work produced: while Lafayette produced the neoclassically balanced La Princesse de Clèves, Aphra Behn was writing irreverent plays and sexually explicit novels such as Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister.

The differences between the two countries in this respect began to narrow slowly, however, as the century wore on. In France, more non-aristocratic women were writing after the mid-century, and in England, there was a moral backlash against the kind of erotic, sexy novels produced by Behn, Manley, and Haywood. After 1750 or so, the language of "sensibility" began to take over in England, and the refinements of this language moved English closer to French taste. Janet Todd, in Sensibility, has described what she calls the "cult of sensibility" that swept European fiction from the 1740s to the 1770s: she defines the literature of sensibility as fiction that

showed people how to behave [...]. Later it prided itself more on making its readers weep and in teaching them when and how much to weep. In addition, it delivered the great archetypal victims: the chaste suffering woman, happily rewarded in marriage or elevated into redemptive death, and the sensitive, benevolent man whose feelings are too exquisite for the acquisitiveness, vulgarity, and selfishness of his world. (4)

We saw above that the French considered the English writing style too coarse, and required their translators to refine it; toward the close of the eighteenth century, this difference in taste was no longer so noticeable.

Sensibility led to a definition of femininity that obscured class differences: the "true woman" depicted in sentimental fiction was the bourgeois ideal, and both countries moved closer toward it, meeting in the middle. By the end of the century, Behn had fallen into disfavor, and Haywood and Manley were oddities: women who discussed sex, scandals, and politics in the same breath. The taste of France and England finally matched, and the surge of cross-Channel translations toward the end of the century bears this out.

NOTES

¹ See Jacques Gury, "Une Excentricité à l'anglaise: l'Anglomanie," in Michele Plaisant, ed., L'Excentricité en Grande Bretagne au 18e siècle (Lille: Université de Lille III, éditions universitaires, 1976), 189-211.

² Abbé de Sabatier de Castres, cited in Gury 192.

³ Grieder, Translations of French Sentimental Fiction in Late Eighteenth-Century England (Durham: Duke UP, 1975) 27; the original is in John Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century IX, 172.

⁴ Ruth Perry comments on these figures in her Women, Letters, and the Novel (New York: AMS Press, 1980), noting that the figure of 203 may be misleading, because some of those works are reprints (Perry 171 n. 39).

⁵ In Told in Letters (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1966), Day notes especially these influential novels: Les Lettres portugaises (1699), Marana's L'Espion turc (1684-86), Mme d'Aulnoy's Relation du voyage d'Espagne (1691), Bussy-Rabutin's Histoire amoureuse des Gaules (1665), and Mme Noyer's Lettres historiques et galantes (1704). All of these went through many, many editions in the next thirty or forty years (Day 32).

⁶ Grieder notes that the following popular French writers were never translated into English for this reason: Loaisel de Trégate, Ducray-Duminil, Dorat, Bastide, and Contant d'Orville. Of Baculard d'Arnaud, translators "generally restricted their choices to his sentimental and pathetic domestic fiction, and his gloomy melancholy went almost unknown across the channel" (Grieder 30-31).

⁷ See Carolyn C. Lougée, Le Paradis des femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976); Joan DeJean, Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France (New York: Columbia UP, forthcoming).

⁸ See Donna Landry, "The Resignation of Mary Collier: Some Problems in Feminist Literary History," in The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987).

⁹ "Madame de Lafayette," Dictionnaire des lettres françaises (Paris: Librairie Fayard, 1960). Also, DeJean, Tender Geographies, Chapter 3.

¹⁰ "Madame de Villegieu," Dictionnaire des lettres françaises. Also, DeJean, Tender Geographies, Chapter 4.

¹¹ "Madame de Graffigny," Dictionnaire des lettres françaises.

¹² See Emily Crosby, Une Romancière oubliée, Madame Riccoboni: Sa vie, ses oeuvres, sa place dans la littérature anglaise et française du XVIIIe siècle (1924; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1976).

¹³ See Robert A. Day, "Aphra Behn's First Biography," Studies in Bibliography 22 (1969); Angeline Goreau, Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn (New York: Dial Press, 1980).

¹⁴ Paul B. Anderson, "Mistress Delariviere Manley's Biography," MP XXXIII (1935-36): 270-272; G. B. Needham, "Mrs. Manley: An Eighteenth-Century Wife of Bath," Huntington Library Quarterly XIV (1951): 268. See also Janet Todd, ed., A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800 (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985).

¹⁵ See Todd, A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800.

¹⁶ See G.F. Whicher, The Life and Romances of Eliza Haywood (New York: Columbia UP, 1915).

¹⁷ See Todd, A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800.

CHAPTER I

What Is Realism?

The term "realism" first appeared in nineteenth-century France to describe painting, opposing Rembrandt's "vérité humaine" to neoclassical "idéalité poétique."¹ In this early usage, "realism" marked a distinction between realistic and idealistic representation, and assigned aesthetic value on the basis of that division. This crucial distinction was later transferred to discussion of the novel because the same problem of representation has been at the heart of all discussions of the genre: should the novel's method of representing reality be "idealistic" or "realistic"? As with painting, aesthetic value in the novel has been decided on the basis of this distinction.

Following the example of major critics such as Erich Auerbach, French and English twentieth-century literary critics have appropriated the nineteenth-century term "realism" and applied it as a critical category to writing whose eighteenth-century authors would not have understood the concept in the least. In Mimesis (1953), Auerbach follows the traces of realistic representation from the Odyssey to Virginia Woolf, and delineates for the twentieth

century the conception of nineteenth-century French fiction -- Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert -- as the high point of realism toward which the eighteenth century was groping. This is Auerbach's description of nineteenth-century realism:

Insofar as the serious realism of modern times cannot represent man otherwise than as embedded in a total reality, political, social, and economic, which is concretely evolving [...] Stendhal is its founder.
(463)

Auerbach's sense of the term is rooted in the nineteenth century, and this causes a problem when "realism" is used as a category for eighteenth-century novels. "Realism" is apparently anchored to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poetic terms such as "vraisemblance" ("verisimilitude", also translated in English as "plausibility"), but as we will see in the second part of this chapter, the concept goes far beyond the scope of any single eighteenth-century critical term: "vraisemblance" refers to a social agreement about what is plausible whereas "realism" as used in the nineteenth century refers to a particular use of language.

In The Rise of the Novel, Ian Watt has given one of the most influential definitions of realism for the early novel, a definition that owes much to the criticism of the nineteenth-century novel by Auerbach and others. Watt's

study identifies realism as the marker of what constitutes a novel, and he judges fiction from the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century according to whether it demonstrates the techniques of what he calls "formal realism," which he defines as a group of literary techniques that embody

the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are then presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (32)

Watt condenses these techniques into a small number of practices whose premise is that the novel is about individualized experience.

The content of the term "realism" is unstable, but its importance is undeniable. Realism is the criterion that has come to define what constitutes the novel as a genre, and as an extension, what retrospectively is seen to have a place in the novel's dominant tradition. In this view, writers who demonstrate realistic techniques are considered important to the development of the early novel, whereas those who do not use those techniques are relegated to the ranks of the "minor writers." Realism is a term that, as it is applied to the development of the novel, creates a hierarchy and excludes certain types of writing, such as the

seventeenth-century French romances, the nouvelle writers (with the sole exception of Lafayette), and in England, the popular women novelists of the early eighteenth century and the pre-Richardson epistolary novels. The excluded group I am concerned with here are women writers.

Watt has been one an important canon-maker because he, like other critics of the eighteenth-century novel, insists that realism is what defines the novel, and then specifies particular literary practices that constitute realism; writers can then easily be included in the realist tradition or dismissed from it according to his criteria. The general tendency in such criticism has been to use definitions of realism to exclude women writers; Watt, for example, does this both by labeling them "unrealistic" and by ignoring them.

The general position of criticism of the early novel is founded on "hindsight." Appropriating the term "realism" from the nineteenth century, Watt sees eighteenth-century fiction as a rehearsal or breeding ground for full-blown nineteenth-century fiction. It is precisely this after-the-fact imposition of a grid that causes Watt to exclude many types of writing that were important in the eighteenth-century. Watt's underlying premise is to take the realistic novel as it appears in the nineteenth century and assume that eighteenth-century fiction was struggling to reach that point of development. In hindsight, then, applying a

nineteenth-century definition of realism to eighteenth-century fiction, he creates a Darwinian hierarchy: he privileges those forms that he sees as important steps on the evolutionary ladder of realism, and denigrates those that he sees as dead ends, peripheral to this upward movement. The exclusionary effects of his application of realist standards derive from his imposition of a badly fitting nineteenth-century grid on an eighteenth-century context.

In Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel, Lennard Davis categorizes three types of "hindsight" approach to the novel, which he labels evolution, osmosis, and convergence (2-10). The evolutionary approach takes what the critic assumes to be the pinnacle of development and moves backward, looking for missing links, and for the elements in earlier fiction that appear in the later perfected form; any elements that were somehow discarded along the way are assumed to have been dropped for a reason -- they were maladapted, not necessary to realism, and are implicitly less worthy of study. The osmotic approach, in which category Davis would place Watt, sees the novel as a genre that grows to fill "a site predestined and cleared for it" (5). This approach is "osmotic" because it sees many currents of thought permeating and influencing narrative, without specifying exactly how they do it. Here Davis would point to Watt's arguments about John Locke's

philosophy, the rise of capitalism, and the English protestant background as sociological currents that Watt connects to the rise of the novel but whose links he never clearly explains. The third of Davis' categories is the convergence model, in which it is argued that the novel suddenly congealed out of the many different types of prose that pre-existed it. This approach does not explain why the particular form of the novel should have arisen out of this particular convergence of forms. Davis argues that all three approaches to the novel work backward, creating a myth of origins from a point of hindsight. The pattern superimposed on the development of the novel is derived from the high point of development the genre is thought to have reached in the nineteenth century.

Historians of the novel who take any of these retrospective approaches tend to reproduce two major categories of problems in their work. First, there are theoretical difficulties with the concept of realist language; Watt, for example, as we will see, argues that realist fiction uses special kinds of referential techniques that earlier fictional language does not. The definition of this realist linguistic technique is, however, more problematic than many literary historians admit. The second problem is that of exclusion: retrospective approaches exclude from consideration groups of writings that do not figure in the period that is taken as standard. In this

case, the standard is based on nineteenth-century male French writers, and although women writers were extremely important in the eighteenth century in both France and England, the retrospective history of the novel screens them out.

An analysis of Watt's argument shows how these problems arise. For Watt, literary realism as we now think of it is based in the individualist worldview held by philosophers such as Locke and Descartes: the view that "truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses" (12). Watt argues that the atmosphere of philosophical realism is analogous to the literary realism of the eighteenth century in that both the new philosophy and the novel genre question tradition, study particular experience from the point of view of the investigator, and question the correspondence between words and reality. (He marks this as the great intellectual paradigm shift that took place in the eighteenth century: the turn from the neoclassical emphasis on the universal to the modern emphasis on the particular and original.) For Watt, questioning tradition in the novel means abandoning the reliance on formal convention that is the main trait of earlier fiction; even a writer such as Chaucer, whose characters are idiosyncratic and detailed, in Watt's view belongs firmly to the tradition of convention and "typing" because he re-uses traditional plots, thus firmly embedding his characters in the universal. Watt

insists on individual experience as the novel's main characteristic: in Defoe's fiction, for example,

[Defoe's] total subordination of the plot to the pattern of the autobiographical memoir is as defiant an assertion of the primacy of individual experience in the novel as Descartes' cogito ergo sum was in philosophy. (15)

Watt sees Defoe's decision not to use what he calls a "traditional" plot as a mark of his intense realism; instead, he replaces tradition by an obsession with the character's own experience that creates a rambling plot whose only justification of its shape is the life of the character herself. The novel, then, is a genre that concentrates on the individual's particular experience, but that -- unlike neoclassical poetry, for example -- has no formal conventions for translating that experience into literature. Watt's definition of literary realism is based on his judgment of that translation process: the narrative techniques that, in his view, successfully represent personal experience are those that he then enshrines as the characteristics of realism.

Watt's two main characteristics of formal realism both follow from his initial insistence on particular experience: the use of proper names, and the treatment of time and space. The use of proper names for characters, says Watt, shows that characters are conceived of as "completely

individualised entities" rather than types (18). It is on these grounds that he summarily dismisses Delariviere Manley and Aphra Behn, since their characters' names "carried foreign, archaic or literary connotations which excluded any suggestion of real and contemporary life" (19); Fielding's Squire Allworthy and other such characters are, however, exempted for various reasons.

Watt also insists that realistic fiction treat time and space in such a way as to provide "a sense of personal identity subsisting through duration and yet being changed by the flow of experience" (24). Watt cites Richardson's "writing to the moment" -- in which the actual experience of reading almost matches the duration of the narrated events -- as adding "a new dimension to the representation of reality" (25). As a corollary to the treatment of time, Watt demands vividly detailed descriptions of the setting, and cites approvingly Allen Tate's argument that the purpose of the novel is "putting man wholly into his proper setting" (27).

The importance of Watt's critical influence is underscored by the use other critics make of his pronouncements on what constitutes "formal realism." In The Evolution of the French Novel, a study that performs for French literary history the service that The Rise of the Novel does for the English, English Showalter simply takes Watt's categories and modifies them: his revised criteria

for realism are names, chronology, geography, the narrator, and money. Since he takes the same retrospective approach as Watt, it is not surprising that Showalter's perspective leads him into exactly the same problems of exclusion and hierarchy. Lennard Davis cites Showalter as the most brutally and explicitly Darwinian of all the critics, ranking literary techniques as fit or unfit for survival in the brave new world of the novel (4).

Michael McKeon is Watt's most important successor for the history of the English novel. McKeon's initial approach is radically different from Watt's, in that he reads eighteenth-century novels in terms of specific political and social upheavals. Like Foucault, he sees the eighteenth century as a period of epistemic change that demands new fictional forms to represent it:

The social significance of the English novel at the time of its origins lies in its ability to mediate -- to represent as well as contain -- the revolutionary clash between status and class orientations and the attendant crisis of status inconsistency. The novel gives form to the fluidity of crisis by organizing it into a conflict of competing interpretations. (173)

McKeon's approach is dialectical, pitting what he calls "progressive ideology" against "conservative ideology," and examining the results in fiction of these struggles. McKeon specifically disavows the retrospective approach: he chastises critics for their rejection of the early fictional "experiments," and says that "only the blindness of

historical hindsight persuades us to seek, in the inevitably strange and shifting grounds of its origins, a relatively familiar and domesticated image of what we know the novel will become" (270). Yet the strength of the entrenched Darwinian retrospective approach is such that McKeon, despite this disavowal, barely mentions the "experimental" writers. In the section of his book where he gives extended critiques of particular novels, he discusses only Bunyan, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding -- the same tired roster that critics such as Watt had drawn up as the realist canon.

For Watt, the turn toward the individual, away from the universalizing tendency of neoclassical thought, is accompanied by a new way of thinking about language. Realism is marked, in his definition, by a concern for the correspondence between words and the things they describe; he contrasts the neoclassical concern with the beauty of language and the novelists' concern that words correspond with their objects. The prose of the realistic novel, he asserts, "restricts itself almost entirely to a descriptive and denotative use of language" (29). In both Defoe and Richardson, he says, "we feel that the writer's exclusive aim is to make the words bring his object home to us in all its concrete particularity, whatever the cost in repetition or parenthesis or verbosity" (29).

Particularly striking here is Watt's assertion that the

intention of the author ("his aim") is more important in what defines him as a realist than his technical success. Fielding's technical virtuosity is labeled "less authentic" than Defoe's or Richardson's shapelessness. This concentration on "authenticity" allows Watt to dismiss another important female writer, Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette, who, along with Choderlos de Laclos, is considered "too stylish to be authentic" (30). Lafayette and Laclos are seen as in complete opposition to Defoe and Richardson,

whose very diffuseness tends to act as a guarantee of the authenticity of their report, whose prose aims exclusively at what Locke defined as the proper purpose of language, "to convey the knowledge of things", and whose novels as a whole pretend to be no more than a transcription of real life ... (30).

Realism, says Watt, is a use of language that leaves no barrier between reality and its representation; any effort at "stylishness" erects a barrier between the two, because it acknowledges the mediating figure of the writer (the stylist). "Authenticity" is an effect produced by the text, an impression that the barrier between reality and representation does not exist.

The problem with Watt's description of this phenomenon is that he fails to acknowledge the illusory quality of this "authenticity." When he says that Defoe's and Richardson's "diffuseness tends to act as a guarantee of the authenticity

of their report," he blurs the distinction between reality and the representation of reality. What Defoe and Richardson produce is an illusion of authenticity, which they achieve in this case by means of the technique of "diffuseness." Watt's discussion lacks a close analysis of this use of language, as well as a definition of "diffuseness." He also concentrates on the "aims" of the writers rather than their effects: "we feel that the writer's exclusive aim..."; their "prose aims exclusively at" Although Watt claims in his study to be describing the technical conventions of formal realism, in practice he makes many assumptions about what these writers are trying to do rather than what can be seen in their work.

Given Watt's appropriation of a nineteenth-century framework, it is useful to turn to critics of nineteenth-century realism to examine more closely Watt's conception of "authenticity" and realist language. Roland Barthes, Sandy Petrey, and Christopher Prendergast have all analyzed realist language in relation to French realist fiction of the nineteenth century. The following section applies some of their insights to Watt's argument.

The Problem of Realist Language: Reference

For a closer analysis of how realist language actually works it is helpful to turn to Roland Barthes. In his

famous essay "L'Effet de réel" (1968) Barthes examines precisely the relationship between reality and representation that Watt's argument blurs.

Like Watt, Barthes sees a definitive break between neoclassical language and realism, which he labels respectively "vraisemblance discursif" and "vraisemblance référentiel" (86). By using "vraisemblance" to describe both kinds of description, he acknowledges the different functions of "plausible" representation. "Vraisemblance discursif" refers to classical "epideictic" writing, which, with judicial and political writing, was one of the three functions of rhetoric. The function of the epideictic was to describe something -- a hero, for example -- in beautiful terms. The plausibility of that beautiful description, however, rested not in the accuracy of its representation of the world but in the place it took in the work as a whole. The epideictic is "vraisemblant" if it fulfills the function it is supposed to, by producing the kind of description the reader expects in the place where he expects it. In fact, Barthes notes, a descriptive passage could diverge wildly from "reality" and still be "vraisemblant" in terms of the work as a whole.

"Vraisemblance référentiel," on the other hand, is a style of description that is plausible when measured against the real world, rather than against the work it is part of; this is the "vraisemblance" we associate with realism, and

it turns against the classical view of the world. In the realist worldview, the "reality" of a fact or a detail is a sufficient reason for its inclusion. The detail is no longer subordinated to the overall function of the work, as it was in the classical worldview. The aesthetic function lingers in that it restrains the amount of detail that can be given (since, theoretically, a description of any particular scene could be endless); but in realism the description of detail has a function that goes far beyond the role it was assigned in the classical epideictic.

The role of the detail is the problem that fascinates Barthes in "L'Effet de réel": how, from a structural point of view, does one explain the massing of insignificant detail that occurs in realist works? How does one explain the fact that an object's existence in "the real world" justifies its presence in a description? Some details add to our knowledge of character or situation, and so can be explained as serving a particular function. But what of the many details that tell us about nothing but themselves? Barthes cites as an example the description of Madame Aubain's living room in Flaubert's Un Coeur simple; the superfluous detail is the barometer above the piano, for which he can find no structural function. What such superfluous details achieve, says Barthes, is "l'effet de réel": they are words whose function is precisely to say "nous sommes le réel" (88). They work by making a claim

about the relation of realist language to reality:

Semiotiquement, le "détail concret" est constitué par la collusion directe d'un référent et d'un signifiant; le signifié est expulsé du signe, et avec lui, bien entendu la possibilité de développer une forme du signifié, c'est-à-dire, en fait, la structure narrative elle-même [...]. C'est là ce que l'on pourrait appeler l'illusion référentielle. (88)

Here Barthes dissects the "referential illusion" that Watt elides: in these superfluous details, written language (le signifiant) claims to refer not to concepts (le signifié), as neoclassical language did, but directly to the object in the real world (le référent). Realist writing wants to "faire de la notation la pure rencontre d'un objet et de son expression" (89). This writing, using the technique of the superfluous detail, claims to remove the realm of conceptualization that acts as a barrier between reality and representation. These details, says Barthes, in fact refer not to the "real" world but to "the category of the real"; they do not directly denote objects in the real world but rather signify the fact that the real world exists. This is what he calls "l'effet de réel."

In The Order of Mimesis, Christopher Prendergast comments on Barthes' use of Madame Aubain's barometer in his survey of theories of literary representation. He reads Barthes' essay in the context of the problem of reference: can fiction be said to refer to anything in the real world,

since the objects it refers to (other than verifiable proper names such as Paris or Napoleon) literally do not exist in that real world? Barthes' "L'Effet de réel" is a response to that problem: the barometer, as has been noted, appears to refer to a real world, but this appearance is in fact a trick to convince readers that reference is taking place.

Prendergast argues that Barthes' position in this essay is radical: the "referential illusion" Barthes mentioned is in fact a questioning of the possibility not only that fictional language can refer to the real world, but that any language can. The implication of this position is the disappearance of the referent, or rather, its existence as merely "a product of signification":

Signs acquire their meaning as the result of a process of semiotic interpretation, in which other signs act as interpretants to previous signs. The meaning of a sign is always, and can only be, explained by way of other signs. Thus, there is theoretically -- though not in practical daily life -- no end to the process of interpretation; signs can always be substituted for other signs, in an endless stream of interpretation or "unlimited semiosis", whereby all possibility of a final or settled relationship between language and the world is, as Derrida will put it, permanently deferred. (67)

Referents, the "brute facts" of the real world, are signs rather than facts. Prendergast extends the implications of this by noting that the "facts" of the real world are already organized into a meaningful sign system of social existence (which is the subject matter of narrative

fiction), and therefore the relation between fiction and the world is a confrontation not of word against thing but of two sign systems facing each other. Mimesis is, as we have already noted and as Prendergast now makes more specific, a question of representation: "The language of mimesis represents not the world but the world as already organised in discourse" (68).

To represent the world "is to produce not a semblance of the real world, but a 'semblance of true discourse' about the world," says Prendergast, quoting Moshe Ron (68). The definition of "true" is of course open to interpretation depending on the culture and time in which one finds oneself, and therefore can never be firmly anchored. It is precisely to avoid this chaos caused by the lack of a stable referent that realist writing, in Barthes' view, tries to re-create the referential illusion. We will see below, in Sandy Petrey's analysis, a more detailed explanation of how realist language creates the referential illusion while knowing all the time that reference is impossible. But first, Prendergast addresses certain problems with Barthes' argument that should be taken note of.

As Prendergast remarks, if Barthes is correct that reference between language and the real world is impossible, then the whole project of mimesis is also impossible; with so much at stake, it is imperative to understand how far one can take Barthes' argument. Prendergast starts his

interrogation with the question of the referential illusion: if, as Barthes says, Madame Aubain's barometer is a detail whose purpose is to say "Je suis le réel," and thereby to embody the referential illusion, does one posit a reader who really believes in that illusion, and believes that the sign for the barometer is in fact the barometer itself? Since such a reader is hard to imagine, the status of the referential illusion is left in question. Prendergast takes issue with Barthes' claim that "le signifié est expulsé du signe" in realist language (88); since no reader moves directly from word (signifiant) to referent, without passing by way of the concept (signifié), the referential illusion is a straw man, and Barthes, says Prendergast, is knocking down a claim that was never made.

Prendergast suggests alternative ways of looking at mimesis, approaches that allow some connection between language and the real world without positing a referential illusion. Wittgenstein, for example, in the Investigations, sees language in the context of social practice. As Prendergast summarizes Wittgenstein's position,

Language is tied to "use", to what has to be done both in and on the world; signification, action and objects intermesh in ways that the doctrine of pure or unlimited semiosis tends to disregard. [...] The "rules" for the production of meaning are given in the relations of practice that engage a community of speakers. (73)

As Prendergast reads Wittgenstein, language cannot be dissociated from its practice in the real world, precisely because language is only language when bounded by the rules of communication that obtain among real speakers in real contexts. In this view, it is not possible to cut the referent off from the sign in the way that Barthes suggested; for Wittgenstein, reference is a practical matter, concerning agreement between the speakers about what is referred to. Prendergast takes this notion further by adding Moshe Ron's definition of mimesis as "a form of language game, based on a set of agreements between a 'mimetic author' and a 'mimetic reader'" (74), a formulation that makes explicit what Wittgenstein implied.

Prendergast ends his survey of theories of reference with Paul Ricoeur's "productive reference," which he finds particularly useful in saving mimesis from the impossibility to which Barthes had consigned it. In this theory, mimesis is a "configuration": it takes the raw material of human actions, which he calls the "prefiguration," and shapes it into narrative. The prefiguration is a pre-narrative, already partly shaped, and it is the writer's understanding of the "rules" of that shaping that allow him or her to create meaning (or to react against traditional meaning) in writing. As in Wittgenstein, the sense of a community creating shared language rules is the basis: the theory

rests on a "community of meaning preliminary to entering into fiction", a socially shared "repertory" whose existence "implies having mastered the whole network of practical categories by means of which the semantics of action is distinguished from that of physical movement and even from psycho-physiological behaviour." (78)

This theory makes possible a relation between signifiant and referent by insisting on a match between what fiction does and the "real world" material it draws on. Ricoeur's theory does not directly address realist language, but it does suggest that the connection between fiction and the real world it represents is a negotiated settlement between a community of language speakers -- not the transparent window Watt (and Jean-Paul Sartre in Ou'est-ce que la littérature?) describes.

Another critique of realist language that can be enlisted against Watt is the attack on the assumption that "reality" is stable and representable. Watt defines realism as a use of language that presents itself as transparent, with no barrier between reality and its representation. Barthes questioned the possibility of the referential connection between language and reality, and saw the referent itself as a "product of signification." Prendergast complicated the issue of the relation between sign and referent by exploring the relationship that is representation. Now, in Realism and Revolution, Sandy Petrey investigates the referent as "construct." Petrey

makes the connection between the language of realism and the construction of reality in relation to nineteenth-century French novels and the French Revolution. Using J. L. Austin's speech-act theory as philosophical basis, Petrey argues that the "real world" referent that realist language tries to denote is unstable, and therefore realist fiction operates on a paradox: it acts as though denoting were possible, while at the same time knowing that denoting is an illusion. The unproblematic denotation that Watt assumes in his definition of realist writing depends on the stability of the referent, that is, on the existence of a real world that remains stable and is simply described by language. This is the assumption that Petrey attacks.

Petrey's position is that realist prose as we now know it -- defined as essentially paradoxical in its use of denotation -- was invented after the French Revolution, precisely because certain specific acts of language and their results called into question the stability of the referent. The particular acts he refers to are acts of naming that simultaneously create and denote the referent; or, to put it in J. L. Austin's terms, speech acts in which the performative and constative functions are collapsed into one (a collapse that Austin himself discussed after he had distinguished between the two functions). Petrey's exemplary instance is the Third Estate (the bourgeois delegation) of the Estates General naming itself as the

National Assembly in 1789: the very act of renaming, and the name the former Third Estate chose for itself, created a new political situation in which power was transferred from the king to the National Assembly. This is Austin's performative language: the National Assembly created itself by an act of language, just as "I now pronounce you husband and wife" creates a marriage by an act of language. The constative function plays its equally crucial and simultaneous part by affirming the institution just created.

The distinction between performative and constative collapses because of the extralinguistic situation: in this case, the physical intervention of crowds of people, and their continuing political affirmation of the National Assembly. As Petrey sees it, Austin's contribution to the theory of realistic language is his understanding that an act of language is never simply an act of language, but depends for its results on the conditions in the real world. Both performative and constative speech depend on this extralinguistic connection: the performative aspect of the National Assembly's renaming itself depends on the populace supporting the new Assembly, and accepting its new entity as authoritative; the constative description of the new National Assembly ("this is the National Assembly") depends on exactly the same extralinguistic acceptance. Even in less dramatic circumstances than the French Revolution, performative and constative speech depend on social

circumstances: to pronounce two people husband and wife, or to describe them as married, means to accept the social institution of marriage without which those words would be meaningless.

In this example, the National Assembly is the referent in the real world: yet it did not exist before the act of language that assumed its existence. Its existence was confirmed by the particular conditions in the real world that accepted its existence (as they may not have under other circumstances). The very fact that this can happen means that the referent is not a stable element: there can be no simple equation between the referent and the language that refers to it if the language itself can change the referent. Denotation can only happen if everyone agrees on the nature and existence of the referent, and therefore denotation changes according to the particular conditions obtaining in a specific social circumstance.

What are the consequences of this for realist language? Petrey argues that the nature of realist fiction is to take the position of "simultaneous denial and affirmation of the referent's reality" (5); realism represents the referent "as a reality produced by communal agreement to act as if denotation were feasible" (6). "In realist fiction, the referent as classically defined is absent while the authority of the referent as classically extolled is omnipresent" (7). Realist fiction, one might say, operates

in bad faith: it knows denotation is not possible, and yet proceeds as if it were.

Realist fiction, in Petrey's view, creates the world at the same time as it describes it. The success of the creation/ description depends not only on the skill of the writer but also on the willingness of the readers to affirm it. Once again, this is a theory that denies the possibility of transparency between sign and referent and insists instead on representation as a "contract" or negotiated settlement between parties. The various approaches I have reviewed here emphasize different aspects of that settlement, and do not always agree, but the range of responses shows clearly why Watt's description of realist language cannot be accepted at face value.

The Problem of Exclusion

The second problem identified in the definitions of realism discussed above is their exclusionary effect. Watt, Showalter, and McKeon do not take account of women writers, despite their importance to eighteenth-century readers, nor of any "experimental" types of fiction that were not perceived as leading to the kind of realism seen in the nineteenth century. The theories of nineteenth-century realist representation surveyed above do not in themselves

differentiate between particular types of writing, or use gender as a criterion for exclusion. However, Barthes, Prendergast, and Petrey use only male writers as examples and do not discuss the results their theories would have if used on women's writing. In the novel histories of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then, women writers are marginalized.

Imposing a nineteenth-century grid on the eighteenth century leads critics to exclude types of writing that do not appear to contribute to the development of nineteenth-century realism. Watt's definition of "formal realism," taken up by Showalter for the French novel, is a tool for ranking all eighteenth-century fiction according to this standard. We have already seen a few instances, earlier in this chapter, in which Watt applied his criteria of realism specifically to exclude women writers: Delariviere Manley and Aphra Behn have characters whose "names carried foreign, archaic or literary connotations which excluded any suggestion of real and contemporary life" (19); and Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette was "too stylish to be authentic" (30). These are almost the only specific references Watt makes to women writers in the entire book: his main tool for excluding them is to ignore them, as Showalter and McKeon do also.

It is my contention that the approach exemplified by Watt, Showalter, McKeon, and others distorts the history of

realism and of the early novel. Imposing the nineteenth-century grid blinds these critics to the variety of prose and the experimentation that was in fact going on in both England and France during this period. The antidote to this exclusionary approach is to abandon these critics' hierarchization and attempt instead to read early novels in context. My object of study here is women's fiction because, as I will argue below, the way the novel has been conceived as a genre is intimately bound up with gender; exploring the exclusion of women from the novel tradition is therefore vital for understanding how that tradition has been shaped and how the genre has been defined with gender as a deciding factor.

Through close reading of women's fiction, I will demonstrate a new frame of reading for these works and a new way of thinking about realism. The term "realism" has up to now been used as if it were inclusive, as if it contained all possible permutations of realist writing. I introduce the term "female realism" below as a way both to discuss an excluded area of literature and as a way of breaking open the closed circle of "realism." Once a demonstration of "female realism" shows that women's writing is also realist, the term "realism" will be exploded: by showing that "realism" is not inclusive, "female realism" calls into question the use and implications of the term.

A Social Approach to Realism

I have identified the two main problems of the historical approach to realism as difficulties with the theory of linguistic reference and the exclusionary effects of the application of that theory. My project in this study is specifically to reintegrate women writers into the literary tradition of the eighteenth century. That reintegration -- defined, as I will elaborate below, in the context of "female realism" -- should be understood in the larger context of a social approach to realism. By this I mean a discussion of realism that takes into account the conditions under which literature is produced.

There have been two important theories of nineteenth-century realism that do this; those of Auerbach and Georg Lukacs. Auerbach, in Mimesis, sees the realism of Stendhal as a reaction to circumstance, particularly to the great upheaval of the Revolution. In the aftermath of the Revolution, Auerbach writes,

He who would account to himself for his real life and his place in human society is obliged to do so upon a far wider practical foundation and in a far larger context than before, and to be continually conscious that the social base upon which he lives is not constant for a moment but is perpetually changing through convulsions of the most various kinds. (459)

Later, Auerbach specifies that Stendhal's realism consists

in his resistance to his contemporary circumstances (481). The realist writer does not only describe his or her surroundings but reacts against them, interacts with them. A social approach to realism takes into account the conditions of production of a specific text.

Georg Lukacs provides another important conception of the novel as social realism. In his Studies in European Realism Lukacs, like Auerbach, propounds the idea of the novelist as intimately connected to contemporary ideology. Discussing Balzac and Stendhal, whom he regards as consummate realists, Lukacs argues that "for both of them realism is a search for that deeper essence of reality that is hidden under the surface" (83-84). No matter that Balzac and Stendhal, in this case, do not agree on what that essence is; the crucial point is that they are actively and subjectively involved in "the adequate presentation of the complete human personality," even when to do so means to go against the current of accepted literary norms (7).

Within the broad concept of social realism, I want to examine the small area of what I am calling "female realism." My definition of female realism is connected to the idea of resistance that Auerbach saw as crucial in the novelist.

I use "realism," "female realism," and "realist writing" to refer to a particular process of representing the world in fiction that could be loosely defined as

follows: realism is a literary convention that is opposed to neoclassicism, and part of its convention is a concern with the individual rather than the universal. The result of that concern is fiction that describes ordinary lives rather than the heroic, and does so in such a manner as to make those lives recognizable to the readers. I will not lay out the manner of that description: I am more concerned with its effect, which can be achieved by a number of different techniques. "Effect," of course, is a term that needs more explanation; effect on whom, contemporaries or later critics? Watt appoints himself the judge of effect from his position of hindsight; I will, on the contrary, take into account the effects of a piece of fiction as judged by its contemporaries, as far as that can be ascertained -- by popularity, for example, and from the context of other works of literature.

My understanding of the realist impulse differs from Watt's and from other critics' in its concept of the role language plays in realist representation. Although the framework of nineteenth-century realism cannot be applied to the eighteenth century, some of the work done on realist language in a nineteenth-century context can certainly prove helpful. Most important in my definition of female realism will be the idea of language as "social" rather than absolute; that is, language as operating in a particular context, a web of conventions defined by elements of public

opinion that can and do change. The crucial "social" element in a discussion of women writers is the attitude toward female sexuality prevalent during the period, and the effect this had on women and their writing.

Female Realism

To argue that the social circumstance surrounding women's writing are theoretically necessary to understanding that writing, it has to be demonstrated that representational language is affected by social circumstances. Watt was able to claim his definition of realism as an absolute standard by describing realist language as transparent and the world it describes as unproblematically stable; Barthes, Prendergast, and Petrey suggest that realist representation is a collaborative agreement between reader and writer, as two participants in a language whose meaning is always negotiated, not absolute. The referent does not simply exist in the real world, as Watt claims; nonetheless, language users can agree to accept something as existing or a meaning as fixed. This agreed limit to "unlimited semiosis" means that one can act as though a stable real world is there to refer to. This view of language, elaborated above, allows one to posit a realist language that can work, without being forced into Watt's

absolutism. Because realist language does not simply exist by itself, but is always connected to the agreement that allows it to exist, the content of "realism" cannot be fixed. It is not simply a technique that can be recognized in writing of any period whatsoever: it is specific to a context.

However, as Prendergast points out, the agreement between language users can be problematic: "what everyone agrees on" can in certain circumstances become an oppressive ideology, restricting "the discourse of representation" (74). "What everyone agrees on" may in fact reflect the language use of a more powerful group, to the detriment of other groups.

Taking those two points -- realist language is specific to a context; the rules of representation can be oppressive and restrictive -- we can begin to formulate a concept of "female realism." In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the social consensus ("what everyone agrees on," the agreement that makes representation possible) is affected by gender; therefore the consensus on what constitutes realist representation is affected by the period's attitudes about gender. We should also say that since realist language is specific to a context, what constitutes realist representation for that period may not obtain in a later or earlier period.

"Female realism" refers as a general term to a

resistance among certain eighteenth-century writers to the conventional understanding of what women were and should be. It consists of a series of strategies that enable women to represent their lives in fiction, even when that representation challenges the norms of feminine behavior. In practice, the term covers three specific areas: the concrete difficulties of female authorship, the content of female realist fiction, and the narrative techniques used in that fiction.

Difficulties of Female Authorship: In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for a woman to write was already a challenge to the prevailing ideology of womanhood. Women did not have the tools to write in other genres because they were not educated. This lack of education made them turn to the least regulated (because newest) genre, the novel. Walter J. Ong has pointed to "the massive effect women's and tradespeople's nonacademic literacy had in the development of literary styles and genres (most notably the novel)," and stresses the importance of women's lack of training in Latin ("Comment" 701).

When women did write, they could expect to be attacked for their presumption in challenging the assumption of their silence. For example, Eliza Haywood achieved enormous popularity with her first novel, Love in Excess (1719), and

with her later works. In the lives of female authors, the double standard operated by associating the act of a woman writing with immorality: a dramatic example of this is Alexander Pope's attack on Haywood in The Dunciad. Pope depicted Haywood as a whore:

Two babes of love close clinging to her waste;
 Fair as before her works she stands confess'd,
 In flower'd brocade by bounteous Kirkall dress'd,
 Pearls on her neck, and roses in her hair,
 And her fore-buttocks to the navel bare.
 (Dunciad II: 150-154, 1728 ed. with variation)

She is the willing prize to be awarded after a urinating contest between two unprincipled male booksellers. After this attack, whether by choice or not, Haywood wrote almost nothing for ten years; when she returned to writing, it was under a pseudonym.

A variation on this attack was to claim that the woman writer did not produce what she signed her name to. Building directly on Pope's Dunciad, Charles Palissot wrote his Dunciade in 1771 and attacked, among other female novelists, Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni:

Stupidité ne pense point ainsi.
 Elle a sans cesse, autour de sa personne,
 Un bataillon qu'elle même a choisi.
 [...]
 Elle y viendra cette Rubiconi,
 Qui n'a point fait le Marquis de Cressy,
 Qui n'a point fait les Lettres de Fanny
 Qui n'a point fait Juliette Catesby.
 (Dunciade, Chant Troisième, 40-51)

After advising women not to enter the male world of learning, he suggests that Riccoboni ("Rubiconi") did not write her first three novels. In the context of such attacks, the first technique of female realism is to write at all. Since these attacks are specifically leveled because of the writer's sex, it is an act of resistance for a woman to represent women's lives in fiction.

Content: The content of female realist fiction is a challenge to the restrictions placed on women's lives. As we shall see in the following chapters, the most important element of this is the attack on marriage. In her study of French seventeenth-century women writers, Joan DeJean has noted that writing about love is never an "innocent gesture" (Tender Geographies xviii): to question and examine how women make or are forced to make marriage choices is to question the organization of the state. In this sense, "female authorship was a political act: these novels are never solely about love, but always stress the political and social implication of affective choices" (Tender Geographies xviii). The women's writing I discuss in this study takes up the same important challenge in the eighteenth century. Female realist writing discusses the sexual double standard; it takes as its subject the effects -- emotional, financial, and legal -- on women of contemporary marriage practices. Female realism explores sexuality and its expression. It

also describes other areas of women's lives: friendship, education, and work.

Every novel considered in this study describes the problems of marriage, or offers a resistance to its constraints: how much freedom the woman is allowed in her choice of a partner; the infidelities of husbands and the effects these cause; reciprocal female infidelities and how they are judged differently from men's; the problems caused by a woman's expression of sexual desire. Particular novels describe very specific areas of marriage and marital law; for example, Tencin's Les Malheurs de l'amour discusses the legal problems a woman could undergo because of her ambiguous status as an unmarried orphan, and how this affects her choice of a marriage partner. Behn's Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister touches on the legal problems an unmarried daughter could face if her father insisted on her return home. Haywood's The British Recluse depicts female friendship as a refuge from male company; Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne offers a similar rejection of marriage, but in this case the heroine chooses to live alone rather than with a friend.

If this account of female realist subject matter seems innocuous today, a brief glance at the contemporary critical reaction shows that it was perceived as threatening and dangerous. An attack on the institution of marriage was an attack on society, as the following comment from Abbé

Jacquín's 1755 Entretien sur les romans shows:

[Les romans] nous apprennent à mépriser les pratiques les mieux établies de la Religion, et les règles les plus respectables de la société, en insinuant que l'essence du mariage ne consiste pas dans une vaine cérémonie, mais dans le don du coeur et dans les sentiments qui l'accompagnent.²

The female realist exploration of marriage is the most significant and broad-ranging area of its representation of women's lives.

Narrative Techniques: The particular stylistic techniques of female realism develop as a response to the difficulties of describing aspects of women's lives that were considered unrepresentable by the prevailing conception of womanhood. The most important group of techniques concern the representation of woman as a subject rather than as an object. This strategy is an attempt to change the agreement of the community of language users. In Petrey's terms, female realists are, by stating something in language, making that thing exist. For example, in Chapter 2 I describe Aphra Behn's and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's attempts to create a female sexual subject, an attempt that necessarily resists the confinement of women in the object position. Female realism is an attempt to depict the reality of women's lives; in depicting it, it also has to

find the language for it, language for which there is no model in earlier fiction.

Female realism often attempts to represent something that, in the eyes of the world, does not exist: for example, a female subject. Sometimes, resistance moves into the space beyond language. As DeJean has pointed out,

[T]he creation of the modern novel originates in a desire to be outside representation, in the no man's land outside of fiction into which the *Princesse de Clèves* finally chooses to disappear. ("No Man's Land" 187)

In the chapters that follow, a special tension will become apparent between women writers' attempts to create their reality in language and their desire to allow that reality to remain beyond representation. In Chapter 2, for example, Fanni Butlerd is important for what Fanni does not say as well as what she does; the novel marks the limits of female realist representation as it tries to expand them. Like La Princesse de Clèves, Haywood's British Recluse in Chapter 4 ends with a rejection of the male world and a retreat into female solitude. Resisting the male description of the female world sometimes leave no language; in these cases, it is necessary to read the techniques of resistance between the lines.

Female realism is also manifested in a structural principle rather than a stylistic or linguistic technique.

Chapter 4 describes the plot structures of female realist novels that do not follow the Freudian male-defined oedipal dramatic structures outlined by critics such as Peter Brooks; rather, feminist Freudian critics such as Marianne Hirsch have posited as narrative models female-defined pre-oedipal relationships, which give women's novels dramatically different closures and patterns of repetition. Hirsch's model, while remaining within the Freudian orbit, suggests one way of reading novels that reject the marriage plot.

Rejection of marriage is in all cases a major sign of the resistance to marriage that I have defined as the essential ingredient of female realism. Rejecting marriage also necessarily involves spurning traditional closure. In Chapter 4 I note that women's texts, avoiding this closure, often develop patterns of doubling in its place. Rather than leading in a single plotline toward the climax of marriage, the novels I discuss tend to take a similar scenario and repeat it several times with different characters, with variations. These doublings have the effect of commenting on the traditional plot while sidestepping it: it is as if various characters were rehearsing the possibilities of this plot before the narrator discards it, forcing the reader to accept the inconclusive refusal rather than the neatly wrapped ending.

Is "female realism" the same as feminist writing? Can it only be used to speak of the writings of biological women? Nancy K. Miller has given a definition of feminist writing as a writing that

articulates as and in a discourse a self-consciousness about woman's identity. [...] Second, feminist writing makes a claim for the heroine's singularity by staging the difficulty of her relation as a woman in fiction to Woman. Third, it contests the available plots of female development or Bildung and embodies dissent from the dominant tradition in a certain number of recurrent narrative gestures [...]. Finally, through the insistence on singularity, feminist writing figures the existence of other subjective economies, other styles of identity. ("Writing Feminist Criticism" 8)

Certain aspects of this definition are similar to the aims of female realism, which also challenges woman's relation to Woman and contests available plot structures. The purposes of Miller's definition, however, are not the same as mine. I use "female realism" not so much to comment on the writings of any particular woman writer but as a way of challenging the literary concept of realism. "Female realism" concerns a literary hierarchy. However, in Chapter 5 we will see that female realism and feminist writing converge in a particular subgenre: feminist satire. When women practice satire in the eighteenth century, it becomes necessary for them not merely to represent women's experience in fiction through content and narrative style, but also to write from a specifically feminist standpoint,

imagining a potential feminist community as a position from which to attack the misogyny of their contemporary society.

Female realist writers are almost always also feminist writers, according to Miller's definition. There is, however, no essential biological requirement that they be women: any male writer could also challenge the concepts of femininity in fiction.

The term "female realism" is a theoretical counterpoint to Watt's "formal realism." Watt extrapolates techniques, distills them, and then formulates them into a set of standards that can be applied to any work, thereby dismissing entirely the importance of context. By "context," I mean what Jane Tompkins, in Sensational Designs, has described as the socio-literary landscape surrounding any work. Tompkins, discussing the nineteenth-century American literary canon, argues convincingly that every generation looks for and values different elements in the literature it admires. Using as illustration Nathaniel Hawthorne and the changing reception of his works over the years, Tompkins extends her argument to show that the context in which we as contemporary readers read any particular work also helps to determine our understanding and interpretation not only of Hawthorne (or any other specific text) but also of the other writers of his period, since they are all part of the landscape (Tompkins 186-201). "[G]reat literature does not exert its influence over and

against time," states Tompkins, "but changes with the changing currents of social and political life" (192).

Watt's rejection of context is the symbol of what is wrong with current discussions of eighteenth-century women's writing. By cutting fiction -- especially women's fiction -- off from its links with the life it represents, all realistic fiction is presented in a distorted frame. The concept of "female realism" is a tool, a method for deciphering the effects ideology has wrought in women's fiction, and a way of describing women writers' resistance to their context. Female realism is a series of strategies of resistance, and as such cannot be distilled as Watt has done with his categories of realism, to be applied to any work in any time. Female realism operates against prevailing ideology, and changes its techniques in particular cases. Therefore, female realist works have to be read in the socio-literary context Tompkins describes -- as should all literary works.

That is why "female realism" helps to break open the tradition of eighteenth-century writing, which has been seen as wholly male; theories of realism have been based only on men's fiction, and only men's fiction is considered part of the tradition. In the chapters that follow, I will show the ways in which some women's writing clashed with contemporary gender ideology during this period, specifically over the question of what was agreed to be representable. Because of

this, much of the women's writing under discussion has had, and continues to have, difficulty in being classified as realistic. Since realism has been used as a way to create a hierarchy that has marginalized women writers, the term "female realism" attacks directly at the point of exclusion. It forces us to rethink the term "realism" and the canon that has been created in its name.

Gender and Representation

Does women's literature [...] fit a given construct?
If not, perhaps it is the construct that is partial and
distorted, not the literature that is defective.

-- Susan Sniader Lanser and Evelyn Torton Beck,
"[Why] Are There No Great Women Critics?"

A first step in the rethinking of women's writing is to introduce excluded writers into the canon. The second step then results: reinserting women into any given field -- here, for instance, as writers of novels in early modern Europe -- does not simply broaden that field, but changes its layout. Once women writers are studied seriously, and put back into their historical context, it is necessary to analyze the means by which they were excluded in the first place. Immediately, it becomes clear that the exclusion of women has been not a by-product but an integral part of literary criticism.

Feminists have begun to use the question of gender as a radical analytic tool whose implications change the entire framework of discussion. Thus one moves logically from the study of women writers as a group, treated separately from other kinds of writers, to an analysis of the role of gender in canon formation and literary criticism. To use gender as an analytic tool in literary studies means to question the terms of literary criticism, the social values on which it

bases its aesthetic judgments, and the purpose of its hierarchies. A criticism that takes women writers seriously will not look anything like the one that exists now.

Theories of gender are theories of representation. The specific problems of women writers during the period discussed in this study are problems of representation: self-representation of the writer herself, and representation of the female subject in the work.

Gender as an analytic tool is a new concept. In the last twenty years or so it has been used by feminists as a descriptive label: as such, it refers to the social construction of identity, in which attributes and activities are assigned to individuals according to their biological sex. Those attributes have different values and meanings at various periods and in various societies, but the "masculine" and "feminine" traits created by gender are seen as in relation and in opposition to each other. In this sense, gender can be seen as historical and contextual: it describes the actual lives of women in particular times and places. However, this does not tell us how gender works as a principle of construction, or what its far-ranging effects are. Therefore, Teresa de Lauretis notes, the notion of gender as descriptive has become limiting, and can even reproduce the categories of gender rather than deconstructing them ("Technologies" 1). To be useful as an analytic tool, gender has to be separated from its

dependence on the idea of biological sexual difference; feminists such as de Lauretis and Joan Wallach Scott have used crucial ideas from Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan to move beyond sexual difference. De Lauretis, for example, thinks of gender in the way that Michel Foucault called sexuality "a technology of sex": for Foucault, sexuality in the modern world has been invented by the regulations that supposedly inhibit it; for de Lauretis, gender is "the product of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life" ("Technologies" 2). De Lauretis' concept goes beyond Foucault's, however, because, unlike Foucault's limited concept of sexuality, gender takes account of the ways in which sexuality is inscribed differently on the bodies of men and women.

The new feminist theories of gender disrupt the existing categories because they see female subjectivity (the application of the ideology of gender) as a relation. As in an equation, changing one term of the equation changes the balance of the whole:

Gender is the representation of a relation, or, [...] gender constructs a relation between one entity and other entities, which are previously constituted as a class, and that relation is one of belonging [...]. (De Lauretis 4)

Questioning the constitution of one of those entities changes the relationship between all of them. De Lauretis also notes the suggestion of power and vested interest in this formulation: "gender constructs a relationship" -- it is active, and serving someone's purpose.

Joan Wallach Scott, a historian of modern Europe, has also moved beyond gender as description, and developed a theory of gender as a category of analysis. Her definition of gender, like de Lauretis', is as a complex interaction based on power relationships, an

integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power (42).

This definition, again, goes beyond Lacanian and Foucauldian theory, although it builds on their insights. For example, Scott recognizes the Lacanian emphasis on language as symbolic order: "Without meaning, there is no experience; without processes of signification, there is no meaning" (38). For Lacan, to experience the world as a subject, one has to have been admitted to the symbolic order of language, which for Lacan is masculine, the law of the father. But Scott sees Lacan as relying for his theory of signification on an immutable pairing: woman versus man, as if "man" and "woman" were concepts that remain unchanged in every

specific historical context. Lacan's "law of the father" is a given in his theory, as if this too would have the same meaning and power in every time and place. Scott takes from Lacan an understanding of the ways in which language defines experience; she moves beyond him in demanding that the gendering of signification be analyzed. "Masculine" and "feminine," she argues, are not immutable concepts but specific constructs that change in various contexts. Scott also borrows from Foucault the concept of power operating in many different fields; like power, gender is not centralized but operates in many areas, often unrecognized. In this way, gender and power are connected: Scott later restates her second proposition by saying that "gender is a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated" (44-45). Once again, it is clear that to change the operation of gender is to change the balance of power.

If gender is an articulation of power, then it is not a limited problem confined to the so-called private areas of marriage and family relations. Rather, argues Scott, it is a basic component of meaning:

conceptual languages employ differentiation to establish meaning and [...] sexual difference is a primary way of signifying differentiation. Gender, then, provides a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction. (45-46)

To understand the way gender works means understanding the way meaning is constructed. Thus to use gender as an analytic tool in any field -- as here, the field of literary criticism of the early novel -- is rethink that field.

Theories of gender are theories of representation. The specific problems of women writers during the period discussed in this study are problems of representation: self-representation of the writer herself, and representation of the female subject in the work. The operation of gender in the material at hand makes it difficult for either of those tasks to be achieved. De Lauretis argues that biological sex may be a given, but gender (with its accompanying, value-laden differences) is certainly a representation. Gender represents individuals as male or female, with all the traits attached to those labels. Individuals then represent themselves as either male or female, so that the label becomes a part of their self-representation. As de Lauretis notes, there is a difference between male representation and female representation: theorists of subjectivity have tended to be male, and have produced theories of the subject in which women are represented only as Woman, and only in relation to men. Thus Freud, Lacan, Foucault, and Althusser have produced a representation of Woman that cannot possibly represent a "real" woman. And because of this, says de Lauretis, women slip in and out of gender, as Althusser

suggested one could be inside or outside ideology:

[T]he discrepancy, the tension, and the constant slippage between Woman as representation, as the object and the very condition of representation, and, on the other hand, women as historical beings, subjects of "real relations," are motivated and sustained by a logical contradiction in our culture and an irreconcilable one: women are both inside and outside gender, at once within and without representation. (10)

Women constantly cross back and forth between these two areas, their experiences of their real lives and the representation of them created by the culture. In the chapters that follow we will see some of the consequences created in fiction by this double consciousness. For de Lauretis, the solution to this problem of representation is a rethinking of Woman in terms only of women -- that is, not in relation to men, to male subjectivity and male sexuality.

The construction of gender is a continuous process, going on today in all the areas de Lauretis identifies as "technologies of gender" -- cinema, theory, even feminism. To construct gender differently, and to represent woman differently, would entail stepping outside heterosexuality, insofar as heterosexuality means defining one sex by its relation to the other. As de Lauretis says, "in the phallic order of patriarchal culture and in its theory, woman is unrepresentable except as representation" (20). To make woman representable, argues de Lauretis, one must discuss

Woman in terms of other women.

The question then arises: if a historical woman's complex experience conflicts with her culture's representation of Woman, what happens to her writing when she attempts to depict women? This study is an attempt to explore that problem in specific texts.

Gender and the Novel

Le roman est une chose femelle. ... Depuis les premières tentatives pour formuler une poétique du récit de fiction en prose, on conçoit le roman, et on en parle, en ayant à l'esprit un modèle féminin. Personne n'a déclaré à haute voix qu'un genre littéraire peut être stéréotypé selon le rôle sexuel qu'il joue, que le roman se comporte comme une femme soit-disant "typique."

-- Michael Danahy, "Le Roman est-il chose femelle?"

All theories of the novel posit a special connection between women and the novel. This has been the case with no other genre. Tragedy, epic, comedy, poetry were all conceived of as genres written by men, and were practiced by men, often for male audiences, until the recent past. The occasional exceptional women who managed to forge a literary presence did not alter the basic maleness of literature. With the novel, however, everything changed. Women wrote novels, women read novels, and critics theorized about the effects that novels would have on women. Ideas about what women are have therefore pervaded all levels of discourse about the novel. Everything that has been said about the novel, from the late seventeenth century up to the present day, has been affected by gender.

There is a series of critical commonplaces about the novel that reflect this connection between gender and genre;

commonplaces that reveal how critics' thoughts about women have been projected onto the novel. The following is a sketch of those commonplaces.

The audience for the novel has always been assumed to be women. Ian Watt, in his sociological survey of readers and writers, partially attributes the appearance of the new genre to the increase of middle-class women readers; in the eighteenth century, he claims, literature became a "primarily feminine pursuit" (43). Joan DeJean has demonstrated the importance of aristocratic women's salons in seventeenth-century France, as scenes not only of literary production but of commentary and reading. English Showalter, while arguing that the kind of sociology Watt practiced for England is impossible to reproduce for France, repeats the common wisdom of the time when he quotes the Marquis D'Argens' comment on novel readers as women and fops:

Que peut-on penser dans les pays étrangers lorsqu'on voit la plupart des ouvrages qui paraissent aujourd'hui? Ce ne sont que des histoires galantes, dont les meilleures ne sont tout au plus utiles que pour amuser quelques petits maîtres et quelques femmelettes. (70-71)

The novel is thought of as a genre without rules, that even an uneducated person can write: this associates it with women. In England, the first major male novelists were, with the exception of Henry Fielding, dissenters and bourgeois

such as Richardson and Defoe; they did not have the typical upper-class university education that relied strongly on the classics, an education that women were denied. As Eliza Haywood said,

But as I am a Woman, and consequently depriv'd of those Advantages of Education which the other Sex enjoy, I cannot so far flatter my Desires, as to imagine it in my Power to soar to any Subject higher than that which Nature is not negligent to teach us.³

Since the novel did not follow any of the recognized rules for the other genres, handed down through centuries (consider, for example, the history of the doctrine of the three unities, with its roots in Greek theory and its renewal in the Renaissance and neoclassical periods), it was not recognized as having any technique at all. One of the major subgenres is the epistolary novel, which has been even more closely identified with women because letters were the only pieces of writing that women regularly produced.⁴ A letter could be artful, but was not seen as art; a collection of letters was therefore seen as something that a woman could produce, but was not taken seriously as a genre. The novel is perceived as lightweight in comparison to the other genres because of its content; it is not considered to deal with serious matters, as for example history does. It is thought to concern only the everyday, and therefore to require no special experience or understanding. The novel

is seen as a genre written by, for, and about women. Yet twentieth-century histories of the early novel use only male novelists as the standards and examples; women, despite being seen as the producers and consumers of the genre, are erased from its history.

Critical discourse about the novel claims to be objective. However, the following brief survey shows that in all its aspects, novel criticism is inextricably based on gender. I have grouped the criticisms into categories that reflect areas of concern to critics and novelists in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: terminology, moralism, vraisemblance, and content. The discussion of these aspects demonstrates the commonplaces sketched briefly here: how gender works as an essential component in all criticism of the novel.

Terminology:

Novel, Romance, History / Roman, Nouvelle, Histoire

The history of the English terms "novel", "romance," and "history," and the French terms "roman," "nouvelle," and "histoire" is a confusing one. The terms coexisted, and were often used interchangeably to describe any fiction. In hindsight, it is easy for critics to wonder at the confusion; in the eighteenth century, it was difficult for

contemporary readers and critics to separate out the novel as a new genre, and therefore to describe it in clear terms. Partly this had to do with the tradition of criticism: steeped in neoclassical thinking, critics in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century were used to viewing fiction in the existing categories described by Aristotle. A genre that had not received the imprimatur of the Ancients would have difficulty in establishing itself. Critics on both sides of the Channel tried to see the novel not as new but as an extension of an already existing genre: thus Fielding's definition of his work as a "comic epic in prose," for example (in the preface to Joseph Andrews). The other reason for critics' difficulty in recognizing and classifying the novel is, as Lennard Davis has argued, that from a Foucauldian point of view the classifications we take for granted today simply did not exist yet: where twentieth-century readers distinguish clearly between fact and fiction, for example, those boundaries did not function in the same way in the late seventeenth century (Factual Fictions, 8). "Histoire" and "history" could refer to both what we now think of as a history and what we now call a novel.

The generic terminology is, then, confused during the period when what we now recognize as the novel was developing. What interests me here is not the convoluted detail of that confusion, but the way in which certain terms

were connected to women's writing.⁵

The main difference between the English tradition and the French is, as English Showalter notes, that English criticism tends to use the terms "novel" and "romance" as historical categories whereas French criticism uses them as critical terms. In England, novel and romance define two historical periods in literature, separated by time, marking a break that occurred around 1700. In France, the same break is marked, but with a different use of terminology, and without the sense that the two types of writing are completely opposite to each other and cannot coexist.

French Terminology

In the French tradition, the term "roman" covers both "novel" and "romance," reflecting the fact that critics do not see the two as completely different types of writing. However, this does not mean that French critics did not distinguish between genres; on the contrary, France saw the same major change in fiction around 1700 that was occurring in England, and the French tradition distinguishes sharply between romance writing and realist writing. Showalter defines the "romance" and "novel" tendencies thus: "The novel tends to be believable, to deal with ordinary people in familiar settings, to be contemporary or nearly so, to show how things really are. The romance tends to appeal to the imagination, to deal with archetypal or allegorical or

idealized characters, to show them in remote settings, to show how things might be" (4). He notes, however, that these attitudes are not far apart and can easily overlap.

The term "roman" in the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century was used to designate most types of prose fiction, from Catherine Bédacier's Anecdotes galans to Marivaux's first work, Les Aventures de *** ou les Effets surprenans de la sympathie, from Scudéry's Clélie to Lafayette's La Princesse de Clèves (Showalter 13-14). Showalter's survey of titles and prefaces shows that writers and editors described as "romans" types of fiction for which we would now use other names. Sometimes writers distinguish between "old" romans and "new" romans (or "petits romans"), meaning the old heroic romances that reigned up to about 1660, and the new shorter fiction such as La Princesse de Clèves.⁶

A new term arose to describe the shorter "new" roman, distinguishing it from the heroic romances: nouvelle. Titles were so vague (in modern critical terms) in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century that the same work could be thought of as an histoire, an amour, and a nouvelle: Showalter cites the anonymous Histoire des pensées, meslée de petits jeux, nouvelle galante (1671), later reissued as Histoire des pensées, ou les amours de Marc-Antoine (1673).

A. Kibedi Varga argues that "roman"/"nouvelle" is in

fact the French terminology change corresponding to the English "romance"/"novel."⁷ He designates the roman as the Scudéry-style heroic romance, and the nouvelle as the Lafayette-style reaction against it: "aux yeux des contemporains, elle [la nouvelle] est surtout une reaction contre le roman. La nouvelle est l'opposé du roman" (58).

Although Varga makes the break between "roman" and "nouvelle" sound equivalent to the English split between "romance" and "novel," this is not the general opinion. In general, English critics see the novel as a complete break with the past because it did not grow out of an English tradition: the heroic romances were French imports. In France, however different the nouvelle was, it was a reaction against an earlier element in an ongoing tradition. Figures for the rates of fiction production in the two countries bear this out: Showalter cites McBurney's Check List of English Prose Fiction and S. Paul Jones' List of French Prose Fiction to show that for the years 1700-1719, there were 72 works of fiction published in England, compared to 263 in France (24-25). If the English felt there was a break in tradition between novel and romance, it may have been because there was a break in prose production that did not occur in France.

Still, the nouvelle clearly represented a change, although it drew on the tradition of Marguerite de Navarre's Heptaméron and the Spanish and Italian novella. Showalter

cites a discussion among the characters of Segrais' Nouvelles Françaises (1656), who discuss in the frame narrative what they plan to write inside the frame:

... nous avons entrepris de raconter les choses comme elles sont, et non pas comme elles doivent être; Qu'au reste il me semble que c'est la différence qu'il y a entre le Roman et la Nouvelle; que le Roman écrit ces choses comme la bienséance le veut, et a la manière du Poète; mais que la Nouvelle doit un peu davantage tenir de l'Histoire, et s'attacher plutôt a donner les images des choses comme d'ordinaire nous les voyons arriver, que comme notre imagination se les figure. (qtd. in Showalter 23)

What this narrator describes is the difference between the romance and the novel as it will later be generally accepted. In her Tender Geographies, a study of seventeenth-century women writers and the intersection of literature and politics, Joan DeJean takes up the issue of Les Nouvelles Françaises, its authorship, and this prologue. First, DeJean argues that in the context of the Duchesse de Montpensier's salon, from which Les Nouvelles Françaises emerged, it is hardly likely that Segrais was the "author," in our modern sense of the term; he may literally have written the stories down, but they were "written" in collaborative salon conversation, as the structure of the book makes clear. The Princesse Aurélie, for example, whose discourse on the nature of the novel is quoted above, is the Duchesse de Montpensier herself. DeJean notes that although Aurélie makes a clear distinction in theory between roman

and nouvelle, the stories told in the book do not bear it out: this is the same problem seen later in England with Congreve's famous preface to Incognita, in which theory again runs ahead of practice. What is important, says DeJean, is that the fiction produced in the Montpensier salon "introduces several elements that eventually help complete the transition from romance to novel: a radically abbreviated format, a prominent use of the conversational model, and an explicit inscription into a tradition of women's fiction" (Tender Geographies 55). Showalter's account of the roman/nouvelle argument ignores the female context of the emerging literary theory: by attributing the work to Segrais alone, he ignores both the contributions of the women in Montpensier's salon, and the fact that an essential factor in the development of the new genre was the conversational technique formulated mainly by women in such salons. In this case, the discussion of novel theory was very much connected to women, since it emerged from a woman's literary salon, used as its foundation the work of the most famous romance writer (Madeleine de Scudéry), produced its own new work (Les Nouvelles Françaises), and influenced later work (Lafayette's La Princesse de Clèves). Yet Showalter's influential account of the origins of the French novel erases women from the discussion of theory.

In France, although the distinction between roman and nouvelle had been made, it was not accepted and used, so

that even in 1739 the Marquis d'Argens wrote on the difference between roman and nouvelle: "Leur différence, ce me semble, ne consiste que dans l'étendue" (qtd. in Showalter 24). The same thing was to happen in England: with Congreve the distinction between novel and romance was made very early in England, and accepted in critical terminology, but writers and critics did not agree on the definition of the terms in practice.

When the term roman is explicitly denied, it is usually because the author, wishing to attest to the truth of the story, designates it an histoire instead. By 1737, when novels were banned in France, the term roman had fallen into disfavor. This generated a certain desire to call romans by other names. DeJean suggests that the term histoire is used in France for another reason, apart from testifying to the truth of the fiction; it asserts the existence of a different area of history, an area open to the control of women (Tender Geographies 246). Many histoires discuss the private lives of famous people; in this way, historical figures are not separated from the "feminine" world of love, the novel, but drawn into it. The demarcation between political history and private love is blurred, the separation of male and female spheres is suspended; women writers can even use these histoires to challenge the official view of history, a view that erases women and their influence (Tender Geographies 249). In England, the same

impulse produces the "scandal chronicles," such as Delariviere Manley's Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians and her New Atalantis, histoires à clef that satirize current political figures by recounting their supposed love affairs.

English Terminology

In the English tradition, "novel" has come to be associated with realist writing, and is contrasted with "romance." The terms are used historically, and there is considered to be a sharp break between one period and the other, occurring somewhere around 1700, although few critics agree on what the first English novel might be. Since the romance is valued less in literary tradition than realist writing, "romance" and "romance elements" are terms used to disparage particular works if they were written in the "novel" period.

In England, the first to make the all-important distinction between "novel" and "romance" was William Congreve, in the preface to Incognita (1692). This is Congreve's definition:

Romances are generally composed of the Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero's, Heroins, Kings and Queens [...] where lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances, elevate and surprize the Reader into a giddy Delight, which leaves him flat upon the Ground whenever he gives of, and

vexes him to think how he has suffer'd himself to be pleased and transported at the several Passages which he has Read [...]. Novels are of a more familiar Nature; Come near us, and represent to us Intrigues in practice, delight us with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unpresidented, such which not being so distant from our Belief bring also the Pleasure nearer us. (Preface, np)

Congreve is clear, but his clarity is precocious: even his own Incognita does not adhere as closely to the rules of the novel as he would suggest. As Ian Watt notes, the two terms were not distinguished once and for all until the late eighteenth century, with Clara Reeve (Watt 10). Reeve, in The Progress of Romance (1785) defined the two: "The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written."⁸ Her definition is very similar to Congreve's, but by Reeve's time the difference exists in practice as well as in theory. Reeve's definition refers to the modern conception of the novel.

Despite Congreve's promising start in defining what constituted the novel, the terms were used interchangeably for some time.⁹ There is much less critical discussion on classifying fiction in England than there was in France. One of the reasons for this has to do with the status of fiction.

Concerning the question of the novel's status, the major difference between England and France in the late

seventeenth century is England's puritan heritage. Puritan thinking condemned fiction as lies, as immoral and corrupting, and until the mid eighteenth century there was real critical ambivalence about all genres of fiction. (See below, "Corrupting or Instructing," for further discussion.) When Charles Gildon criticized Defoe's Robinson Crusoe in An Epistle to Daniel Defoe, it was on the grounds that Defoe was lying rather than because of some dissatisfaction with his narrative innovations:

the design of the publication of this book was not sufficient to justify and make truth of what you [Defoe] allow to be fiction and fable; what you mean by legitimizing, invention, and parable, I know not; unless you would have us think, that the manner of your telling a lie will make it truth.¹⁰

This ambivalence about fiction continued until Richardson's Pamela, in 1740. Until then, most critics refused to write seriously and in depth about the novel. As Ioan Williams notes in a survey of eighteenth-century critical thinking,

...as far as most commentators were concerned novel and romance remained on the outskirts of literature, to be treated perfunctorily, merely with reference to their potential moral danger. A great deal of experimenting was carried out by writers of the period, but until 1740 no single work had appeared which contained a coherent and integral design and which could claim to be treated seriously by its readers. (7)

Only with Richardson, says Williams, did the novel achieve

respectability and therefore a place in critical thought. This twentieth-century summation of eighteenth-century attitudes reveals two kinds of problems: hindsight, and the contemporary attitude toward pre-Richardson fiction writers. The imposition of a later critical grid on the eighteenth century has been discussed above; in Williams it takes the form of an assumption that the eighteenth century would agree with him on what constituted a "coherent and integral design," and the certitude that no earlier fiction possessed it. More important is the dismissal of the "experimenting" taking place before Richardson; he is referring to the first period of English literary history during which women were great producers of fiction. Dismissing every work before 1740 means dismissing many of the best-known and most accomplished women writers. This dismissal is not simply a twentieth-century imposition: eighteenth-century critics themselves associated women with the popular novel and dismissed it. For example, in his The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody (1709), Lord Shaftesbury ridicules the kind of gallantry found in contemporary fiction; one character says to another:

'You attack'd the very Fortress of Gallantry, ridicul'd the Point of Honour, with all those nice Sentiments and Ceremonials belonging to it. You damn'd even our Favourite Novels; those dear sweet natural Pieces, writ most of 'em by the Fair Sex themselves.'¹¹

Shaftesbury explicitly associates immoral and ridiculous gallantry with women writers. The great "experimenters" of the period during which Shaftesbury is writing were women, especially Aphra Behn, Delariviere Manley, Catherine Trotter, and Mary Pix, the "Female Wits." All of these women were censured for their "warm" writings at various times.¹² Shaftesbury makes a connection between women writers and foolish gallantry; the same women writers are censured for immorality; contemporary critics and twentieth-century critics dismiss these women's writing as unworthy of what Williams calls serious treatment. What were seen as the foolish or immoral elements in the novel were invariably associated with women.

Twentieth-century critics continue to see the terminology of fiction in terms of gender, just as Shaftesbury had begun to do. Dieter Schulz, discussing the continuing confusion in England between "novel" and "romance" in popular usage, relates the use of these terms to the sex of the novelist:

I shall relate the indiscriminate polemics against 'novel' and 'romance' to certain aspects of popular fiction before Pamela, and suggest that the novels of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding should perhaps be viewed as a reaction against the kind of romanticized novel or novella produced by such writers as Aphra Behn, Mary Manley, and Eliza Haywood, rather than as an alternative to the tradition of 'high' romance represented by the heroic romances of the seventeenth century. (78)

By "indiscriminate polemics" Schulz means the continuing attacks on both novel and romance as though there were no difference, although Congreve and others had already distinguished the forms. As is clear from this quotation, Schulz's position is that eighteenth-century novelists saw themselves reacting not against "romance" but against popular fiction. The writers of this fiction, as Schulz points out, were often women. A glance at any of the bibliographies will show that many popular novelists were men, but it is the particular kind of fiction written by women that raises his ire.¹³ Comments such as these support the main argument of my study, that there is something special about the "female realist" writing of the period that distinguishes it from men's writing. Schulz's position is fairly radical: discarding the traditional critical distinction between "novel" and "romance," he reorients the debate along gender lines. The male novelists who will be recognized as the "realist writers" are seen to be specifically rejecting the spurious "romanticized novel" produced by women writers. Schulz suggests that these female fictions are rejected because they exhibit "the same lack of realism and moral purpose as the romance" (80), thereby connecting morality and realism on the male side, and immorality and lack of realism with women.

Schulz ends his argument by denying women even the possibility of being called "novelists." Once again

decrying the "popular" (female) novelists, he concludes:

... the novelists conceived of their own work not so much as an antithesis to the 'high' heroic romances -- it has been questioned, incidentally, whether Fielding had any extensive knowledge of them -- but rather as an alternative to a subliterate hybrid of novella and heroic romance, which was the most popular type of fiction when they started their careers as novelists.
(91)

Behn, Manley, and the others have by this point in his argument been relegated to the category of the "subliterate." Schulz is claiming that the confusion between novel and romance occurs not because of a major distinction between the two forms, but because women writers were associated with both terms, and had thus "contaminated" them. Male writers wanted to disassociate themselves not from the content/form of either novel or romance but from the women writers they perceived as "unsavoury."

Vraisemblance/Verisimilitude: or, Idealism versus Realism

...c'est aux femmes seules, qu'appartient cette sensibilité précieuse, cette imagination facile et riante qui embellit tout ce qu'elle touche, et crée les objets tels qu'ils devraient être, mais que les hommes condamnés à un travail plus sévère ont toujours suffisamment bien fait quand ils ont rendu la nature avec exactitude et fidélité!

-- Laclos, letter to Riccoboni¹⁴

The doctrine of vraisemblance, as it pertains to "novelistic" fiction, arises in French neoclassical theory and is exported from there to England. The term arises from the debate over the Aristotelian contrast between historical truth and poetic plausibility. There is no space here to describe in detail the various refinements and changes that the term underwent in the two countries. Rather, I want to show how vraisemblance is connected to gender.

One of the early writers to articulate a theory of vraisemblance was Scudéry, in the preface to Ibrahim (translated into English in 1652).¹⁵ In this influential piece of theory, much quoted in both France and England, Scudéry discusses the importance of vraisemblance in the novel:

...gross untruth makes no impression in the soul, nor gives any delight: as indeed how should I be touched with the misfortunes of the Queen of Gundaya and the king of Astrobacia, whereas I know their very kingdoms are not in the universal map, or, to say better, in the being of things? [...] I have labored then never to eloin myself from it [vraisemblance], and to that purpose I have observed the manners, customs, religions, and inclinations of people; and to give a more true resemblance to things, I have made the foundations of my work historical, my principal personages such as are marked out in the true history for illustrious persons. [qtd. in Heidler, 18-19]

Scudéry's suggestions do not sound like the much-maligned "romance" impulses she was later accused of specializing in.

Rather, she sounds more like the later "realists." As J. B. Heidler notes, Scudéry's theory is balanced between extremes of realism and idealism; citing and commenting on one of Anacreon's speeches from the later Clelia (Volume I published 1654; translated into English in 1656), Heidler notes:

Anacreon says: 'the true art of falsehood is to resemble closely the truth.' Rejecting both the strictly realistic and idealistic points of view, he declares that the best method is 'that which shall be at the same time marvellous and natural.' (Heidler 19)

Scudéry's method consists of using historical "truth" where possible, basing her novels on historical personages and the observable customs or manner of a country, so as to give a natural and plausible air to her books. In England, this theory remained current among writers for at least another half century. Delariviere Manley, for instance, declared her allegiance to truth in her typically flamboyant preface of Memoirs of Europe, toward the close of the Eighth Century (1710):

But for us that barely attempt without Presumption or Despondence, who tremble neither with too forward Desires, nor abject Fears, who think no Place lovely which Truth and Glory do not adorn, nor wou'd climb the Hill of highest Favour without their support; let us with a chearful Boldness loose the Reins in view of attaining the latter, as the only Reward of our Endeavours; and impartially entertain our Reader with the former.¹⁶

For these writers, "plausibility" was a way of producing pleasurable fiction. Manley adds morality as another reason to use "truth" as a guide.

Meanwhile, however, more complex theories of vraisemblance were being posited. After Scudéry, critics such as Boileau and Rapin revised the term to indicate that vraisemblance insists on a choice between representing things as they are and representing them as they should be. This position repudiates the earlier notion of vraisemblance; Boileau specifically attacks Scudéry for her characters' lack of vraisemblance, because they do not conform to the historical figures.¹⁷ Rene Rapin articulates this:

La vérité est presque toujours défectueuse par le mélange des conditions singulières qui la composent. Il ne naît rien au monde qui ne s'éloigne pas de la perfection de son idée en naissant. Il faut chercher des originaux et des modèles dans la vraisemblance et dans les principes universels des choses ou il n'entre rien de matériel et de singulier qui les corrompe.¹⁸

Fiction should be a representation of the universal rather than the particular, showing not the imperfections of everyday life but the platonic models of things as they should be. Clearly, vraisemblance in this strict neoclassical point of view is closer to idealism than to what came to be known as realism.

The doctrine of vraisemblance also notes that truth is

not always vraisemblable. Boileau argues that the reader not be asked to believe anything "incredible," even if it is proven to be true:

Jamais au spectateur n'offrez rien d'incroyable:
 Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable.
 Une merveille absurde est pour moi sans appas:
 L'esprit n'est point ému de ce qu'il ne croit pas.
 (L'Art Poétique, Chant III, lines 47-50)

The conservatism of Rapin's and Boileau's approach is apparent. The vraisemblable is measured by what has been and what is now accepted as plausible by the community. In the 1701 preface to L'Art Poétique, Boileau insists that the public is the ultimate judge of what is good in literature; a good work will always -- if not immediately, then eventually -- be an enduring success with the public, whereas a bad one will be ignored (41-42). Rapin states it even more unequivocally: "Le vraysemblable est tout ce qui est conforme a l'opinion du public."¹⁹ Vraisemblance after Boileau is a manifestation of current conservative ideology. As A. Kibedi Varga notes, it is a theory that goes beyond "imitation of nature," and makes "le poète créateur qui égale Dieu" ("Vraisemblance" 331).

Although vraisemblance has been used to keep certain texts out of the canon,²⁰ it should be noted that this universalizing conception of vraisemblance promoted by Boileau and Rapin is almost diametrically opposed to the

realism described by Watt, Barthes, and the theorists of nineteenth-century literature. Neoclassical vraisemblance derides the detail as the sign of the everyday, whereas the role of poetry is to rise above the mundane, into the poetic universal. Barthes' details, on the other hand, function as the signifier of the "real," and Watt prizes above all the accumulation of detail found in Defoe's and Richardson's novels. It is precisely the detailed "imitation of nature" that is considered realistic, and that strict neoclassical vraisemblance moves away from. How, then, can vraisemblance be used as a measure of a realistic novel?

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, vraisemblance functions as what its literal meaning implies: "that which seems true." This meaning, ascendant during the period of the novel's early development, is, as has been shown, dependent on public opinion; public opinion as expressed by powerful misogynist critics such as Boileau would not be likely to accept feminist rewritings of social relations as vraisemblant. Eighteenth-century "realism" has been seen through the grid of the nineteenth century, and what "seemed true" in the nineteenth century had, of course changed. Let us look first at the "idealist" view of vraisemblance, and then discuss why idealism changed to detail-oriented realism in the nineteenth century.

One of the clearest examples of what happens when the neoclassical sense of vraisemblance comes up against a

feminist viewpoint is the well-known case of Valincour's criticism of La Princesse de Clèves. Jean-Baptiste Troussel de Valincour published his book-length Lettres à madame la Marquise *** sur le sujet de 'La Princesse de Clèves' only six months after Lafayette's novel, joining in the intense public debate about the novel.²¹ Valincour's book was soon answered in turn by a rebuttal, Abbé de Charnes' Conversations sur la critique de 'la Princesse de Clèves.' The two critics debate the nature of vraisemblance, especially in the scene of the princess's statement to her husband that she loves another man. Valincour's position is that the confession scene is implausible, "concertée" (Lettres 111) -- how did it happen so opportunely that Nemours was there? where did he put his horse? why did he immediately tell his friend such a secret? Such a thing could happen in real life, but it is precisely these kinds of singulier occurrences that Rapin and Boileau advised writers to spurn. As DeJean puts it, "if an individual action is judged 'morally incredible,' then the work in which it appears is condemned as 'defective'" ("Lafayette's Ellipses" 891). The judgment of invraisemblance, then, is a way not to take this particular piece of women's writing seriously.²²

Nancy K. Miller demonstrates, in "Emphasis Added," the connections between Boileau's "public opinion," vraisemblance, and women's writing. Miller cites Gérard

Genette's notion of the maxim, a refinement of "public opinion":

What defines plausibility is the formal principle of respect for the norm, that is, the existence of a relation of implication between the particular conduct attributed to a given character, and a given, general, received and implicit maxim. ... To understand the behavior of a character (for example), is to be able to refer it back to an approved maxim, and this reference is perceived as a demonstration of cause and effect.²³

Miller then takes Genette's formulation and applies it to the controversy over Lafayette and vraisemblance:

If no maxim is available to account for a particular piece of behavior, that behavior is read as unmotivated and unconvincing. Mme de Clèves's confession makes no sense in the seventeenth-century sociolect because it is, Genette argues, "an action without a maxim" (75). A heroine without a maxim, like a rebel without a cause, is destined to be misunderstood. (26)

The question of how vraisemblance can be used as a measure of a realist novel has now been answered. Vraisemblance is the measure of how closely the action of a novel and its characters connect to what is seen as the "norms" of the "real world." This is a profoundly conservative understanding of the way literature operates in society that has had a marked effect on feminist writing, since feminist writing resists or tries to change those norms.

Twentieth-century criticism of the early novel, however, sees the eighteenth century through the prism of

hindsight. Vraisemblance, seen as idealistic, is no longer the measure of realism. Naomi Schor has demonstrated that throughout the nineteenth century, literary idealism and realism were still connected: fundamentally the same, but leaning in opposing directions -- one toward idealization, the other toward what George Henry Lewes called "detailism" ("Idealism" 59-60). Only at the turn of the century did "detailism" triumph. Schor argues that in the twentieth century, idealism has come to be associated with the feminine, and realism with the masculine. The original idealistic (and masculine) notion of vraisemblance has been lost, and replaced with the superiority of realist detail. Realist detail is associated with the masculine because it is seen as an ability to face the ugliness of the real world, and as politically effective precisely because of that; in this new configuration, idealism is seen as escapism, an inability to face reality (Schor, "Idealism," 62). Schor cites George Sand's report of her conversation with Balzac, in a quotation that restates the Laclos epigraph with which I began this section:

You seek man as he should be [says Balzac to Sand]; I take him as he is. [...] I magnify and idealize [vulgar people] in reverse, in their ugliness or folly. [...] That you could never do, and you do well not to gaze too closely on the beings who give you nightmares. Idealize only toward the lovely and the beautiful: that is woman's work. ("Idealism" 65)

Schor comments on both the Balzac/Sand dialogue and the Laclos/ Riccoboni debate from which the epigraph to this section is taken; she notes that both Balzac and Laclos see women as "congenitally unable to view the world without the benefit of rose-colored glasses" (67). They then attach aesthetic value to the depiction of the ugliness of the everyday world. This is the position that Watt takes when he castigates Behn and Lafayette for their lack of realism: he implies that they cannot face the world in all its gritty detail, but must paint it as prettier, more "stylish," than it is. The misogyny of literary criticism is enduring: when idealism was aesthetically valued (in vraisemblance), women were considered unable to attain it; when realism took over, women were once again thought incapable of it.

The Content of Novels

The subject matter of the novel is one of the elements that has most closely associated it with women. From the earliest theorists on, the novel has been thought of as treating love and courtship, which are understood to be part of private life and thus the domain of women, whereas history and politics are part of public life and therefore the province of men.

The definition usually cited as early and important is

Pierre-Daniel Huet's, in his Traité de l'origine des romans, which was originally published as a preface to Lafayette's Zayde. He deals with both content and purpose in the opening statements:

... ce qu'on appelle proprement Romans sont des fictions amoureuses, écrites en prose avec art, pour le plaisir et l'instruction des lecteurs. [...] La fin principale des Romans, ou du moins celle qui doit l'être, et que se doivent proposer ceux qui les composent, est l'instruction des lecteurs, à qui il faut toujours faire voir la vertu couronnée, et le vice châtié. (3-4)

Huet's definition of content endures, and is found again and again in other writers. Dr Johnson's Dictionary (1755), for instance, defines "novel" as "A small tale, generally of love" (qtd. in Schulz 79).

In Tender Geographies, DeJean argues that even before Huet, Madeleine de Scudéry had physically mapped out the terrain of the novel with her Carte de Tendre in Volume I of Clélie (1654). It is Scudéry's definition that shaped the future conception of the novel:

As Ferdinand Brunetière remarked in 1889, French "novelists have never ceased traversing the Carte de Tendre." At the onset of the decade before Louis XIV's marriage, during which préciosité and the salons reigned supreme, Scudéry offered a mapping of a territory situated simultaneously in the domain of literature and in that of human relations, a place in which men were consigned to the margins while women set the course. (Tender Geographies 57)

DeJean also notes the implications of Scudéry's map for the

power struggle that will later ensue over literary boundaries and status. For "content" is not innocent; as has already been shown in the discussion of the novel as a corrupting influence, "love" as the content of a novel is not harmless when it includes a direct attack on the institution of marriage. Critics may have claimed that the novel treated only frivolous subjects, suitable for women, but attacks such as Abbé Jacquin's, cited above, show that some critics at least recognized the power and scope of the women novelists' feminist critique.

Some eighteenth-century critics saw the subject of love as expanding rather than limiting the male preserve. DeJean cites Lenglet du Fresnoy's De l'Usage des romans (1734), in which "he proclaims the superiority of the novel to pure history, which has for too long neglected women's role as the prime movers of history" (Tender Geographies 249). We have already noted (in the section on terminology) that histoires (what we might now call "historical novels") give women a chance to challenge the official view of what happened in history and why, and of what was important. The official view always erases women's part in affairs of state and politics; the histoire can break down the separation between public and private, a separation that is always gendered.

The "feminization of the novel," in Michael Danahy's phrase, has to do with its perceived content as detailed

narrative. As we saw in the discussion of vraisemblance, detail is what took the novel away from the neoclassical ideal of the universal, drawing it back instead to the everyday world of the particular. Eventually, when the idealizing trend of neoclassical vraisemblance fell into disrepute at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was the detail that marked realistic writing and was the criterion of excellence. Yet although detail was marked as feminine in that it was what women wanted to read, when women wrote they were, paradoxically, considered less skillful at supplying precisely this kind of detail. Ian Watt, for example, saw Richardson as "feminine" in his writing because of his command of detail, even though he dismissed Behn, Haywood, and Manley from his pantheon because he considered their details of names and places insufficient:

One reflection of Richardson's closeness to the feminine point of view is to be found in the wealth of minutely described domestic detail in Pamela. Many contemporary readers apparently objected to the "heap of trivial circumstances" in the novel; [...]. But if the men mocked, there can be little doubt that many feminine readers enjoyed these details for their own sake; Madame Du Deffand, for example, particularly praised "tous les details domestiques" and preferred Richardson's novels to the French romances on their account. (153)

The producer of the fiction is marked as "feminine" to the extent to which he understands the needs of his female audience and provides them with the details they love. This

marks the female audience as passive consumers. Watt's schema does not leave room for a female writer who understands her female audience, since he has already categorized the popular women writers as lacking in the required technical skill.

As English Showalter notes, the passion for the detail is an English phenomenon, at least as far as criticism of the early novel goes. In France, the insistence on the detail as a mark of realistic writing did not emerge until the nineteenth century. Readers seemed to accept that, given the content of the novel, psychological realism might not demand the exhaustive description of the physical plane. Discussing Lafayette's novels, Showalter comments:

Mlle de Scudéry had pointed the way for these minute analyses of the human heart, where the realism is all psychological. Circumstantial detail was deemed unnecessary, even undesirable, for it lessened the likelihood of the reader's identifying herself -- the reader was always assumed to be a woman -- with the heroine. (34)

English criticism, then, has been harder on women writers in this respect than French. Both traditions have designated women as the passive audiences of fiction, with men as the active producers (with the exception of seventeenth-century France).²⁶ The French seems to have allowed a space for the appreciation of early women novelists that has been lacking in the English.

The status of the detail, however, has been similar in both traditions: women have been shown as able to consume it, but not able to rise above it and arrange it artfully. In her Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine, Naomi Schor argues that the association of femaleness with detail is an extension of woman's supposedly closer connection with nature:

Viewed as congenitally (rather than culturally) particularistic, the woman artist is doubly condemned to produce inferior works of art: because of her close association with nature, she cannot but replicate it. the law of the genre is that women are by nature mimetic, incapable of creating significant works of art in nonrepresentational art forms -- notably music. (17)

The woman writer should, in this view, be a "realistic" writer because she is closely associated with the details of the everyday world. But as we saw above, critics have seen women as unable to face the ugly details of everyday life without idealizing them. Now we add the second critical argument that women do not possess the ability to abstract from detail, and therefore they do not produce art, since art (according to the critics) is abstraction. Women have been able to write novels, since novels are to some extent representational, but the more abstract an art becomes (such as music), the less well women are able to produce it. Critics caught in this ideological trap are bound to see the fictions of female novelists as inferior (less abstract,

less technically adept) to the works of male writers.

To Corrupt or to Instruct: Moralism in Novel Criticism

One of the earliest criticisms leveled against the novel was that it corrupted its readers, especially its female readers. The response to this critique was the novelists' claim that they were, on the contrary, aiming to fulfill the most basic classical requirement for literature: Horace's command to "delight and instruct."

The charges of corruption leveled in England tended to be less virulent than those in France. For example, John Clarke said in his Essay Upon Study (1730) that romances were "generally very indiscreetly and foolishly Writ" and had "a strong Tendency to corrupt and debauch the Mind with silly Mischievous Notions of Love and Honour, and other Things relating to the Conduct of Life."²⁴ English critiques of the novel as genre tend to arise, argues Lennard Davis, from the English puritan background, which saw any tale whose purpose was not didactic as lies, and therefore sinful ("Social History," 120). The puritan-derived critiques see fiction as a waste of time, as diverting the reader from more proper pastimes, and therefore as unworthy of serious critical and intellectual consideration. Up until Richardson's Pamela (1740), this

puritan attitude persisted. J. B. Heidler notes that there was a remarkable change after Richardson, and that critics after 1740

ceased to consider it [the novel] merely as a pleasing diversion for women and children or as a means of inculcating virtue. Instead they viewed it as an artistic unit, and discussed in that connection the plot, the characters, the sentiments, and the diction.
(46)

By this time, fiction had been accepted as a viable genre (not as an unproblematic one), partly thanks to Richardson's blend of moralism and technical innovation.

The French critiques, on the other hand, accuse novels of undermining the entire fabric of society. The focus of the critics' attack is usually on women: women were perceived to be the writers and readers of novels, and the subversive messages these critics saw in novels would take their effect on women. Critics take varying lines on the bad effects of the novel, but all focus on sexual relationships. Boileau, for instance, in his influential Tenth Satire on women, argues that novels make virtuous women become wanton; the novel he chooses as example is Scudéry's Clélie (DeJean, Tender Geographies, 284). Pere Porée, in his oration on novels, concentrates on the social upheaval cause by the false sense of power novels give women:

What are women in civil society? a part of society, but a subordinate part that must receive the law and not give it ... Novels reverse the natural order; they make woman independent from man; they make her the supreme lawgiver.²⁵

Porée saw women's rule of the domain of love in novels as corrupting and dangerous. For woman to escape her submissive role in any way whatsoever was a threat to social stability. The concomitant effect of women's emancipation was the feminization of men, which is the second danger Porée notes:

[Novels] corrupt [men's] hearts...with the examples they propose: thus the indolence, and the lack of vigor on the part of our young men...which are so detrimental to the Republic.²⁶

Other critics attacked the novel for more specific reasons. For example, Abbé Jacquin noted that the corrupting effect of novels on women came not simply from its teaching them insubordination, but from the novel's attitude toward marriage:

[Les romans] nous apprennent à mépriser les pratiques les mieux établies de la Religion, et les règles les plus respectables de la société, en insinuant que l'essence du mariage ne consiste pas dans une vaine cérémonie, mais dans le don du coeur et dans les sentiments qui l'accompagnent.²⁷

Novels, argues Jacquin, portray a world in which marriage for love is the ideal. Women who believe this will want it

in their own lives, and this desire will disturb the practice of marriage for property and inheritance, and of the patriarchal power of decision. If women demand to choose for themselves in marriage, and even in ending unsatisfactory marriages, the basis of the property transferral system will be overturned.

The tone of the attacks on the novel shows how threatening the genre was perceived to be. The novelists' response was usually not to counterattack on the same grounds, but to shift the terms of the discussion entirely. To discuss novels as instruments of delight and instruction is to remove the argument from the realms of gender and morality (which are closely connected), into the world of classical rules in which gender played no part. The novelists' claims to be delighting and instructing, repeated obsessively in the prefaces of novels that do no such thing, attest to the insecurity of their position. In England, these claims dwindled after about 1740, when Pamela's success made the novel -- or at least a certain type of novel -- respectable. Delariviere Manley's preface to Queen Zarah is an important document in this respect: Manley's work was derided as "immoral" by contemporaries such as Richardson (see Davis, "Social History"), but this preface lays out in terms that no contemporary could have found fault with all the current wisdom on the status and function of the novel as opposed to the romance, and on the purpose

of the novel. She ends with exemplary advice on the role of instruction and delight:

... the chief End of History [i.e., fiction] is to instruct and inspire into Men the Love of Vertue, and Abhorrence of Vice, by the Examples propos'd to them; therefore the Conclusion of a Story ought to have some Tract of Morality which may engage Virtue. (qtd. in Williams 38-39)

In France, the novelists' claim to be delighting and instructing took varied forms. Georges May, in Le Dilemme du roman au XVIIIe siècle, discusses them in detail, and Showalter has distilled the discussion into four variations of the theme of moral instruction. At various points, novelists could claim to be presenting "l'argument du tableau de la vie humaine" (helping society by giving it a true picture of itself); offering "la supériorité de l'exemple concret" (thereby driving the moral point home by the vivid drama of one's depiction); demonstrating "la justice immanente" (showing poetic justice, through which the wicked are suitably punished); and depicting the "piège dénoncé" (in which vice is shown in its true colors and thus demystified) (Showalter 40-43). Novelists could use these arguments to protect themselves if their morality were attacked.

* * *

Although twentieth-century critics usually argue that their exclusion of women writers is based on those writers' lack of skill or innovation, a closer reading shows that even in the twentieth century, critics hold women novelists to an eighteenth-century standard of morality. In the section on terminology, above, Dieter Schulz was cited as using supposedly terminological debates to attack the popular female novelists. In the same essay, he articulates even more clearly the reason for his attack: the problem is not that women novelists are unskillful, but that they are immoral. Here is his commentary on Eliza Haywood:

Love in Excess and the other novels of Mrs. Haywood's earlier career retain key concepts of courtly and heroic romance, while at the same time depriving them of their idealistic content. The result is an ambiguous rhetoric, which seemingly adheres to ideological and stylistic patterns of romance, but actually undermines those patterns and supplants their idealism by lasciviousness. (87)

There is no discussion here of whether it would be an interesting technical innovation to "undermine" romance -- perhaps an innovation that would help define the novel as a genre separate from the romance. Love in Excess (1719) was almost exactly contemporaneous with Moll Flanders (1722), a novel that recounts the life of a pickpocket of none too strict morals. Why, then, should Love in Excess kindle such anger?

A critic who has focused on precisely the question of

women writers and immorality is John Richetti. In his Popular Fiction Before Richardson and again in "Popular Narrative in the Early Eighteenth Century: Formats and Formulas," he argues at length that the fiction of Delariviere Manley and Eliza Haywood (he singles these two out) is popular because the authors deliberately pander to their audiences' desire for vicarious pornography. He depicts Manley and Haywood as manipulators of ideology rather than as authors; they use latent social antagonism (corrupt aristocracy versus "classless" sobriety) and sexual antagonism ("helpless and virtuous females destroyed by a malign masculine ethos") to woo their audiences. Of Haywood's early career Richetti says:

Haywood rehearsed with unfailing energy and only slight variations the popular formula promised in her titles: a format highlighting genteel, euphemistic but effectively pornographic descriptions of female passion and male lust, and featuring most of the time aristocratic elegance and corruption. ("Popular Narrative" 17)

Like Schulz, Richetti effectively consigns Haywood to the category of the "subliterary," the hack writer of formula fiction who rings endless variations on the same theme, appealing to her audience's lowest instincts.

In Richetti's diatribe, women writers are guilty of two major crimes: Haywood is excoriated for her "moral simplifications" (22), Delariviere Manley for writing that

is "deliberately indifferent to anything but the reader's capacity for erotic fantasy" (15). These criticisms could have come straight from the eighteenth century, from Abbe Jacquin's anguished realization that novels might show women what was wrong with marriage, or that they would make women want love to be conducted on different terms. The viciousness of Richetti's critique appears to stem from an anxiety about the level of female sexual expression voiced in these novels.

Few twentieth-century critics have argued that the true purpose of the novel was indeed, as its eighteenth-century supporters agreed, to give moral instruction through delight. Richetti's attack on Haywood and Manley, however, leads him to espouse the eighteenth-century position. "In the fiction Manley and others actually wrote," he complains, "the traditional literary ideal of moral instruction shifts strongly away from a combination of edifying scene and moralizing discourse..." (13). The foundation of Richetti's supposedly modern criticism is the same as Abbe Jacquin's: the morality of the woman writer. For a woman writer to overstep the traditional female role of passive, chaste object is still, in the twentieth century, to incur a critical wrath as unliterary as Pope's in the Dunciad.

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NOTES

¹ See Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1957) 10; Lennard J. Davis, "A Social History of Fact and Fiction," Literature and Society: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1978 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) 122.

² Cited in Joan DeJean, Tender Geographies (New York: Columbia UP, forthcoming), ms 269.

³ Cited in John Richetti, "Popular Narrative in the Early Eighteenth Century: Formats and Formulas," The First English Novelists: Essays in Understanding, ed. J. M. Armistead (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1985) 19.

⁴ For a discussion of women and their connection with the epistolary novel, see Robert A. Day, Told in Letters (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1966), and Ruth Perry, Women, Letters, and the Novel (New York: AMS Press, 1980).

⁵ For further discussion of terminology, see especially Davis, Factual Fictions (New York: Columbia UP, 1983) and "A Social History of Fact and Fiction"; Showalter, The Evolution of the French Novel (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972); Schulz, "'Novel,' 'Romance,' and Popular Fiction in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century," Studies in Philology 70 (1973).

⁶ See Ellen Chapco, "Historical Verisimilitude and Literary Creation: The Rise of the petit roman in Seventeenth-Century France," Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History 12 (1984), for more on the term petit roman.

⁷ A. Kibedi Varga, "Pour une definition de la nouvelle a l'époque classique," Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des études françaises 18 (1966): 58.

⁸ Cited in Ioan Williams, Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 6.

⁹ See Schulz for a discussion of the confusion of terms among novelists themselves.

¹⁰ Cited in Davis, Factual Fictions, 157.

¹¹ Characteristicks, I, 194; cited in J. B. Heidler, "The History, from 1700-1800, of English Criticism of Prose Fiction," U of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature XIII (1928): 26-27.

¹² See Robert A. Day, "Muses in the Mud," Women's Studies 7 (1980) for a discussion of the censuring of the female wits.

¹³ See for example William McBurney's Check List of English Prose Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960) and S. Paul Jones' List of French Prose Fiction (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1979).

¹⁴ Laclos, Oeuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1951) 688. Cited in Nancy K. Miller, "Men's Reading," Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991), in her translation:

"[W]omen alone possess this precious sensibility, this easy and cheerful imagination that embellishes everything it touches, and creates objects as they should be: but ... men, who are condemned to a harsher labor, have always acquitted themselves well when they have rendered nature exactly and faithfully!" (50).

¹⁵ See DeJean, Tender Geographies, 54 for a discussion of the authorship of this preface; it has been claimed that Scudéry's brother, Georges, was the author.

¹⁶ Cited in Heidler, 25.

¹⁷ See DeJean, "No Man's Land," Yale French Studies 73 (1987): 188; the attack is in Boileau's Dialogue des héros de roman.

¹⁸ Cited in L'Art Poétique (Paris: Bordas, 1966) 73.

¹⁹ Cited in Varga, "Vraisemblance -- problèmes de terminologie, problèmes de poétique," (Paris: CNRS, 1977) 329.

²⁰ In "No Man's Land," 187-188, DeJean cites specifically Scudéry's Clélie and Lafayette's Zayde as texts that have been excluded from the canon on this basis.

²¹ For an account of the contemporary debate over La Princesse de Clèves in journals such as the Mercure galant, see Maurice Laugaa, Lectures de Mme de La Fayette (Paris: Colin, 1971).

²² The exception, of course, is Lafayette's Princesse de Clèves, the only early novel by a woman in either France or England to be included in the canon. See DeJean's Tender Geographies, 148-164, for an account of the complicated story of Lafayette's insertion into the canon.

²³ Cited in Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing (New York: Columbia UP, 1988) 26.

²⁴ Cited in Williams, 6.

²⁵ Pere Charles Porée, De Libris qui vulgo dicuntur romanenses, oratio (1736), 20, 108. Cited in DeJean, Tender Geographies, 133.

²⁶ Porée 9, 16; 100, 106. Cited in DeJean, Tender Geographies, 133.

²⁷ Abbé Jacquin, Entretiens sur les romans (1755). Cited in DeJean, Tender Geographies, 269.

²⁸ See Watt, The Rise of the Novel, 43-44, for comments on English audiences; Danahy, Feminization of the Novel (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1991), 16-17, for comments on French audiences.

CHAPTER 2

Construction of a Female Subject:
 Aphra Behn's Letters Between a Nobleman and His
 Sister, and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's Lettres de Mistriss
 Fanni Butlerd

In Aphra Behn's play The Rover, Angellica Bianca is a prostitute who hangs a sign of herself outside her door to attract customers. Unfortunately, her ploy backfires; instead of customers, Angellica's sign attracts only vituperation. Janet Todd, who takes this scene as the title of her book on women writers, The Sign of Angellica, comments on this strange reaction. "The message of her portrait is too frank, too crude," says Todd:

Had she worn it close to her face as a mask, matters might have been different, but instead she chose to distance it and to draw attention to its construction. The action was conscious, blatant, unfeminine and professional. (1)

Angellica's sign functions as a metaphor for the problem of the writing woman in the eighteenth century; if she wears her writing as a mask, it may be accepted, but if she admits that she is a professional who is distanced from her work, she risks male wrath.

As women in significant numbers began publishing fiction in the eighteenth century, the problem of their

relation to their work became pressing. This problem is reflected in the discussions (continuing from their publication to the present day) over the authorship and fictionality of certain works: Les Lettres portugaises (the Portuguese Letters), Aphra Behn's Oroonoko, and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd, for example.¹ In all three cases, the question is one of "authenticity": supposing that a woman wrote them, were they written as "real" letters (in the case of the Portuguese Letters and Fanni Butlerd), or about "real" experience (in Oroonoko)? The disputes around those questions reveal the same profound anxiety about the fictional masks of women writers that Angellica's sign provoked in her customers.

The "authenticity" of the Portuguese Letters has been disputed with vehemence. It is only in the twentieth century that Guilleragues has been generally recognized as the author; until then, it was believed that a certain "real" nun named Mariana Alcoforado wrote them as "real" letters.² Literary sleuths tried to track down the nun and her lover, with what was thought to be some success. A nineteenth-century journalist, J.F. Boissonade, conclusively "found" the evidence identifying the characters.³ Mariana's letters, read as the unmediated expression of uncontrollable passion, formed one of the most popular books of the eighteenth century; it was quickly translated into English, and spawned many imitations in both English and French (Day,

Letters 32-33). The letters were praised for their natural style, and the "novel" served as a paradigm for female writing: this work was thought of as occasioned by passion, written not for the public but for a private audience, and only accidentally brought to light; the letters depicted the writer as abandoned and helpless, complaining about her plight but unable to change it. This was a model that did not attempt to change women's literary position. It placed its stamp on the eighteenth century, a response to Angellica's sign.

With Behn's Oroonoko, the dispute about authenticity has centered more in the twentieth century than the eighteenth. Oroonoko is Behn's best-known work, yet critics have been much more eager to discuss Behn's personal authority as narrator than her novelistic technique; since the novel is written as a first-person account of a slave rebellion in Surinam, modern critics -- taking their cue from Boissonade -- have ferreted endlessly for evidence that Behn either went to Surinam herself or took her facts from a popular travel narrative.⁴ Once again, it is the conflation of author with narrator that is disturbing: why is it important for critics to show that women authors write only about their own firsthand experience? What is upsetting about the idea that women, like men, can fashion "realistic" narratives, can even write them in the first person, without that experience having anything to do with their own lives?

My third example of questioned "authenticity" is Riccoboni's Fanni Butlerd. This novel consists of Fanni's letters to her lover, and even Riccoboni's most recent modern editors assume that Fanni's letters are actually "real" letters that Riccoboni herself wrote in a failed love affair of her own.⁵ In an odd coincidence, it was the same nineteenth-century journalist, J.F. Boissonade, who "discovered the identity" of Fanni/Riccoboni's lover.⁶

In all three cases, critics and readers have had enormous difficulty accepting a woman as author, as someone who constructs artful fiction. The Portuguese Letters were letters written "artificially" by a man, but for years they were assumed to have been written "naturally" by a woman. With Oroonoko, critics have claimed that Behn was simply "recording" what she saw, rather than inventing and arranging. With Fanni Butlerd, critics have made strenuous attempts to collapse the female character and female author into one, a "natural" writer. The difficulty has been exacerbated by women writers' frequent use of the epistolary form: as a frame, the epistolary novel itself is clearly directed to the public, but within that frame, single letters are privately addressed to a particular reader. It is easy for the reader of an epistolary novel to be seduced by the particularity and "naturalness" of the letter form, and to forget the larger frame.

In this chapter, I will examine two novels that hang up

a sign of Angellica; Aphra Behn's Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister (1684) and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd (1757) challenge readers' assumptions about the relation of a female author to her text, and about female identity within that text. When critics conflate author and character, they deny the author's ability to construct a fictional female identity. In these two novels, the authors work on two levels: they attack the conflation between author and character, thus laying claim to the right to construct a mask; and they also, within the novel itself, allow the characters to construct an identity. The heroines of these two epistolary novels use their letters to challenge the assumptions that the other fictional characters make about their identities. Behn and Riccoboni re-create in fiction the problem they faced in life as writers: their critics' refusal to allow them to define themselves as subjects.

Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister is Aphra Behn's first novel, written in 1684 after a long career as a playwright.⁷ It tells the story of Sylvia, who falls in love with her sister's husband, Philander, and elopes with him. There is no question of marriage, but Sylvia happily braves her father's attempts to arrest both her and Philander, and moves with him to Paris. Their epistolary exchange details Sylvia's growing ability to express herself and her desires, and her growing independence. Lettres de

Mistriss Fanni Butlerd, published in 1757, is also Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's first novel. Set in England, it is a series of letters from a young middle-class woman, Fanni Butlerd, to Alfred, Mylord Erford, an aristocrat who courts, seduces, and then abandons her in order to marry a titled and wealthy woman. But rather than lapsing into silence or despair at her abandonment -- which is the conventional pathetic position that such a plot assigns her -- Fanni instead ends her series of letters with one that she publishes in the newspaper. This letter is an outcry of female disgust with the prevailing state of male/female relations and a rewriting of the terms by which they can be judged.

How is it that Sylvia and Fanni end up in such a strong position -- not as ruined women but as public critics of male behavior? Both novels presents a heroine who begins by seeing herself as a passive victim of seduction, but ends by seeing herself as an active subject, what I am going to call a "social subject," following Teresa de Lauretis's formulation. De Lauretis, taking into consideration the particular historical and linguistic forces operating in the world of the female subject, defines a "social subject" as one that is formed, in an ongoing process of construction, from "the semiotic interaction of 'outer world' and 'inner world'" (Alice 182). Thus the "social subject" is grounded in experience and language, and is engaged in the world. It

is also crucial to recognize that female subjectivity and experience, as de Lauretis argues, are "necessarily couched in a specific relation to sexuality," as a result of the operation of gender differences ("Technology" 18). The central problem of Love Letters and Fanni Butlerd is the process of self-construction; in each novel, this process involves a struggle in which writing, sexual desire, and subjecthood are inextricably connected for the heroine.

The crucial turning point in this self-construction process, from passive victim to active social subject, has been identified by the critic Peggy Kamuf as the moment when the heroine becomes a reader of her own text and through that comes to an acceptance of her own desire, which she recognizes in her writing; accepting her desire, she stops being a victim of the plot that has "happened" to her, and becomes instead an active producer of the events of a subjectivity (Kamuf 61). In this instance, Kamuf is discussing that paradigmatic novel of seduction and abandonment, The Portuguese Letters; the turning point Kamuf marks in The Portuguese Letters is relevant for Love Letters and Fanni Butlerd too. Sylvia and Fanni go through a similar process; each protagonist becomes an increasingly self-conscious writer as she recognizes herself in her own writing, and arrives at a comparable but more complex recognition of her own desire, a recognition that can come only through writing.

The heroines in these novels achieve subjecthood through writing, and they do so through writing about female desire and sexuality. The heroine can only reach social subjecthood through sexuality: by recognizing her own desire for her lover, and reconstructing her desire in her writing.

Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister

Behn's Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister consists of the letters between a nobleman who first has an affair with, and then elopes with, his wife's sister. It was published in three parts, in 1684, 1685, and 1687, because it was a "scandal chronicle" based on the real-life adventures of Forde, Lord Grey (later Earl of Tankerville) and his sister-in-law, Lady Henrietta Berkeley, who really did run off together and get arrested, as the novel describes; as their affair developed, so Behn added to the chronicle.⁸

Set in France, Love Letters is an epistolary dialogue between Sylvia and her lover, Philander, with occasional letters from other characters. Philander has been married to Sylvia's older sister, Myrtille, for ten years or so; the novel begins as he convinces Sylvia of his love for her and persuades her to return it. Part I takes them through a preliminary exchange of letters, an agreement to have an

affair, an anticlimactical first night in which Philander proves to be temporarily impotent, and the consummation and almost immediate discovery of their affair; they then flee to Paris to avoid the marriage that Sylvia's parents are planning to force on her to repair her reputation. After three months spent hidden and living together, Sylvia's father has first Philander and then Sylvia arrested; they escape again, just as Philander is charged with high treason for his part in a rebellion against the king (this has formed a subplot throughout the novel). In Parts II and III, the couple's continuing adventures and breakup are described, but the novel now includes stretches of narrative and is no longer purely epistolary; for this reason, I am using only Part I, which was originally published separately as a novel that could stand on its own.

Behn's Love-Letters is a polyphonic epistolary novel, and Sylvia's style as a writer evolves in direct contrast to her lover, Philander's. In fact, in Behn's novel as a whole, much of the force comes from the comparison of the two correspondents: Philander's position as a man, and a libertine, is always in interplay with Sylvia's position as a woman for whom the consequences of a love affair are, in practical terms, more serious. Also, because Philander's responses to Sylvia are part of the novel, Sylvia's role as a reader is in the forefront: often, she questions Philander and forces him to change his style or message as a result of

her criticism.

The first noticeable characteristic of Sylvia's writing style is its sentence structure, especially in comparison to Philander's. At the very beginning of the novel, Philander establishes his style as he states his case to Sylvia:

You, my lovely maid, were not born to be obtained by the dull methods of ordinary loving; and 'tis in vain to prescribe me measures; and oh much more in vain to urge the nearness of our relation. (3-4)

He is authoritative, straightforward, very forceful, and clear that he does not intend to be thwarted. His wooing language follows the conventions of contemporary literature: Behn's theatrical background is often in evidence, and Philander sometimes sounds like the rakes from some of her seventeen plays. In comparison, Sylvia's immediate response shows a more halting sentence structure and that reflects her sense of herself:

I confess with blushes, which you might then see kindling in my face, that I was not at all pleased with the vows you made me, to endeavour to obey me, and I then even wish'd you would obstinately have denied obedience to my just commands; have pursued your criminal flame, and have left me raving on my undoing: for when you were gone, and I had leisure to look into my heart, alas! I found, whether you obliged or not, whether love or honour were preferred, I, unhappy I, was either way inevitably lost. (4-5)

Sylvia expresses conflicting desires that are reflected in her somewhat convoluted sentence structure. Her conflict is

fundamental and easy to ascertain: an affair with Philander will mean her "undoing" -- the loss of family, status, and reputation. Therefore she needs, before making her decision, to examine her own state of mind carefully. Where Philander can fall easily into the character of aristocratic rake, Sylvia, as a young unmarried woman of good family, has no models to follow that will allow her to speak of desire. On the contrary, all the available patterns suggest silence and modesty for a woman in her position. She cannot assume Philander's easy certainty, and so her writing is an inner dialogue rather than a hortatory speech. She balances her own desires against what she sees as her duty; and her rhetoric often reflects ambiguity, fear, and doubt.

This very first exchange of letters suggests what Behn will demonstrate throughout the novel: the main subject is not the love between Sylvia and Philander, but the differences between them -- gender differences that play themselves out linguistically and emotionally. Philander's tone suggests that masculine language avoids complication in its presentation of a real-life situation, whereas female language allows for complexity.

Sylvia has a certain distrust of her medium. Her main concern is telling "the story of the heart," as she puts it, and she worries that words cannot express this adequately: "there is a rhetoric in looks; in sighs and silent touches that surpasses all," she says; accents too can change

meaning, and cannot be conveyed on paper (31). Where Philander is confident that he can achieve his desired effect through words, Sylvia is in search of a more complex reality, and is less sure that language can express it.

Sylvia as Reader

In epistolary novels of seduction, it is the letter that symbolizes the seducer's love, and to read it at all is to make a statement; as Richardson's Clarissa knew, she was guilty as soon as she had accepted Lovelace's first secret letter. The letter is a powerful instrument of love, and Sylvia needs to examine its promises very carefully. A female character needs to be a good literary critic.

For a woman in Sylvia's position, a man's rhetoric is a linguistic maze that she has to negotiate: Sylvia defines herself as a character by her abilities as a decoder -- she proves to be a very sharp reader of Philander's prose. For example, when Philander tries to persuade her that his love for her is legitimate and honorable, despite his marriage and their legal consanguinity, he describes a vision of divinely sanctioned love that transcends the laws of men:

[I]n my creation I was formed for love, and destined for my Sylvia, and she for her Philander: and shall we, can we, disappoint our fate? No, my soft charmer, our souls were touched with the same shafts of love before they had a being in our bodies, and can we contradict divine decree? (8)

Philander's rhetoric remakes the world according to his own

plan, and forces Sylvia either to accept it or to reject it whole. But Sylvia is quite capable of exploring the differences between Philander's rhetoric and the real world, of puncturing his conceits. Referring to this letter, she notes dryly:

You say, my adorable brother, we were destined from our Creation for one another; that the decrees of heaven, or fate, or both, design'd us for this mutual passion: why then, oh why did not heaven, fate or destiny, do the mighty work, when first you saw my infant charms?
(44)

Sylvia wants to know why heaven made the foolish mistake of allowing Philander to marry Sylvia's sister, Myrtilla, if Sylvia was the one who was meant for him. Philander's romantic conceits were not made for such close scrutiny, and cannot withstand it. But the importance of Sylvia's constant questioning is that it forces the novel's reader, as well as Philander, to re-examine the male seducer's position; the conventional libertine rhetoric is not allowed to stand unchallenged -- this is not, in the end, a conventional love story.

Sylvia is wealthy and noble, the daughter of a count, so there is no difference of social level between her and Philander. The first stage of her construction of herself as a subject, then, is in terms of her family and social position. She refers to this a number of times -- once or twice even casually noting her reactions whenever she sees

the King ("a trembling adoration" [34]), but she makes her most specific statement when trying to decide whether or not to have the affair with Philander:

I cannot forget I am daughter to the great Beralti, and sister to Myrtilla, a yet unspotted maid, fit to produce a race of glorious heroes! And can Philander's love set no higher value on me than base poor prostitution? (18)

Sylvia at first sees herself as defined by her social context: she has her position because of her father, and she has her own role to play by marrying into the same social stratum and continuing the heritage. Unlike Philander, she does not have much power to act, because if she changes her relation to her family, she loses her position entirely. The decision to have an affair involves abandoning a whole life. When she makes that decision, it is a crucial step in her development; and she stands by it. When their affair has been discovered, the pair are forced to flee, and are hunted down by Sylvia's father; during the confusion of the flight Sylvia thinks Philander has abandoned her, but she stands by her original autonomous decision:

I'll not upbraid thee with my love, or charge thee with my undoing; it was all my own, and were it yet to do, I should again be ruined for Philander, and never find repentance, no not for a thought, a word or deed of love, to the dear false forsworn. (99)

At this point she is alone, without money, and literally almost without clothes, because she fled in her nightgown.

But her self-definition as a woman who chose her position, and accepts the results, is stronger than any need to blame Philander. The act of choice -- even in circumstances where her options are extremely circumscribed -- is the essential definition of Sylvia as a subject in her own right.

There is no doubt that Sylvia is aware of the consequences of her decisions; over and over again, she reiterates that she knows what awaits her: "shame, dishonour, reproach, eternal infamy and ever-lasting destruction, even of soul and body" (79-80).

Sylvia also -- in unspoken contrast to the doubly unfaithful Philander -- defines herself as constant. After the first anticlimactic night together, Philander and Sylvia write each other letters that cross, so that neither reads the other's before sending his or her own. Philander's is a litany of excuses for his sexual failure, and he uses as rationalization the fact that this has never happened to him before in any of the many, many sexual liaisons he refers to. But Sylvia writes in a way that differentiates her sharply from Philander's libertinism:

[B]y yonder breaking day that opens in the east, opens to see my shame -- I swear -- by that great ruler of the day, the sun, by that Almighty Power that rules them both, I swear -- I swear, Philander, charming lovely youth! Thou art the first e'er kindled soft desires about my soul, thou art the first that ever did inform me that there was such a sort of wish about me.
(61)

"My shame," she says, because she has decided that the

intent is as serious as the deed, and although she is still technically a virgin, she takes no notice of what the world defines as sexuality. Instead, she gives precedence to the importance of her own desire: she desired Philander, therefore the important threshold has been crossed. This is a revolutionary step, a move toward defining sexuality in terms of female desire rather than male performance.

As the novel progresses, Sylvia changes her original definition of herself. Before, she owed her position to her family; now she owes it to love. "[I] love," she says, "and love so, as never any woman can equal me in love..." (62). Finally, she is willing to give up everything for her love. But unlike the Portuguese nun, who also defined herself by her love, Sylvia shows true independence: since she has chosen to love, since she has made her own decisions about how to act on her love, she is not simply a passive, helpless receiver.

Sexuality

The eighteenth-century European woman was defined by her sexuality in a way that no man was, as the metaphor of Angellica's mask shows. This applies to all women, not just to characters in novels. Consider Aphra Behn's reputation, for example: very little is definitely known about her personal life, not even whether she was ever married; yet her reputation into this century has been as the "notorious"

Mrs. Behn. Henry Fielding referred to her sarcastically in Tom Jones as a writer whose work would make good bedtime reading for a rake.⁹ There is some evidence to suggest an affair with a lawyer, John Hoyle, but the bulk of the evidence against her comes not from her life but from her work; critics and readers have been unable to separate the narrators of her works from the author herself.¹⁰

Sexuality is also the most consequential aspect of a female character's identity. Sylvia's position is already partly defined by her plot: the decision to have an affair implies a breaking away from the norm, a potentially revolutionary act.

For Behn's Sylvia, sexuality is an integral, important part of her character. At the beginning of the courtship, she cannot make up her mind whether to have the affair; she knows she loves Philander, but the idea that he is her sister's husband holds her back -- not only because their incestuous relationship shocks her, but because she is jealous. She knows he once loved Myrtila, and actually eloped with her, and she wonders whether she can trust the protestations and promises of a man who has already broken them to his wife -- let alone his king. When she decides to sleep with Philander, however, it is not a half-hearted decision:

Since I must be undone, and give it all away; I'll do it generously, and scorn all mean reserves: I shall be

brave in love, and lavish all; nor shall Philander think I love him well, unless I do. (65)

Nor does she ever make any secret of the fact that she is sexually attracted to him. She begins to be more explicit than ever before about her feelings at the moment when she has the most reason to be disappointed, after their first anticlimactic night together:

[I]f you but touch my hand, my breath grows faint and short, my blood glows in my face, and runs with an unusual warmth through every vein, and tells my heart what it is Philander ails, when he falls sighing on my bosom. (62)

It is as if disappointment taught her to say clearly what she had apparently felt but not expressed earlier. In this letter, she explores her own sexual feelings with great candour. She continues:

... I own with all this love [...] that I have wishes, new, unwonted wishes, at every thought of thee I find a strange disorder in my blood, that pants and burns in every vein, and makes me blush, and sigh, and grow impatient, ashamed and angry... (63)

This letter, the one written the morning after their first night together, is probably the most important for Sylvia's definition of herself as a sexual being; it also marks an important narrative stage, a reversal of the expected conventional love story. In this letter (58), Sylvia does three things: she affirms the importance of her own desire rather than male sexual performance; she tells Philander

that she loves only him (thereby saying that love and sexual performance are not necessarily linked); and she also manages to soothe poor Philander's ego by suggesting that she does not realize whether the act was consummated or not. This letter shows her as a woman with a strong understanding of her own sexuality: instead of accepting male values, male terminology, male rhetoric about female sexuality, she has described herself and her feelings in her own terms, and reacted accordingly. In fact, it is that moment of male weakness that has given her this opening; this odd, unconventional turn in the plot has opened up a new realm of linguistic power for the heroine. From then on, she continues to express herself as a free sexual woman, but it is this letter that marks the turning point.

Plot

The role of female characters in eighteenth-century literature was as circumscribed as the roles of real women. Behn and Riccoboni had very little room to maneuver, yet they have both arrived at endings that avoid the usual fate of female characters -- there is no death, pregnancy, convent, or penury at the end of these novels. Still, those are the options that would have been in any reader's mind, and the characters themselves mentally rehearse all the possibilities.

In one sense, Behn does not have much choice of plot in

Love Letters, since she was following a real story as it unfolded; each of the three parts was written after new developments in the story of Lord Grey and Lady Henrietta became publicly known. For the bare bones of her plot, then, she has to have Sylvia and Philander flee together at the end of Part I. Nonetheless, this is a novel, and in the background are the other possible plots that any novel reader would be expecting: this time the seduced maiden is not abandoned, but many other novels existed to show that that was a likely possibility. Other endings are always in play: abandonment, death in misery, a shameful pregnancy, life as a prostitute -- these are all denouements that novels offered for seduced women. Sylvia herself, as the most interested party, has to consider those endings before she commits herself to the affair; since she knows Philander has already broken promises, she knows she may not be able to trust him. Before she starts the affair, she imagines the possible outcome:

[I]t is pitiful sometimes to see me; on one hand a thousand Cupids all gay and smiling present Philander with all the beauties of his sex [...]; on the other hand, a poor lost virgin languishing and undone, sighing her willing rape to the deaf shades and fountains, filling the woods with cries, swelling the murmuring rivulets with tears, her noble parents with a generous rage reviling her, and her betray'd sister loading her bow'd head with curses and reproaches, and all about her looking forlorn and sad. (23)

Here she uses the declamatory language of an abandoned woman weeping on a restoration stage; plot patterns are literary

structures and she recalls them by using the language suitable for each. Sylvia rejects this outcome, and she wins her bet: Philander does not abandon her, does not grow tired of her as she feared he would; by the end of Part I they are still happily in love and willing to risk the wrath of the world. This in itself is unusual: an "immoral" woman who is not punished for her sexuality is a rare occurrence in eighteenth-century novels.

Even more striking evidence of Behn's unconventional manipulation of plot is inside the novel, where she had freedom from the confines of "facts." Philander's impotence is an extraordinary piece of irony that alters the direction of the entire novel: the man who was "formed for love" (8), the man Sylvia refers to hopefully as the "all-powerful" (49), proves on their first night together to be incapable of consummating the affair. Philander's impotence, so unthinkable in the literature of the time, provides the chink in masculine armor that enables the female viewpoint to be heard. Its metaphorical function is more important than its actual role in the plot: it allows the reader to see the gap between rhetoric and reality, to rethink masculine language. It allows Sylvia the space to create her own language of desire, to break out of the old pattern. In an earlier poem called "The Disappointment," Behn had depicted the same scene -- two eager lovers, the man's impotence (or premature ejaculation) -- but with a

crucial difference: in the poem, the woman is very upset and disappointed at the anticlimactical denouement, and runs off crying.¹¹ In Love Letters, Sylvia does not show any disappointment; the simple sexual frustration has been turned into something much more important, a moment of power for the woman. This plot element has metamorphosed into something symbolic rather than physically sexual.

These two examples show that Behn, working within the confines of convention, has revolutionized the structure of her novel. She has flouted the obvious expectations of her reading audience, who expect the usual pattern of seduction and punishment, and she has created a new language for her female character.

The Double Standard

By the dictates of the double standard, female characters are not supposed to admit to any sexual desires. This is Sylvia, telling Philander that her coldness to him was feigned:

[F]or I confess I did dissemble a coldness which I was not mistress of: there lies a woman's art, there all her boasted virtue, it is but well dissembling, and no more. [...] What foolish nonsense fond custom can persuade: Yet so it is; and she that breaks her laws, loses her fame, her honour and esteem. Oh heavens! How quickly lost it is! (63)

Sylvia confesses that she began by following the expected behavior of women: hiding her feelings, refusing to admit

desire. She knows that it is only "fond custom" that maintains these rules, and very quickly she revolts against them. The essence of Sylvia's courage (and her revolutionary importance as a heroine) is her willingness to express what has been denied to women: at every possible moment she breaks the silence and admits desire, even though she knows what she will lose by it.

Sylvia understands the silence that is expected of women, but she has publicly run away and lives with her lover. She is concerned with the public commentary on her behavior, which seems to hurt her. After Philander has been arrested and taken to the Bastille, charged with rape by Sylvia's father, Sylvia writes: "I am armed for the worst that can befall me, and that is my being rendered a public shame, who have been so in the private whispers of all the Court for near these happy three months... "(105). Behn does not fail to point out ironically the sexual double standard that was in operation: at the beginning of the novel, Sylvia's father is in hot pursuit of her dressing maid, despite her mother's presence.

Public Declaration

At the end of the novel, Sylvia established herself in the subject position to the extent that she can speak against social convention. At this point, she is being chased by her father's agents, who want to arrest her, and

her tone becomes bitter. Her letter to Philander turns into an invective against marriage:

Must laws, which man contrived for mere conveniency, have power to alter the divine decrees at our creation? [...] It is fine divinity they teach, that cry marriages are made in heaven -- folly and madness grown into grave custom; should an unheedy youth in heat of blood take up with the first convenient she that offers, though he be an heir to some grave politician, great and rich, and she be the outcast of the common stews, coupled in height of wine, and sudden lust, which once allayed, and that the sober morning wakes him to see his error, he quits with shame the jilt, and owns no more the folly; shall this be called a heavenly conjunction? Were I in the height of youth, as I now am, forced by my parents, obliged by interest and honour, to marry the old, deformed, diseased, decrepit Count Anthonio, whose person, qualities and principles I loathe, and rather than suffer him to consummate his nuptials, suppose I should (as sure I should) kill myself, it were blasphemy to lay this fatal marriage to heaven's charge... (108)

She attacks marriage, the double standard, and forced marriages contracted for financial gain against the woman's wishes. The sentiment is strong, certainly, and out of context it sounds like a feminist plea for the complete restructuring of the marriage laws. In part, it is; but throughout the novel, in times of stress, Sylvia has a habit of taking over pieces of Philander's rhetoric that she has previously criticized as shallow. Here she is taking up an argument that Philander made to her when he told her that his marriage to her sister was meaningless (9). At the time, Sylvia had great difficulty accepting it, and saw it as a seductive ploy; now she seems to accept it completely. Still, she has added details to the argument that support

her feminist position; Philander was concerned only with persuading Sylvia that marriage bonds did not apply to him, but Sylvia is concerned with the details of those bonds. For her, one of the most revolting aspects of marriage is the way women are used as pawns, ending up with men like the revolting Count Anthonio. This is not an abstract argument; when her parents found out about her affair with Philander, they immediately arranged a marriage with Foscario, and were prepared to force her to accept it. Foscario was not ugly and old, but Sylvia refused to accept the violation of her will.

Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd

Riccoboni's Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd is set in England, coincidentally reciprocating Behn's choice of background. Fanni Butlerd's social standing is a little ambiguous, but is clearly below that of the man who courts her, Mylord Alfred. Because of that, as with Sylvia and Philander, there is no question of marriage. This novel consists of Fanni's letters to Alfred, detailing the beginnings of love, the decision to have an affair, Alfred's long absence on court business, and then the ending of their affair soon after his return, when he announces that he is

marrying a woman of his own social class. Alfred suggests that he and Fanni continue the affair after his marriage, but she refuses. Fanni's last letter is published in a newspaper, as her final response to Alfred; she then publishes the whole collection after disguising the characters to protect their privacy.

In Fanni Butlerd, Riccoboni demonstrates a very particular way of working through the process by which the heroine, through struggling with her own desire, comes via writing to construct herself as social subject rather than victim. To come to subjecthood through writing means to find a language in which to express desire, and the ideology of female sexuality current in eighteenth-century France strictly regulated the expression of this sexuality. Assertive female sexuality was seen as a threat to the marriage, family, and property systems as well as to "morality": Rousseau, among others, formulates this clearly. The old idea that women, by nature, were uncontrollably sexually voracious also lingered on well into the eighteenth century.¹¹ Convention allowed women the expression of only nonassertive -- or responsive -- affections;¹² modesty, defined as the negation of the expression of sexual desire, and by extension, of all expression including writing, was considered the most valued feminine characteristic. Given an ideological construct of femininity that denied desire, the problem for Riccoboni is to find a language to talk

about her heroine's sexuality. In Fanni Butlerd, Riccoboni's solution to this problem is a special use of absence as a way to develop a new language about sexuality.

I use "absence" as an organizing principle in Fanni Butlerd in the sense that the French critic Pierre Macherey describes it in his concept of the non-dit, the "not said." Macherey sees the concept of absence, as central to the functioning of all fiction.¹³ The non-dit, for Macherey, is that which cannot be said, and fiction derives its meaning from the hidden conflict between the said and the not said. Ideologies -- such as the ideology of female sexuality -- exist around what Macherey calls "un grand soleil absent": that which cannot be discussed if the ideology is to remain operative (Macherey 154). The spoken itself cannot create the sense of the literary work: only the juxtaposition of said and not said produces meaning. The implicit presence of the not-said has to be acknowledged. To understand Riccoboni's novel we need to investigate the complicated functioning of the non-dit in its text.

In Fanni Butlerd, this notion of the non-dit, the inexpressible, works on two connected levels: physical absence and linguistic absence. The physical absence is the effect of the presence or absence of the male lover; the linguistic absence is not silence but rather the absence of a language to describe what the ideology cannot express --

in this case, active female sexuality.

Physical Absence

In the novel's dynamic of physical absence, the physical absence of Alfred, Fanni's lover, is always implied by the epistolary nature of the novel. Fanni's first move as self-conscious writer is to conquer this absence through her letters. As narrator, Fanni develops a technique that could be called "writing as if" -- that is, writing as if she were speaking to Alfred and he were responding immediately, as if writing were so powerful that it could conjure up the loved one's presence. For example, one night she lies in bed reading one of his letters, and she writes an immediate response:

Je relis cette lettre charmante: je la remets dans ce portefeuille, que j'ai vu si souvent dans vos mains. Ah! qu'il sent bon! il sent comme toi ... Mais cela finira-t-il? Je vous dis que je veux dormir: entendez-vous, Mylord, je veux dormir. Bon soir: adieu ...
(Letter 31)

With this metonymic technique, Fanni makes the objects she associates with Alfred -- the letter or the lettercase -- take his place and act as if they were he. She develops a rhetoric of presence, a fictional construct: through her writing, her lover is present. To write is to create her lover's presence, but with one crucial difference: Alfred's written presence differs from his real one because Fanni has

control over it. Paradoxically, Fanni is closest to Alfred when he is absent; that is, when she is writing to him "as if he were there," when he is a construct who can be summoned on her own terms. The ideal lover is the absent lover, and absence is necessary for Fanni to have some control in her relations with Alfred. This technique is Fanni's first step toward subjecthood.

Alfred is necessarily always absent at the moment of writing, but he is more or less distant at different points in the novel. For the first half of the novel, Alfred is courting Fanni; then they have a brief affair -- lasting perhaps ten days, as far as one can tell from the ambiguous dating of the letters. After that, Alfred is sent away on an official posting, and the nature of his absence changes: the letters written during the courtship and the brief consummation of the affair suppose a temporary absence -- Fanni expects to see Alfred in a few hours, or the next day. But the letters written during his posting assume a longer absence that turns out to be permanent: Alfred is away for several weeks, and when he returns he quickly becomes engaged to another woman, at which point Fanni breaks off their relationship. The time span of Alfred's absences is important because as they vary there is a corresponding change in the nature of Fanni's discourse.

Just as Fanni's substitution of a fictional construct -
- the ideal lover -- in her letters allowed Fanni to have

control over her relationship with Alfred, his permanent absence allows her to move one step further and develop a voice of her own about her feelings for him. This is when her discourse changes. The more absent Alfred becomes, the more marked Fanni's ability to speak becomes: finally, when his absence becomes emotionally complete (that is, when he is engaged to another woman), Fanni is able to publish her letter to him in the newspaper. The content of Fanni's newfound ability to express herself in writing is the exploration of her sexual desire.

The development of Fanni's discourse on sexuality does not involve an increased explicitness. Rather, it is a change in orientation and terminology. In early letters, Fanni defines sexuality in terms of male pleasure rather than female desire. In later letters, she will learn to redefine her sexual experience in terms of her own desire.

In these early letters, Fanni relies on saying what it is conventionally possible to say; that is, she expresses her sexuality as responsive, not assertive; in terms of her lover's pleasure rather than her own. For example, in the letter written after their first night spent together, Fanni describes what has happened as a deliberate choice on her part to make her lover happy:

Ah que mon âme est tranquille! [...] J'ai rempli les désirs de mon amant, je les ai vus naître; il est heureux, il m'estime, il m'aime; il m'adore: [...] Je n'ai point cédé: un moment de délire ne m'a point mise

dans ses bras; je me suis donnée: ... (Letter 36)

At this early stage, all that can be said within the bounds of convention has to be said in terms of Alfred's pleasure rather than her own. She cannot openly state her own sexual desire. Even in Fanni's first reaction, however, there is a sense of autonomy: the only pleasure she can speak of is Alfred's, but Fanni lays emphasis on her own choice in the matter: "Je me suis donnée," she says: "je n'ai point cédé": "I gave myself; I didn't surrender." She asserts her own right to choose, but pleasure can only be defined in relation to the man.

Once her lover is definitively absent, and the immediacy of the sexual experience is gone, Fanni begins to develop a new way of writing about her feelings. The absence of the lover is vital because it creates a gap in male rhetoric, which allows Fanni the opportunity to act rather than react. What Fanni develops is not merely a separate but equal rhetoric; rather -- to return to Macherey's concept of the non-dit -- Fanni describes her own concept of sexual pleasure through what is not said as much as by what is said. This "linguistic absence" is the second level of the role of absence in Fanni's new discourse on sexuality.

Linguistic Absence

"Linguistic absence" is the non-dit of the text. As the novel proceeds and Alfred's absence becomes permanent, Fanni's letters increasingly allude to a series of dreams and daydreams in which she plays with images of control, subjugation, and pleasure in sexuality. It is through these that her new discourse of female pleasure emerges, a discourse structured by the "not-said."

The fantasies follow several basic themes. In some, Fanni is either invisible or hidden. Even before Fanni became Alfred's lover, there was talk of a magic ring of invisibility that Fanni's friends were discussing one evening -- apparently referring to the ring in Diderot's 1748 novel Les Bijoux Indiscrets. Fanni fantasizes having such a ring, which would make her invisible, and she imagines going unseen to Alfred's room as he gets ready for bed; once he is asleep, she plays practical jokes on him until he wakes: then, weakened by laughter, she will be unable to resist what follows: "& puis le silence, la nuit, l'amour ..." (Letter 25). Fanni herself ends this phrase with an ellipsis: there are no words to describe what she envisions happening.

In another fantasy, she imagines watching Alfred through a little hole -- "seulement par un petit trou, par le plus petit qu'il soit possible d'imaginer!" (Letter 65). Again and again, Fanni is obsessed with seeing Alfred but

being unseen herself.

In other fantasies Fanni is concerned with having the power to make her exit when she wants to: at one point, finding out that Alfred's letters are delivered to him when he wakes up, she imagines herself waking him up instead -- as if she were herself a letter. She would kiss him, she says, and then she would run away (Letter 60). Substituting her physical presence for the letter, she has the same kind of control over the outcome of her expression as she does when she is writing a real letter. Like Fanni's fictional construct of the "ideal lover" in her letters to Alfred, this suggests again that it is only through writing that the heroine achieves autonomy.

Yet other fantasies involve a substitution of some other object for the male body, since there is no direct language in which a woman can safely express desire for a male body. At one point, she uses a portrait of Alfred as a means of indirect expression of desire; she takes the portrait to bed with her and says of it, "Je vais me mettre au lit, votre portrait y vient avec moi, nous allons dormir ensemble....dormir!" (Letter 46). Later in the novel, the substitution becomes more complex: once again she has Alfred's portrait in bed with her, and is dissatisfied with "how much space it leaves in the bed" (Letter 98). She wishes to have the fairy Nirsa's magic powers so that she could make a double of Alfred and send it off to do his work

for him, meanwhile keeping the real Alfred sleeping in bed with her. In this substitution, her fictional construct of the "ideal lover" becomes physically real, through magic.

Finally, there are letters in which she expresses desire without either magic, invisibility, or substitution. In these letters, the non-dit is a deliberate choice that Fanni makes in order to point to a discourse of sexuality that has not been invented yet -- the possibility of a female sexuality in its own right, rather than one dependent on and reacting to male sexuality. In the following quotation, for example, she is responding to a dream Alfred has had in which he sees himself at her knees:

Ah, quel songe! d'ou vient me cause-t-il tant d'émotion? ... A mes genoux! toi, mon cher amant! hélas, t'y verrai-je encore? ... Je partageois ton bonheur! Muet dans mes bras, sans autre sentiment que celui du plaisir ... Eh bien ... dis-moi, dis-moi donc? mais non; tais-toi. En vérité la pensée va vite. Cette image... Oh tais-toi: paix, paix donc! dans un mois, mon cher Alfred, vous me direz le reste. (Letter 66)

This passage shows Fanni's insistence on not speaking: Alfred is "speechless" in her arms; first she asks him to speak and then decides that she prefers him not to -- "tais-toi!" she says. Her thoughts go faster than her words; but although it is clearly implied that both writer and reader understand the pleasure to come, Fanni vehemently does not want it put into words: she repeats -- "Tais-toi: paix, paix

donc." The telling is always deferred, put off into the future, when Alfred's return from his posting will presumably make words unnecessary. And yet despite the refusal to describe graphically this erotic situation, there is enough detail to explain to the reader the source of Fanni's pleasure: Alfred is at her knees, therefore no longer in the position of control and power that he has in real life, and their pleasure, as she says, is mutual. It is Alfred's dream, yet she responds to it very strongly because it shows them on the footing she longs for -- an equality of position and pleasure.

What, in fact, is Fanni constructing as a female sexuality? She points toward the possibility of a non-male-centered sexuality. Partly this is defined in opposition to Alfred's sexuality, as when she rejects the idea that only sexual intercourse itself is a satisfactory proof of love:

L'attachement d'une femme délicate est au-dessus des idées de votre sexe: vous ne connoissez qu'une preuve de notre amour; mais vous ignorez combien est fort le sentiment qui nous conduit à vous la donner. Non, vous n'aimez point comme nous. (Letter 97)

Here Fanni is reverting to the language of sensibility, the eighteenth-century rhetoric that admired the pure and susceptible heart it associated with femininity. Sensibility does not necessarily deny female sexuality, but it links it with emotional sensitivity. This rhetoric

sharply differentiates male conduct from female conduct, and is the only vehicle available for Fanni to express positive female feeling and sexuality.

Fanni also explores the possibilities of other kinds of sensual experience. For example, when she referred in one fantasy, mentioned earlier, to the idea that the fairy Nirsa could make her a double of Alfred, she said that the point would be to keep Alfred with her in bed. Yet she emphasizes that it is his sleeping presence she wants, not his sexual presence:

Je goûterois plus de plaisir à vous contempler endormi
dans mes bras, qu'une autre n'en sentirait dans
l'instant le plus doux de votre reveil. (Letter 98)

At another point, she dwells at length and with great eloquence on the number of kisses Alfred will owe her on his return from his trip, and how she will demand an exact accounting of them (Letter 60). The lover's presence (even sleeping), his kisses, his touch give Fanni a sensual pleasure that does not depend on the male sexual economy.

But the real implication of the role of absence in Fanni Butlerd is that in a profound way, the male lover is not very important. Yes, as a social subject Fanni interacts with men, and necessarily defines herself in opposition to men. Historically, semiotically, she is rooted in a real world in which she must struggle with a

male-oriented sexual economy. Yet the importance of absence as a structuring foundation of this text is such that men's actual presence is not as interesting to Fanni as the fictional presence she can herself construct through writing. Macherey speaks of one level of the non-dit, which in this novel corresponds to the cultural taboo surrounding female sexuality: female sexuality is the "grand soleil absent" that Macherey said cannot be spoken of openly, but has to be taken into account. But there is another, more personal and more particular level of non-dit in Fanni Butlerd that goes beyond Macherey's conception: for Fanni, sexual pleasure exists more effectively in recollection, in memory, in playful construction of future possibility than it does in the presence of her lover. The non-dit of the culture has been incorporated into her subjecthood. But in the process of constructing herself as a social subject, Fanni has inverted the terms of the argument, just as she did in her publicly published letter: where her culture says that the unsayable "absent sun" is female sexuality, for Fanni the "absent sun" is the male lover. By constructing herself through writing as a social subject, Fanni has also defined herself as a sexual subject, and thereby she changes the balance of what can, and cannot, be said.

By the end of the novel, what has Fanni achieved? She

has pointed toward a new concept of female sexuality, and she has tried, as a newly constituted social subject, to live it; she has refused to be forced into the plot of pathetic abandoned woman pining for an absent lover. What is remarkable about the novel, in fact, is the effect that her lover's absence has on Fanni: his absence induces her to write; his absence, rather than his presence, reveals her desire for him; his absence prompts her exploration of the nature of her own desire, and her understanding of the ways it differs from his.

There is a second level on which the non-dit operates in this text. On one level, there is the general non-discussibility of female sexuality, that "grand soleil absent" around which the concept of women circles. But there is also the second level: in this novel, as we have seen, the absence of the particular lover is a necessary requirement for Fanni to explore her own sexuality. Sexual pleasure for Fanni depends largely on his absence rather than his presence.

This discussion began by linking Fanni Butlerd with Les Lettres portugaises; in its construction of a female subjectivity, however, Riccoboni's novel takes a giant step beyond Les Lettres portugaises. Mariana, the Portuguese nun, stops writing at the end before there is any true resolution: she suggests that she may in the future write a letter to show her lover that she is at peace, but we never

see the letter. Fanni, however, goes beyond Mariana by not only writing but actually publishing a letter that we could call a manifesto of male/female relations. This is the act of a subject.

Riccoboni's Fanni is not like the Portuguese nun in many ways: she is in the world, not in the convent. She does more than write -- she writes to protest, to change that world. The Portuguese Letters belongs to a male-authored tradition that stretches back to Ovid's Heroides -- letters written by a man that claimed to be written by all the abandoned women of the ancient world. The endings of the seduced woman's plot are similar in all Ovid's cases: abandoned, the woman is in despair and ruined. Like Sylvia In Behn's Love Letters, Fanni has to think through her literary antecedents if she is to avoid this ending. Finding a new denouement is difficult, as she herself points out. Thinking of her friend Sir Thomas, who is pining with unrequited love for her confidante Miss Betzi, Fanni says: "Je ne veux point le sort de sir Thomas: je ne voudrois pas du mien non plus. Que me faudroit-il donc? Ah, je ne l'aurai point ce que je veux! je suis trop sûr de ne le point avoir!" (Letter 61).

In the end, she finds the strength to create a different kind of ending that she had not envisioned; over and over again she had imagined what would happen when (not "if") Alfred left her, but she had not dreamed it would be

so abrupt and chilly a break. She had not imagined that she would come to despise Alfred, and to see him as very different from what she had thought him. At the very end of the novel, she has found a new position for herself that is not any of the denouements she had mentioned. She acknowledges that she still loves Alfred, but she refuses to continue the affair because she will not cause the kind of pain to another woman that she herself has felt (Letter 113). She also insists on the importance of female memory; she refuses to deny her love, thus differentiating herself from Alfred, from all men who can love and then forget the women they loved (Letter 116). And most important of all, by publishing her letters she violates all the expectations of what a woman in her position should do. With this stroke, she changes herself from a passive abandoned woman to a moral force: her reason for publishing is to instruct women in the arts of men, to awaken them to the gap between male rhetoric and male action. By so doing, she places herself morally above Alfred, and in a position of power. He has not dared to boast of their affair because of what his future wife would do, but Fanni has dared to do what women are not supposed to do, and made herself public.

The novel ends with a final letter of protest, a public (and published) critique of male sexual behavior. In this letter, Fanni finally achieves what has eluded her for so long: she escapes from the tyranny of Alfred's rhetoric, and

begins to define herself in her own terms again. She accuses him of breaking not the standards of the world (by those standards, he has done nothing wrong), but the standards that she herself sets up:

A présent c'est vous, Mylord, vous seul que je méprise, non pour avoir quitté une femme, vous être montré plus ambitieux que sensible, non pour avoir change de sentiment, mais parce que vous en avez feint que vous ne sentiez pas; (Letter 116)

She is redefining the male terms of the argument and replacing them with her own; to treat a woman badly is the same as breaking one's word in the "real" world. Men want to separate the two, and have different rules for public and private; as Fanni phrases it, "Mais quoi, tromper une femme, est-ce donc enfreindre les loix de la probité? manque-t-on à l'honneur en trahissant une maîtresse? C'est un procédé reçu..." (Letter 116). But Fanni refuses to accept this; she wants women to be treated by the same standards. What she is attacking here is not the sexual double standard (which forces women to be strictly chaste) but the related gender double standard, which says that in affairs of love, men do not have to abide by the usual rules of honour.

Earlier, she was willing to believe that some men at least were capable of the same kind of sensibility as her; now, she has made a firm distinction based on gender. Men are innately different from women, and innately incapable of understanding them.

Her last letter, which I have described as her manifesto, is her most important summing up of all that she has learned; it was written for public consumption, not for Alfred, and in it she addresses all men:

Monstres féroces, qui nous devez le bonheur et l'agrément de votre vie, vous qui ne connoissez que l'orgueil & l'amour éffréné de vous-mêmes; sans la douceur, sans l'aménité qui fûrent notre partage, quel seroit le votre? Pensez-vous que nos mains se refusassent à laver dans le sang des outrages que nous recevons, si la bonté de notre coeur n'étouffoit en nous le désir de la vengeance? Sur quoi fondez-vous la supériorité que vous prétendez? sur le droit le plus fort? Eh que ne le faites-vous donc valoir? que n'employez-vous la force, au lieu de la séduction? Nous saurions nous défendre; l'habitude de résister nous apprendroit à vaincre. Ne nous élévez-vous dans la mollesse, ne vous rendez-vous foibles & timides, que pour vous réserver le plaisir cruel que goûte cette espèce de chasseur, qui tranquillement assis, voit tomber dans ses pièges l'innocente proie qu'il a conduite par la ruse à s'envelopper dans ses rets [sic]? (Letter 116)

Once again, she describes innate and enduring differences between the sexes, and stresses the superiority of women, who are too good to take revenge on all the injustices done them.

* * *

Both of these novels show female characters defining themselves as active subjects. The very fact that they do so means that they have to reject the conventional plots

offered by the literature around them, and forge a new kind of scenario -- conventional plots do not show women as subjects, but as passive objects. The struggle for subjectivity is played out in writing, in reading, but most essentially in the woman's definition of her own sexuality; for what a woman had to struggle against was a double standard that relegated her to silence and object status in the name of chastity. Sexuality and self-expression through writing are inextricably connected.

Aphra Behn was luckier in her period than Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni. It is clear that, however slight the freedoms it offered to women, the English Restoration provided Behn with more room to maneuver than the French 1750s did for Riccoboni. Behn's heroine has to define herself against the background of the double standard; but Riccoboni has the additional weight of the cult of sensibility to hem her in. Fanni depicts herself as a woman for whom sensibility is the defining trait, and sensibility is somehow incompatible with the kind of sexuality Behn's Sylvia was able to express. In the seventy-odd years between these novels, there was a regression in the amount of sexual a freedom a woman could envisage -- even linguistically -- and this is reflected in the novels. Aphra Behn wrote during the Restoration, a period in England when, as part of the backlash against the Puritan years, there was great freedom; some of this even extended to women. But by the time Riccoboni was writing

Fanni Butlerd in France, the atmosphere had moved firmly back toward the notion of female purity; in literature and life, this was reflected in the cult of sensibility that so clearly affects Fanni. Janet Todd describes in Sensibility how women gave up sexual power and freedom for the power of moral superiority. Since the struggle for sexual freedom seemed to be hopeless, they took the power that they could get: defining their essence as naturally purer and more sensitive than men's, women placed themselves in the position of moral arbiters -- a position that led eventually to the Victorian "angel in the house."

By offering women the reward of moral superiority, sensibility took away their right to express sexuality. Since male rhetoric also denied female sexuality its right of expression, it is harder for Fanni (who defines herself as sensible) to construct a positive image of herself without falling into the definitions suggested by men (Alfred). It is revolutionary, however, for a woman to define herself as a subject in either of these situations, and both these novels offer at least partially successful results.

The problems that Sylvia and Fanni encounter as characters bear a close resemblance to those that Behn and Riccoboni encountered as authors. The following analogy suggests just how much more heavily Riccoboni's contemporary ideology held her back from expression: in each novel,

Sylvia and Fanni write a letter that they tear up -- it is too strong, too "true" for consumption (Behn 42-45; Riccoboni Letter 30). But in Behn that letter, full of emotion, is recuperated: Sylvia's maid pieces it together and sends it. In Riccoboni, the letter is lost, and all we learn of its contents is that it expressed her desire for Alfred. For Behn, then, strong emotion is difficult to express, but it is possible -- her letters arrive at their source. For Riccoboni, there are some things that have to be censored; female desire is the first of them.

NOTES

¹ Lettres portugaises, Lettres d'une Péruvienne, et autres romans d'amour par lettres, ed. Bernard Bray and Isabelle Landy-Houillon (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1983). Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd, ed. Joan Hinde Stewart (Geneva: Droz, 1979). Aphra Behn, Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave, ed. Lore Metzger (New York and London: Norton, 1973). All further references to these texts are given in parentheses in the text.

² Frédéric Deloffre and J. Rougeot, introduction to Les Lettres portugaises (Paris: Garnier, 1962).

³ Emily Crosby, Une Romanière Oubliée: Madame Riccoboni (1924; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1976); and Joan Hinde Stewart, introduction to Fanni Butlerd (Geneva: Droz, 1979).

⁴ See Anneke Prins-S'Jacob, "Aphra Behn, Suriname and the Critics," OSO: A Journal for Surinamese Linguistics, Literature and History 3.1 (May 1984); Bernard Dhuicq, "Further Evidence on Aphra Behn's Stay in Surinam," Notes and Queries 26; Robert A. Day, "Aphra Behn's First Biography," Studies in Bibliography 22 (1969); W. J. Cameron, New Light on Aphra Behn (Auckland: U of Auckland P, 1961).

⁵ Joan Hinde Stewart, in her introduction to Fanni Butlerd, quotes a letter from Riccoboni to David Garrick that she assumes proves the case. In the letter, Riccoboni says: "J'ai mis dans un de mes ouvrages l'événement qui a changé les premières dispositions du sort à mon égard et sans le sçavoir, le public s'est vivement intéressé à des malheurs qu'il a regardés comme une fiction" (x). This seems to me a little thin; that she used her own experience as a foundation is probable, but does not prove that she actually used her own letters.

⁶ Crosby, Une Romanière Oubliée, 84; Stewart, introduction to Fanni Butlerd, x.

⁷ Aphra Behn, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, Part I (New York, London: Viking Penguin/Virago, 1987). All further references to this work are given in parentheses in the text.

⁸ See Cecil Price, Cold Caleb (London: A. Melrose, 1956) for this history of the Grey/Berkeley escapade.

⁹ Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, Book X, ch. ii.

¹⁰ "The Disappointment," in The Collected Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers (London: William Heinemann, 1915).

¹¹ See Paul Hoffman, La Femme dans la pensée des lumières (Paris: Editions Ophrys, n.d.).

¹² This is Mary Poovey's formulation; see The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984) 4.

¹³ Pierre Macherey, Pour une théorie de la production littéraire (Paris: François Maspero, 1966). All further references to this work are given in parentheses in the text.

CHAPTER 3

Marriage

Eliza Haywood's Love in Excess and Marie-Jeanne de Riccoboni's Le Marquis de Cressy

[P]erhaps the most serious problem that confronts us in writing a history of eighteenth-century marriage is that so much female feeling, so much female bitterness, was not only unexpressed but almost inexpressible.

-- Susan Staves, "Where Is History But in Texts?"

I argued in my opening chapter that the main content of female realism is the critique of marriage. In this chapter I examine two novels that discuss the problem of female agency in marriage -- that is, what happens when a woman falls in love with a man and wants to marry him, in a society where the woman is not supposed openly to make that choice. The two novels, as I will demonstrate below, share the same plot: I argue that Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's Histoire de M. le Marquis de Cressy (1758) is consciously based on an earlier novel by Eliza Haywood, Love in Excess, or the Fatal Enquiry (1719). The existence of two novels using the same plot -- but with very different results -- provides an unusual opportunity to compare approaches: the two authors, working with the same material, take different stances on female sexuality and arrive at different denouements.

These novels question the role of women in marriage:

first, and most importantly, they depict the conflicts caused by the perceived social role ascribed to women in the choice of a partner. The protagonists of both novels fight against the passivity forced on them, and resist it by trying to sidestep it. Within the marriage itself, the heroines continue to resist the role ascribed to them by the sexual double standard: they reject the passive acceptance of their husbands' infidelity. This chapter examines the strategies that can be used in a novel to resist the ideology of marriage, and the effect those strategies have on the novel in terms of plot and narrative stance.

Resisting the Ideology of Marriage

Novels do not depict life, they depict life as it is represented by ideology.

--Lennard Davis, Resisting Novels (24)

A novel's value, then, or indeed the value of any work of art for feminists, is determined not by its progressive picture of woman or by any exhortation to change a sexist society, but rather by its articulation of the conflict, or what is sometimes called the problematic, posed by a sexist ideology, in the background but nevertheless dominant, in which female consciousness is foregrounded.

--Karen Newman, "Can This Marriage Be Saved?"

The resistance to marriage in women's writing produces,

as Judith Lowder Newton has remarked, "tension, disguise, and ultimately disjunctions of form" (9). I argue that resistance to marriage is a concrete form of a resistance to the ideology of femininity; those terms, however, need more explanation. "Resistance" is related to what Nancy K. Miller has called "cultural resistance" ("Writing" 9), which can be situated "in the insistence of a certain thematic structuration, in the form of content" ("Emphasis" 27). In "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," Miller takes Gérard Genette's notion of a "maxim" -- a belief or expectation about behavior operating in a particular culture at a particular time -- and talks of "demaximization" in women's novels. That is, those elements in novels by women that go against the grain of what their society expects from them and their characters contribute to an effect of "demaximization." One such element is the Princesse de Clèves' confession to her husband in Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette's novel. The immediate effect of demaximization is often to make the plot seem "implausible" to some readers, as in the case of La Princesse de Clèves, so it will be particularly important to explain possibly implausible plot elements in these two novels -- for example, Madame de Cressy's suicide.

I use "ideology" in the sense defined by T.J. Clark, who sees the traces of it in literature as

a kind of inertness ... a fixed pattern of imagery and belief, a syntax that seems obligatory, a set of permitted modes of seeing and saying; each with its own structure of closure and disclosure, its own horizons, its way of providing certain perceptions and rendering others unthinkable, aberrant, or extreme. And these things are done ... as it were surreptitiously ... most often tied to the attitudes and experiences of a particular class, and therefore at odds, at least to some extent, with the attitudes and experience of those who do not belong to it.¹

Novels that resist the ideology of femininity, then, are those that challenge not only the reader's social expectations but also the novel's narrative patterns. The "maxims" of eighteenth-century marriage involve passivity on the woman's part: she must wait to be chosen; she may exercise the power of refusing, but not of choosing; she should not manifest sexual desire before the marriage; she should not complain of her husband's infidelity after it. Love in Excess and Le Marquis de Cressy resist these cultural maxims at all levels of their narrative structures.

Love in Excess and Le Marquis de Cressy

"I have ever held comparisons to be odious," said Charlotte Bronte, referring specifically to comparisons between one woman writer and another (Showalter, "Double" 478). But there are comparisons so curious that they beg to be made, and one of these is Riccoboni's Histoire de M. le

Marquis de Cressy (1758) and its unacknowledged model, Haywood's Love in Excess (1719). The similarities of plot and detail between these books show that Riccoboni knew and used Haywood's novel. But the real interest of the comparison lies in the ways in which she changed the original.

The early editions of Cressy are subtitled "traduite de l'anglais par Mme de ***" (Crosby 174). There is no English work with such a title, and later editions of Cressy abandon the claim. Modern critics seem to assume that Riccoboni was simply trying to ride the wave of literary anglophilia and gain a wider audience; as Paul Van Tieghem puts it, "les deux premiers romans [Fanni Butlerd and Le Marquis de Cressy] sont soi-disant 'traduits de l'anglais' --il faut bien se laisser porter par le flux du succès des romanciers anglais" (102). No one appears to have followed up the possibility that she was telling the truth.

Riccoboni was, in fact, interested in the English as more than simply a popular bandwagon. She had read plenty of English novels; she corresponded regularly on literary matters with her friend the actor David Garrick, and translated and "adapted" Henry Fielding's Amelia. She entertained a number of English writers at her home, and late in her life she gave a collection of 47 English novels she owned to Garrick (Crosby, appendix VIII).

There is no evidence, however, that Riccoboni read

Eliza Haywood, the best-selling English writer who made a splash with her first novel, Love in Excess, was excoriated by Pope in the *Dunciad* for her "immorality," and wrote approximately 70 novels and novellas before her death in 1756. (Haywood, by the way, knew as much about French literature as Riccoboni did about English; she translated French novels, and apparently traveled to France several times.²) None of Haywood's novels were among those Riccoboni gave to Garrick, but it is clear from an examination of the two plots that Love in Excess is the model for Le Marquis de Cressy.

Riccoboni's Cressy is not simply an imitation or loose translation of Love in Excess, however. When she wrote her famous continuation of Marivaux's Marianne, Riccoboni avoided the easy, conventional closure of the two other suites -- by the English Jane Collyer and an anonymous French author, who both married Marianne off at the very same moment her noble birth came to light. Riccoboni used other people's material for her own ends, not, as was so often done in the early days of the novel, as a way of recycling an old story for quick publication. Riccoboni was as important a figure in the development of the French novel as Haywood was in the English, and her transmutation of Haywood's novel is instructive about the possibilities a female author -- in different cultures, and separated by forty years -- had open to her in her treatment of the same

material.

Certain of Riccoboni's changes have as much to do with her Frenchness as with her female eye. I have already pointed out in the introduction to this study that French translators of English works tended to "refine" the language of the original in order to bring it line with French sensibilities. Alix Deguise notes in her preface to the Marquis de Cressy that when Riccoboni herself translated plays that Garrick sent her from London, she produced adaptations rather than translations, since "le goût français s'accommodait mal de ce qui pouvait amuser un public britannique."³ Apparently, any transposition of English work into French demanded a filter; the French public of the third quarter of the century preferred a more aristocratic milieu, with as few intrusions as possible by the lower classes and their bad manners or unrefined speech.

Two Novels, One Plot

The following brief summary of the two novels shows where their plots coincide and where the narrative commentary makes them utterly different.

Haywood's Love in Excess is set in France, with French protagonists. Her hero is the Count D'Elmont, who returns to Paris after the wars in the train of the victorious Luxembourg. Riccoboni calls her protagonist the Marquis de

Cressy and has him returning from the Spanish war in the train of the Duc de Vendôme.

D'Elmont and Cressy are charming, brave, handsome, and immediately desirable at court. Of all the women who would be happy to accept such a man, Haywood singles out two: Amena Sanseverin, just out of the convent, naive, pretty, and fresh -- but not rich; and Alouysa, a little older, independent since the death of her parents, witty, noble, and very rich. Riccoboni calls her two heroines Adelaide de Bugei (the young, naive girl from the convent) and Madame de Raisel, who is slightly older, widowed, extremely noble, and very rich. In both novels, the two women are friends.

Although Riccoboni keeps the number and relationship of the characters, and the plot outline, she changes tempers and motivations; Haywood's Amena is proud, fierce, and jealous, whereas Madame de Raisel is sweet-tempered and generous. The effects of these changes will be discussed below. In general, however, the plots of the two novels unfold in the same way: in each, the hero, unaware that the older woman loves him, starts a gallantry with the younger, making her fall hopelessly in love with him. In each, the girl's father, alerted to the love affair, demands that the hero either propose marriage or leave; both heroes decline marriage (to the horrified surprise of Adelaide and Amena) - - they are ambitious for money and titles. Yet even after this refusal both Cressy and D'Elmont, by bribing the

maidservants of Adelaide and Amena, manage to meet with them in their gardens, to lure them out of the garden into the neighboring park (which Haywood identifies as the Tuileries), and there to come within a hair's-breadth of completing the seduction.

Meanwhile, Haywood's Alouysa and Riccoboni's Raisel, loving the hero but ignored by him, decide to take an active role. Each writes two anonymous letters to the hero, and with the help of money, beauty, and status, each marries him. However, neither is happy. Alouysa is torn by jealousy when she realizes her husband loves not her but another woman (Melliora, the ward who has been put under his care), and she concocts elaborate schemes to discover this other woman's identity; one of these schemes ends in her accidental death, when D'Elmont, rushing through a dark room, runs her through with his sword at the end of Book II. In Riccoboni's version, the newly married Madame de Cressy does not realize that her husband is having an affair with her own ward, Hortense de Berneil, and also with Madame D'Elmont, an unscrupulous female rake. When she finds out, she is so sure of never being happy again that she takes poison. In both cases, the husband's infidelity and bad treatment of his wife lead directly to their deaths. And in both cases, the deaths have indelible but very different effects on the husband: in Haywood, after some tribulations D'Elmont succeeds in reforming and achieving a happy

marriage with Melliora (in Book III); in Riccoboni, Cressy's status and success become meaningless to him, and he is never happy again.

Love in Excess and Le Marquis de Cressy are based on two themes that are wholly shaped by cultural assumptions: seduction and marriage. In this particular case, it is not the fact of marriage itself that is important but the life lived after marriage -- already a deviation from the standard marriage plot, which traditionally ends with the sealing of the bargain. The representation of seduction can be read as an indicator of each writer's stance on women's position in the sexual power structure, which in the eighteenth century is balanced in the man's favor: seduction provides an opportunity to write about the sexual double standard, openly or covertly criticizing it or supporting it.

In "Women Writers and the Double Standard," Elaine Showalter has described the enormous socio-literary pressures exerted on women writers in Victorian England. Those insights are applicable to the eighteenth century; since women writers were almost invariably associated with their works in the minds of their critics, a woman who wrote about female sexuality in any but a conventional way risked having her characters and herself portrayed as immoral. Pope's attack on Haywood in The Dunciad and Palissot's on

Riccoboni in la Dunciade are vicious and pointed examples of this (see Chapter I).

Haywood's treatment of seduction in Love in Excess can be read as an attempt at demaximization, since the portrayal of an active female sexuality goes against the grain of contemporary maxims on the subject. This in itself is a major step toward redefining "femininity." Haywood's Amena, for example, intends to resist seduction, but does not, and is not chastised by the narrator. On the contrary, the narrator sets up an environment that makes Amena's feelings perfectly understandable: in the persuasively empty, moonlit park, "What now could poor Amena do, surrounded by so many Powers, attack'd by such a charming force without, betray'd by Tenderness within: Vertue [sic] and Pride, the Guardians of her Honour fled from her Breast, and left her to her Foe, only a modest bashfulness remain'd, which for a time made some defence, but with such weakness as a Lover less impatient than D'ELMONT would have little regarded."⁴ As it turns out, Amena is saved by a sudden interruption that has been stage-managed by Alouysa through her footman; but she was clearly ready to succumb to her own sexual desire and to D'Elmont's importunings. As the narrator says, "Vertue and Pride," which might have saved her, are the first things that desert Amena, driven out partly by her own "Tenderness" for D'Elmont; her own desire is the destroyer of her pride.

The above quotation introduces some crucial words in

Haywood's vocabulary. "Virtue" and "pride" are complex packages of meanings in eighteenth century novels, referring to a network of cultural assumptions; these words recur repeatedly in both novels. For Haywood, virtue means sexual continence, the socially accepted norms of female behavior (which Amena discards fairly easily), while pride seems to refer more specifically to the woman's own sense of herself within those limits of behavior. That is, while public virtue assumes that a woman has no sexual desires, and if she did, would not act on them, pride is a concept more difficult to define; conduct books told a woman to derive her pride from careful abnegation of her own desires and inclinations, and from subordination to those of her husband or father. In this sense, pride is a reinforcer of public virtue. But "pride" could also refer to the mirror image of this concept of femininity: it can evoke a woman's pride in herself rather than herself as adjunct to a man. Haywood seems to be portraying a possibility for woman's pride in self, which for her consists of sensuality; her female characters have huge reservoirs of all kinds of emotions, especially love and sexual feeling. It is rare to find an insipid, passionless woman in a Haywood novel.

There are strong marks of cultural resistance in Haywood's depiction of seduction, which demonstrates a rejection of the contemporary ideology of female virtue. Yet there is also a certain amount of confusion in her

narrative. The reasons for that confusion will become clearer later in the century, with the institutionalization of "sensibility" as a defining female characteristic that very quickly limits women. Haywood's "sensuality" at first seems to be a move toward freedom, but its built-in traps become apparent quite quickly. In Love in Excess, even as Haywood makes her characters full of passion, she cannot move to the next step of allowing them to act on their feelings. Alouysa, for example, is witty, interesting, and passionately in love with D'Elmont, but she is also proud, haughty and jealous, and her excess of feeling with its concomitant inability to accept her husband's infidelity lead her directly to a horrible death. Amena is full of sexual feeling, and ends up in the convent. Haywood's narrative technique displays the tensions Judith Lowder Newton referred to, which Newton specifically links to the resistance against marriage. Haywood emphasizes the pleasures of sexuality; she draws bedroom scenes in great detail, dwelling on the physical charms of both characters and leaving very little to the reader's imagination (she was censured as too "warm" in her own day). Yet at the same time, she outlines on many different levels the consequences of a woman's taking sexual pleasure for herself. Given this narrative conflict, should Haywood's "pride" as patriarchal conformism or as feminist subversion? In Love in Excess, Haywood is conscious that the popularly accepted definition

of pride constitutes a denial of female sexuality, but cannot envision a woman breaking successfully out of that constriction. In this, of course, she is realistic: the legal and social position of an English woman of her time would not have allowed a happy outcome for an actively sexual woman.⁵ But this double-edged sword of pride is a figure of Haywood's central conflict; it encapsulates the female struggle for autonomy -- the struggle to define oneself by one's own pride in oneself, and the difficulty of deciding in what a woman can find this pride. Under the conditions in which Haywood wrote, merely depicting and describing female sexuality, and giving it pride of place as something important and worth describing, is a mark of some resistance.

Riccoboni's depiction of seduction and female passion is somewhat different from Haywood's. Where Haywood presents "pride" as a crucial problematic term, Riccoboni uses it unequivocally. Riccoboni's Adelaide is made of different stuff from Amena: in exactly the same situation as Amena, alone in the park with Cressy, "sous un feuillage épais," and madly in love with him, she at first returns his kisses with pleasure. Still, once she realizes that he intends to seduce her, she is infuriated: "... la témérité du Marquis portée à l'extrême, la tirant de cette ivresse dangereuse, lui rendit sa raison et la force de s'opposer à

ses entreprises" (61). Pride and reason are here opposed to female sexual desire, and overcome it. Refusing to speak to Cressy, she returns home, disillusioned; she understands his attempt at seduction as a denial of her conception of love. "Pride" in Riccoboni's version is not the double-faceted coin of Haywood's early novels: it has an aristocratic edge to it that matches the tone of eighteenth-century French novels. Adelaide is insulted when Cressy tries to seduce her, because that kind of behavior is reserved for girls of lower station -- he is not paying proper respect to her quality. Like Haywood's eventual heroine, Melliora, Adelaide has defined herself as a chaste woman, and that image is revolted by Cressy's seduction.

Interestingly, there is no female character in Riccoboni's version who takes any pride in her own sensuality as a virtue in itself (unlike Fanni Butlerd, as we saw in Chapter 2): even though Hortense de Berneil, Madame de Raisel's ward, has a long affair with Cressy, she is several times described as cold and lacking in feeling; the affair started not out of lust but as a bet, when Hortense told Cressy she was immune to seduction. Certainly, Adelaide and Madame de Raisel feel sensual passion, and even express it very warmly, but it is always held within carefully defined barriers, as when Adelaide expresses her anguish over Cressy's marriage to Raisel:

[A]h, la cruelle! elle est sa femme, elle regne sur ses volontés, elle fait ses plaisirs, elle les partage; il lui est permis de contenter tous les désirs de ce qu'elle aime; elle peut sans rougir, recevoir ses caresses, les lui rendre, mettre son bonheur à s'y montrer sensible. Et moi je ne dois me rappeler qu'avec honte ces moments ... moments délicieux, et pour toujours gravés dans ma mémoire! (81)

Here, Adelaide admits to her sexual feelings for Cressy, but discusses them only in terms of what is permitted her to feel; that is, even though sensuality is part of her nature, she defines herself as a woman who contains her sensuality within the certain boundaries. Only a married woman, as she sees it, is permitted to express sexual pleasure.

So Haywood depicts women for whom sensuality is an important component of their personalities, while Riccoboni's characters see sensuality as something to be carefully controlled. Let us return for a moment to Miller's "Emphasis Added" to help explain this crucial difference between the two novelists in such a basic element of these novels. Describing other ways in which women writers can indicate cultural resistance, Miller talks about Freudian conceptions of poetic creativity; Freud posits a marked difference between male and female psyches in this area, with the male ego positing itself in fiction as invulnerable. Miller expands on this point, suggesting that a female ego -- at least as it appears in French women writers -- posits itself in fiction as subject to every possible kind of attack; the heroine's role in this

situation is to "transcend the perils of plot with a self-exalting dignity" ("Emphasis" 33). If seduction is seen as a "peril of plot," we can characterize Adelaide's reaction to Cressy as "self-exalting dignity."

Miller herself notes that there are certain differences between the English tradition and the French, with English heroines often getting a second chance while French heroines rarely do ("Emphasis" 33). So her formulation is useful in explaining the difference between Haywood's heroines and Riccoboni's. In the French text, the female ego works itself out in terms of plot by renunciation and superiority, a rejection of sensuality. As Miller phrases it,

the suffering seems to have its own rewards in the economy of the female unconscious. The heroine proves to be better than her victimizers; and perhaps this ultimate superiority, which is to be read in the choice to go beyond love, beyond "erotic longings," is the figure that the ambitious wishes of women writers of women writers (dreamers) takes.

("Emphasis" 34).

The choice of embracing or rejecting sensuality is made in an attempt to obtain power. Freud talks of "ambitious wishes" as well as "erotic longings"; for a woman novelist, says Miller, these ambitious wishes may be played out as "a fantasy of power that would revise the social grammar in which women are never defined as subjects; a fantasy of power that disdains a sexual exchange in which women can participate only as circulation" ("Emphasis" 35). Sexuality

is an element that has to be manipulated by the novelist in the attempt to provide a female character with a powerful position.

So we can attempt to characterize the differences between Haywood's and Riccoboni's strategies in terms of a pursuit of power. Haywood resists the maxims of her culture by depicting female sexuality as active, responsive, and complex; however, once she has done that, she has backed herself into a corner -- given the options open to her, there is no way she can find a happy ending for such sexuality. Riccoboni, with the same material, takes the opposite way out: she decides to remove her heroines from the circle of sexual exchange, making them superior, "better than [their] victimizers." In the case of Adelaide, this manoeuvre does not finally elevate her to the "subject position"; she never achieves a position where she can comment on what happens and guide the action, but is simply removed from circulation and put in the convent. The strategy is more successful in the hands of Madame de Raisel, who becomes a morally superior critic of her husband's life and (posthumously) arbiter of his happiness. In her case, though, achieving this position involves a rejection not only of sensuality but of life itself.

This then is the choice of strategy -- to embrace sensuality or to sacrifice it in the pursuit of a different kind of power. And this proves to be the crucial choice

that leads to the different denouements of the novels. Haywood's female characters try to stay in circulation, to obtain power within the status quo -- and at least by the way the world measures, they are defeated, since they are always punished for the expression of sexuality. Riccoboni's female characters remove themselves from circulation. It is hard to judge which is more "effective."

Haywood and Riccoboni do not and cannot argue for equality of sexual freedom for women. But a comparison between the position of the narrator and the positions of other characters -- a kind of conversation internal to each novel -- shows to what extent they fly in the face of conventional public opinion. Female chastity, still the inviolable operating assumption in the eighteenth century, in both England and France, is more a question of representation than of fact; that is, to appear chaste is the important thing. In conventional society, then, it is vital for female discourse (which represents a woman to the world) to be carefully monitored by a woman's male protectors -- in the case of Amena and Adelaide, by their fathers. In Haywood, when Amena's father discovers she has let her love for D'Elmont be seen, he is appalled: "But is it possible, cry'd he (quite confounded at these words) that she should stoop so low to offer Love. Oh Heavens! is this the effect of all my Prayers, my Care, and my indulgence" (37). In Riccoboni's novel, Adelaide's father has the same

reaction; lecturing her after his approach to Cressy has produced a refusal of marriage, he tells her: "mais je ne répondrai pas de vous conserver ma tendresse, si vous étiez assez faible pour vous livrer encore à un penchant que vous devez rougir d'avoir laissé paraître" (36). For both fathers, the very admission of desire is already a matter of shame; both narrators, in comparison with this staunchly patriarchal position, are much more tolerant of women's desire, since they allow Adelaide and Amena to feel and declare it, if not to act on it.

The expression of sexual desire within the scene of seduction is only one of the possible areas of resistance in these two novels. Sexual desire operates in less immediate areas than the scene of seduction, and the more mature characters have a different response to it. Adelaide and Amena represent one type of woman: one who is too young, too sheltered, too naive to know how to manipulate worldly conventions to her advantage. Haywood's Alouysa and Riccoboni's Madame de Raisel are in a different position; they have lived in the world, and they have a more sophisticated way of expressing their desire. Where Amena and Adelaide are passive, almost allowing themselves to be seduced, Alouysa and Raisel decide that their love for the hero is so great that they must take matters into their own hands; each writes him an anonymous letter, a declaration of love. This is an enormous step, given the prohibition on

female expression. It is especially significant that they choose writing as a way of communication, and anonymous writing at that -- a medium one can take as a metaphor for the early female novelist. One aspect of the extraordinary importance of the woman novelist -- who appears in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, often writes anonymously, and gives women a voice for the first time -- lies in her treatment of female sexuality: women novelists allow their characters to speak of their own lives and desires.⁶

As with the Princesse de Clèves' confession to her husband, it is not the consequences of the act that count, but the act itself as an expression of cultural resistance. The princess's confession was not "successful" in the sense that it led her to a happy marriage or to a position of sexual equality; it did, however, provide her with a sense of emotional autonomy, which is success on a different scale. In the same way, although Alouysa's and Madame de Raisel's letters bring them only unhappy marriages, the very act of writing changes the structure of the plot. When a woman acts instead of waiting passively for the hero, the wedding itself can no longer serve as the culmination of plot. Instead, what happens after the marriage is now put under scrutiny. It is true that the result is unhappiness for these two heroines, but without their letter-writing activity their postmarital existence would never even have

come into question. The letter writing is important because it reorganizes the plot, creating a space for the "real" married lives of the heroines to be depicted.

And so, these letters as expressions of desire open up new areas of conflict, rather than solving problems -- for either the narrators or the characters. With Alouysa as with Amena, Haywood allows her female characters to have desire, yet her narrative registers an enormous conflict about it. Haywood's Alouysa admits desire only with immense difficulty. The narrator explains the cultural milieu that holds Alouysa back; for example, when D'Elmont first arrived at court, many women fell in love with him, and, as the narrator puts it, "vented fruitless Wishes, and in secret, curss'd that Custom which forbids Women to make a Declaration of their Thoughts" (I:2). The idea of writing a letter finally appears to Alouysa the only expedient, one "which probably might let her into the Secrets of his Heart, without the shame of revealing her own" (I:3), but it takes her much soul-searching and hesitation before she is finally driven to do it by the force of her passion for D'Elmont -- the depth of feeling being, in the eyes of the narrator, a mitigating factor.

Riccoboni's Raisel is in the same situation of loving Cressy, who takes no notice of her. She and her narrator also note the dangers for a woman of taking the step of announcing her passion to him; as the narrator says: "La

retenue de son sexe et sa modestie naturelle ne pouvaient lui permettre de faire les premiers pas; quoique ses intentions eussent pu justifier ses démarches, elle n'osait en faire aucune: il lui paraissait honteux d'employer l'entremise d'un ami, et d'acheter par une sorte de bassesse un bonheur qu'elle rougirait d'avoir obtenu..." (27).

Nonetheless, either because Riccoboni portrays her as a woman of much calmer character than Haywood's Alouysa, or because (unlike Alouysa) she has already been married once, Madame de Raisel does not suffer as much at the moment of writing as Alouysa does. She blames herself much less for her own passion, accepts it more. Riccoboni has carefully made this possible by the slight changes she has wrought in the plot: where Alouysa in her jealousy deliberately breaks off D'Elmont's affair with Amena, Madame de Raisel does not know that Cressy had any attachment to Adelaide, so she is less guilty, less desperate. As the denouement of the plot demonstrates, Madame de Raisel's acceptance of her own passion is a crucial sign of her autonomy; finally, she is distinguished from Alouysa by becoming the architect of her own fate rather than a helpless pawn, as Alouysa is.

The very fact that Alouysa and Madame de Raisel have to write a second letter (because the first one is misunderstood) is another instance of resistance. These two novels are determined to force the protagonists to investigate as fully as possible the limits of their desire

and the possibilities they have to act on it; the two women must affirm the decision they have already made by repeating the step even more forcefully.

One of the striking aspects of these two novels is their redundancy, their repetition of characters in similar situations. Haywood especially repeats scenarios over and over again with a dreamlike insistence -- but in each case, the characters react slightly differently, so that by the end she has built up an entire scale of possible response to her central situation (which in Love in Excess is the expression of female desire). These multiple representations of possible female action give the authors an opportunity to experiment with possible outcomes of the plot.

Haywood has two versions of a female rake, Melantha and Ciamara, but they appear slightly later in the novel; Riccoboni introduces hers earlier -- Madame D'Elmont, the coincidence of whose name can hardly be an accident.⁷ The marquise D'Elmont appears at a crucial juncture -- the moment when Madame de Raisel is contemplating a further step into self-expression with her second letter -- and offers a representation of the farthest possible end of the scale of self-expression. Madame D'Elmont has many affairs, and tells men that she desires them -- as she does Cressy -- rather than passively waiting for them to approach her. The narrator does not expect her readers to respect Madame D'El-

mont's way of life: "Madame D'Elmont était une de ces femmes qui, n'ayant aucune des vertus de leur sexe, adoptent follement les travers de celui qu'elles prétendent imiter; qui loin de chercher à en acquérir la force et la solidité, en prennent seulement l'audace et la licence, et qui livrées au dérèglement de leur imagination, s'honorent du nom d'homme, parce que indignes de celui de femmes estimables, elles ont osé renoncer à la pudeur, à la modestie et à la délicatesse de sentiment, qui est la marque distinctive de leur être" (28-29). Note the terms in which D'Elmont is described; she has given up a specifically female virtue -- chastity -- and attempted to take on masculine qualities in its place; even worse, she takes pride in her "masculine" traits rather than in the female pride she has relinquished. The female sphere is rigidly differentiated from the male sphere in matters of sexuality. If chastity is an essential part of womanhood, an unchaste woman is not truly a woman. This episode offers an internal commentary on expectations about chastity; in keeping with the narrative strategy of renunciation, it states that sensuality cannot be the path to power for a woman, while hinting that a woman could perhaps imitate "la force et la solidité" of a man.

Technically, Riccoboni's decision to put the example of Madame D'Elmont in conjunction with Madame de Raisel's letter-writing is extremely effective. Haywood has an equivalent character for Madame D'Elmont: not a female rake

but a young woman, Melantha, who has no modesty at all. Melantha, however does not appear until later in the novel and therefore cannot offer the same kind of cautionary counterpoint at a crucial moment as Madame D'Elmont provides.

Melantha is a young unmarried woman who is as completely lacking in the essential female virtues of modesty and chastity as Madame D'Elmont herself. She is in the same situation as all the other female characters in both novels: she loves the hero, and now must decide how and if to express and act on her desire. Melantha goes much further than Alouysa to make her feelings known; she schemes to end up alone in the park one night with D'Elmont, and makes a frank confession of her desire. Their exchange in the park is worth quoting at length because it vividly paints the impossibility of the woman's position:

[W]ell then (resum'd she) I'll put it past a Supposition, and tell you plainly, that I did walk this way on purpose to Divert your Spleen. I am sorry (reply'd he, tir'd to Death with her Impertinence) that you are Disappointed; for I am not in a Humour at present, of receiving any Diversion. Fie (said she) is this an Answer for the Gay, Gallant, Engaging COUNT D'ELMONT, to give a Lady who makes a Declaration of Admiring him -- who thinks it not too much to make the first Advances, and who wou'd believe her self fully Recompenc'd for breaking through the nice Decorums of her Sex, if he Receiv'd it kindly ----- Madam (said he, not a little amaz'd at her Imprudence) I know of no such Person, or if I did, I must confess, shou'd be very much puzzled [sic] how to behave in an Adventure so uncommon: Pish (answer'd she, growing vext at his Coldness) I know that such Adventures are not uncommon with you: I'm not to learn the Story of ALOVYSA, and if

you had not been the first Address'd, perhaps might have been 'till now unmarried. Well Madam (said he, more out of Humour) put the Case that what you say were true, I am Married; and therefore, (Interrupted she) you ought to be better acquainted with the Temper of our Sex, and know that a Woman, where she says she Loves, Expects a thousand fine Things in Return. But there is more than a possibility (answer'd he) of her being Disappointed, and methinks Madam, a Lady of your Gaity shou'd be Conversant enough with Poetry, to Remember these too [sic] Lines of a famous English Poet.

All Naturally fly what does Pursue
'Tis fit Men shou'd be Coy, when Women Woe. [sic]
(II:61-62)

Melantha's behavior is quite extraordinary, as D'Elmont himself notes ("an Adventure so uncommon"). She goes far beyond the bounds of acceptable female behavior, and "amazes" D'Elmont with her "Imprudence." Melantha is not rich, like Alouysa, nor is D'Elmont in love with her, so her rejects her. When Melantha makes specific reference to Alouysa's active role, she is told in no uncertain terms that a woman cannot count on success from such strategies. Finally, D'Elmont resorts to literature to make his point: it is "natural" for men to avoid a woman who acts on her desires.

Like Alouysa and Madame de Raisel, however, Melantha does not give up: D'Elmont has an elaborate scheme of his own for raping his beloved Melliora, and Melantha puts herself in Melliora's bed. D'Elmont does not realize whom he has been having sex with until afterwards, so Melantha gets her wish in a way; soon of course, she is found to be

pregnant, and has to be married off as quickly as possible. But this episode provokes the narrator to a snide commentary on the hypocrisy of the double standard: when Melantha's brother finds her in bed with D'Elmont, he draws his sword to punish her, and the narrator comments, "Few Men, how amorous soever themselves, care that the Female part of their Family shou'd be so, and he was most sencibly [sic] mortify'd with it" (II:89).

In Book three, Haywood introduces one final representation of a woman's options -- the Italian Ciamara, last and worst step on the scale of female sexual depravity. In each case so far, D'Elmont's reaction to the character has been the barometer of the accepted attitude toward female sexuality; he is the novel's internal commentator, the upholder of maxims, the keeper of ideological norms. Amena is passive, so D'Elmont feels great tenderness for her; Alouysa is forward enough to write letters, but they are anonymous and her aim is marriage, so D'Elmont does not censure her; Melantha wants sex, and tells him so, so D'Elmont finds her "impertinent" and "impudent." Ciamara goes beyond all these characters; she is shameless, and literally throws herself, half naked, on D'Elmont, so his reaction is predictably harsh:

The Grief he had been in, that it was not in his Power to return her Passion, while he believed it meritorious, was now chang'd to the utmost Contempt, and her Quality, and the State she lived in, did not hinder him

from regarding her, in as indifferent a manner, as he wou'd have done a common Courtizan" (III:93).

Later, D'Elmont clarifies his position ever further: "I can esteem the Love of a Woman, only when 'tis Granted, and think it little worth acceptance, Proffer'd" (III:129).

Riccoboni's Cressy is less expansive on this subject; he does not seem to make moral judgments on women's sexual behavior -- but then again, he is never shown as loving any woman. A crucial difference between the two novels is that love is not an effective tool for any of Riccoboni's characters, whereas for Haywood it can have an effect. This becomes clear with the last two representations of women offered in the two novels, Haywood's Melliora, loved and worthy of love, and Riccoboni's Hortense de Berneil, unloved and unable to love. As Melliora's name suggests, she is the perfect heroine: she steadfastly resists all D'Elmont's attempts at seduction and rape, even though she loves him passionately, and is willing to wait faithfully after Alouysa's death until he is in a position to marry her, which he does on the last page. Hortense, in contrast, starts her affair with D'Elmont on a bet that attempts at seduction will not work on her; she is patently ungrateful to her protector, Madame de Raisel, and is described several times as "cold" and unresponsive.

This array of characters -- more numerous in Haywood, but still present in Riccoboni -- presents all the possible

options of a woman who wishes to express her sensuality and desire. The force of repetition underscores the desperation of Haywood's strategy: examining each heroine's progress, it seems clear that not one woman has been able to determine her own fate, to create a space for herself in which she can be the subject. Melliora replays Alouysa's plot, and is successful in the sense that she marries a hero who for the first time is willing to admit his love for a woman, but the last pages make it very clear that there will be a price to pay. Melliora is allowed her happy ending in return for realizing that she must adhere to the most rigorous demands of the sexual double standard: that is, not only must she accept any of her husband's infidelities, but she must silently and cheerfully forgive them. In Riccoboni, the result is very different: by stage-managing her own death in the manner of a Clarissa, Madame de Raisel has achieved a position in which she can finally have power over her husband. Unfortunately, as with Clarissa she can do this only at the price of her own life.

One of Haywood's greatest accomplishments in Love in Excess is her portrayal of the difficulties of a woman writing. She expends great care and detail on her description of Alouysa's attempts to write her second letter to D'Elmont, in a way that speaks volumes on the analogous situation of a woman novelist. This second letter is even harder than the first because it is an affirmation of the

original decision to express her feelings; she now takes complete responsibility for her desire. Alouysa's feelings, by this time, are complicated by her wild jealousy on finding out about D'Elmont's affair with Amena; her jealousy and rage are described in all their intensity (to be compared with a writer's rage when her productions have been ignored). This combination almost persuades her to abandon modesty altogether; she writes a letter telling D'Elmont of her love, and is even about to sign it (the most complete affirmation of responsibility, analogous to a novelist signing her books), when she tears it up in shame:

No, let me rather die! (said she, starting up, and frightened at her own designs) then [sic] be guilty of a meanness which wou'd render me unworthy of Life, Oh! Heavens to offer Love, and poorly sue for Pity! 'tis insupportable! What bewitch'd me to harbour such a thought as even the vilest of my Sex would blush at? To pieces then (added she tearing the Paper) to pieces, with this shameless witness of my folly, my furious desires may be the destruction of my Peace, but never of my Honour, that shall still attend my name when Love and Life are fled. (I:10)

To admit one's love for a man is to sink to the level of a prostitute ("the vilest of my Sex"). The letter that Alouysa finally writes is again anonymous, and much less specific; it simply points out that D'Elmont has made a mistake in his identification of the letter writer, and should guess again. She has been forced to censor herself in order to protect herself.

Riccoboni's Madame de Raisel writes in almost exactly the same terms as Alouysa; in fact, the similarity of their letters is one of the places that shows without a doubt that Riccoboni had Haywood's novel in front of her. Yet once again the context of the letter is very different; Raisel does not have Alouysa's wild jealousy, nor does she seem to see such a problem with writing her letter: "madame de Raisel n'osait paraître; mais elle désirait que monsieur de Cressy la devinât" (56). She did not dare declare herself, but she wants Cressy to know of her love, and the situation requires delicacy, but not terrible self-doubt. It is true that the narrator adds immediately, "Un mouvement injuste, mais pourtant naturel, lui faisait hair la Marquise" [D'Elmont], since she knows that Cressy mistakenly believed her first letter came from D'Elmont and thus ignored it, but there is no raging jealousy, no tearing of hair here. Partly this is the difference of style between English and French writers that has already been mentioned: the rules of bienséance extended from the stage to the novel, and such wild behavior was not considered acceptable in aristocratic France. The difference in tone is a sign of the huge changes Riccoboni makes in her protagonist's character and motivation: Alouysa acts out of jealousy as well as love, deliberately trying to make D'Elmont abandon Amena, whereas Raisel does not even know about Cressy's affair with Adelaide, and has no idea that she is coming between them.

But could we also hypothesize that the forty years separating these novels have somehow made a difference, that it was a little easier for Riccoboni to write than for Haywood? Or is it that Riccoboni's narrative strategies lead her to a less desperate place?

The Two Denouements

The deaths of the two wives, it would seem, are the denouement, for both Haywood and Riccoboni. At this point, the plots of Love in Excess and Le Marquis de Cressy are structurally almost parallel, although the motivations are not. In Haywood, Amena is in the convent; Alouysa is dead; D'Elmont and Melliora are in love, but decorum will not allow them to marry for the moment. In Riccoboni, Adelaide is in the convent; Madame de Raisel is dead -- but by her own hand; and Cressy no longer cares for Hortense, whom he has already abandoned. A comparison of the last paragraph of Riccoboni and the summation at the beginning of Book III of Love in Excess shows how far apart the two authors are in sensibility even while adhering to the same plot outline. This is Riccoboni's final paragraph:

Monsieur de Cressy ne put se consoler; Adelaide sacrifiée pour lui, madame de Raisel morte dans ses bras, formèrent un tableau qui se représentant sans cesse à son idée, empoisonna le reste de ses jours.

Il fut grand, il fut distingué; il obtint tous les titres, tous les honneurs qu'il avait désirés: il fut riche, il fut élevé, mais il ne fut point heureux (130).

The bitterness of this ending is strikingly different from the tone of Haywood's summation at this point in the plot: at the very beginning of Book three, Haywood's narrator says:

Tho' COUNT D'ELMONT never had any great tenderness for ALOVYSA, and her extravagance of Rage and Jealousy, joyn'd to his Passion for MELLIORA had every Day abated it, yet the Manner of her Death was too great a shock to the sweetness of his disposition to be easily worn off; he cou'd not remember her Uneasiness, without reflecting that it sprung only from her too violent Affection for him; and tho' there was no possibility of living happily with her, when he consider'd that she dy'd, not only for him, but by his Hand, his Compassion for the Cause, and Horror for the Unwish'd, as well as Undesign'd Event, drew Lamentations from him, more sincere, perhaps, than some of those Husbands, who call themselves very Loving ones, wou'd make" (III:1-2).

Metaphorically, too, the plots are exactly parallel: Madame de Raisel makes much of the fact that she had asked Cressy to hand her her poisoned tea -- ("Je suis charmée, Monsieur, de tenir de vous-même ce remède salutaire" [125]), and Haywood's narrator also emphasizes, in the quotation above, that Alouysa "dy'd, not only for him, but by his Hand." Both women are dead because their husbands have betrayed them.

Riccoboni has wrapped up her plot, but amazingly,

Haywood continues. What follows in Book three is a prime example of plot contortion: having resisted the conventional plot structure until this point, Haywood now returns to the familiar pattern, thus executing a narrative about-face. The third part of the novel embraces the marriage ending, but has to do a little fancy footwork to achieve this. Having put her hero in the deplorable situation of having killed his wife, a situation in which -- despite all the narrator's efforts -- he appears neither likeable nor heroic, Haywood now has to manipulate the plot drastically in order to make him fit for the happy ending that she has in store: marriage with the incomparably virtuous Melliora. Book three of Love in Excess is no longer a novel but a romance -- an elaborate testing and purification of the hero. Melliora retires to a convent, not to become a nun but to live in virtuous seclusion, while D'Elmont, sullied by Alouysa's death, travels. Wherever he goes, beautiful women fall in love with him, and one, the Italian Ciamara, goes to extraordinary lengths to seduce him. He has plenty of opportunity to show his physical courage, and he is also able to show how virtuous he has now become, thanks to the love of Melliora. He resists all the women who love him, even the powerful and vindictive Ciamara, who finally poisons herself when she cannot have him (even when Riccoboni puts Haywood's ingredients to very different use, she still borrows her plot elements from her model).

Finally, after abductions, midnight escapes on horseback, coincidental meetings, transvestite escapades, and mistaken identities -- the very stuff of romance -- D'Elmont has suffered enough to prove that he is worthy of Melliora, whom he marries on the last page. Haywood's final paragraph is a reverse image of Riccoboni's in every particular:

... when they came to Paris, they were joyfully receiv'd by the Chevalier BRILLIAN and ANSELLINA, and those, who in the COUNT's Absence had taken a liberty of censuring and condemning his Actions, aw'd by his Presence, and in time, won by his Virtues, now swell his praises with an equal Vehemence: Both he and FRANKVILLE are still living, blest with a numerous and hopeful Issue, and continue with their fair Wives, great, and lovely Examples of conjugal Affection."
(III:56)

* * *

If we describe the content of these two novels as the anatomization, from the woman's point of a view, of an unhappy marriage, we have already said a lot about their resistance to the cultural norms. That a wedding could be anything but the ending, that a woman could re-imagine the marriage itself on different terms -- these are crucial steps toward a creation of woman as a real subject in fiction. Chapter 5 will examine novels that re-think the marriage plot from the point of view of satire.

The words "in fiction" are important. The array of characters that seems to a modern reader to be so close to extravagant redundancy, especially in Haywood, begins to make more sense if we read these two novels as a kind of metafiction. Both novelists run through all the available depictions of women, with the plot endings that conventionally attach to them: the young, gullible girl who ends up in the convent; the sensual woman (already portrayed in the English tradition by Aphra Behn) who is disappointed in love; the woman whose temper is out of control, and who therefore comes to a correspondingly violent end; the female rake; and for Haywood, the woman who resists all sensual and feminist temptation and achieves the "happy ending."

Perhaps, pursuing this argument, we should see Haywood's Book three not as a romance tacked incongruously onto the end of a novel, but as an ironic commentary on the possibilities available to a novelist. It is a measure of the gap between what Haywood could have done and what the reader would accept. After all, despite the extreme implausibility to modern eyes of Book three, with all its evidence of authorial manipulation, this last part does fulfill all the requisite cultural expectations about women. This ending was probably a lot easier for its audience to swallow than the possibility of an Alouysa who managed to carry her point. Having attempted to portray women who in their sensuality do not conform to acceptable femininity,

Haywood has nowhere else to go with her plot. Like Alouysa writing her second letter, Haywood has to censor herself in order to protect herself: female sensuality is dangerous for its writer.

In terms of resistance, Riccoboni's ending is the more successful, since her heroine remains in control and carries her conscious refusal through to the very end. Riccoboni arrives at this point by using renunciation and moral superiority as ways to recast the female stereotype; these strategies leave her an avenue of escape from the plot, since their logical conclusion is withdrawal.

As fiction, then, we have to say that Haywood succeeds only by changing plots in midstream, by moving from resistance to compromise when her particular form of resistance becomes impossible. Riccoboni succeeds in a more elegant fashion, without having to change plots. But comparing Riccoboni with Haywood's lush energy, I am forced to regret the loss, and to wonder what on earth Riccoboni's sequel could be.

NOTES

¹ Quoted in Lennard Davis, Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction (New York and London: Methuen, 1987) 26.

² See G.F. Whicher, The Life and Romances of Eliza Haywood (New York: Columbia UP, 1915) for a description of Haywood's life and education.

³ Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, Histoire de M. le Marquis de Cressy, ed. Alix Deguise (Paris: des femmes, 1987) 17. All further references to this novel are noted in parentheses in the text.

⁴ Eliza Haywood, Love in Excess, or the Fatal Enquiry (London: W. Chetwood, 1719), Book I, 28. All further references to this novel are noted in parentheses in the text, with the number of the book in roman numerals preceding the page number.

⁵ For detailed examples see Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," Journal of the History of Ideas 20 (1959): 195-216.

⁶ There had been women writing before the novel and outside the novel, but it was the novelists' commercial success that cemented their position -- a position that diarists and essayists, for example, could not attain. The commercial success of the novelists gave them the practical opportunity to voice attitudes that were too easily suppressed in other genres. The story of Mrs. Pepys's diary is a wonderful example of what could happen to other types of writing before they reached print: Mrs. Pepys, as well as her famous husband, wrote a diary, but when Samuel found and read it, he thought it "so picquant, and wrote in English and most of it true, of the retirednesse of her life and how unpleasant it was, that being writ in English and so in danger of being met with and read by others, I was vexed at it and desired her and then commanded her to teare it." Quoted in Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (London: Virago, 1989) 36.

⁷ Madame D'Elmont is herself an interesting character: the coincidence of names can hardly be missed, since Haywood's Alouysa became "Madame D'Elmont" herself. Riccoboni's D'Elmont has some of the same functions as Haywood's Alouysa, such as giving crucial information just at the right moment: she is the one who tells Adelaide's

father about the affair with Cressy, thus forcing Cressy either to marry Adelaide or leave her, just as Alouysa informs Amena's father of her affair with D'Elmont. Both women do this in an attempt to get the hero for themselves, but there the resemblance ends: Alouysa loves D'Elmont, and wants to marry him, while Riccoboni's D'Elmont sees Cressy only as a handsome man to have an affair with. But Riccoboni's D'Elmont steps in again later; it is she who tells Madame de Raisel, now Madame de Cressy, that Cressy has been having an affair with her ward, Hortense, as well as with D'Elmont herself.

CHAPTER 4

The Problem of Plot:
 Closure and Narrative Structure in Women's Novels

I would like to begin with the proposition that female orgasm is unnecessary. [...] I mean that women's orgasm and, by extension, women's pleasure can be extraneous to that culmination of heterosexual desire which is copulation. Women's pleasure can take place outside, or independent of, the male sexual economy whose pulsations determine the dominant culture, its repressions, its taboos, and its narratives...

-- Susan Winnett, "Coming Unstrung"

This double ending [of Eliza Haywood's 1719 novel Love in Excess] is the last reminder of the "richness" (redundancy from a critical point of view) possible in the complicated amatory narrative such as Love in Excess. [...] Having rewarded Melliora [the heroine] with marriage [Haywood] fears, perhaps, a let-down, and so Violetta is brought on stage to expire in happy tears. Her death is, in a sense, an orgasm, a suitably violent and spectacular end to the story. It is the orgasm we have been waiting for, the one we have approached so often in the many near-consummations. Melliora cannot be allowed to have it, at least not in our presence. The scene would not only be unseemly, but, worse, dull.

-- John Richetti, Popular Fiction Before Richardson

I begin with these provocative quotations to illustrate a problem. One could hardly imagine two critics whose positions were further apart than Susan Winnett's and John Richetti's, yet when they talk about women's writing they

find a little piece of common ground: they agree that narrative and sexuality are intimately connected. To be more specific, narrative as we know it has a problem with the representation of female sexuality. Winnett argues that female sexuality can escape the control of dominant narrative forms, which are based on male pleasure; she is offering a threat to narrative order as it has existed until now, and the possibility that other narrative forms could and should be privileged. I doubt that Richetti would agree with Winnett, since he has little respect for the technical prowess of the women writers he discusses in his Popular Fiction Before Richardson, but even he notes that female sexuality cannot be represented openly in the narrative genre Haywood is using. To represent female sexuality directly, rather than in the indirect guise of a tearful death, would be, as he puts it, not only "unseemly" but "dull," although he does not stop to examine this curious conclusion.

In this chapter, I examine one area of criticism in which gender questions the pleasure of the text: Freudian narratology. Using Peter Brooks's Reading for the Plot as the Freudian narrative model, I argue that this influential way of reading is based on a pattern of male desire and male sexuality; it leaves out entirely the possibility that female desire -- and therefore "female plot" -- could follow another pattern.

"Female Plot"

Is there really a female plot, distinguishable from a male plot? And if there were, what would it be? Peter Brooks comments on this question in *Reading for the Plot*, his influential exposition of Freudian narrative theory, in which he argues that the shape of narrative follows the trajectory of desire and its satisfaction. He gives his definition of female plot in the course of a discussion of a folktale called "All-Kinds-of-Fur":

...[T]he folktale "All-Kinds-of-Fur" in some measure represents the female plot, a resistance and what we might call an "endurance": a waiting (and suffering) until the woman's desire can be permitted response to the expression of male desire. (330, n.3)

Yes, there is female plot, concludes Brooks, and it is based on passivity -- woman as object rather than subject. This chapter questions that conclusion by examining Brooks's Freudian model, Marianne Hirsch's and Susan Winnett's feminist Freudian revisions of that model, and three eighteenth-century novels by women that do not fit Brooks's patterns. The novels are Eliza Haywood's The British Recluse (1722), Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791), and Claudine-Alexandrine de Tencin's Les Malheurs de l'amour (1727).¹

The concept of what constitutes narrative satisfaction

is, in the Freudian model, affected by gender. Brooks describes narrative as engendered by desire, with closure taking place when that desire is satisfied. Yet the very nature of the desire he describes is exclusively masculine. In his discussion of a Balzac novel, Brooks describes the hero's desire thus: "desire as erection, as the tumescence of a self in a state of domination, an imperious and imperial self" (51). Would a model that followed female desire use the same metaphors? Would it have the same narrative structure? In other words, can we posit a female plot based on female sexual response, one that would be parallel to the male plot? This raises the corollary problem of whether desire can always be satisfied, especially for women. If, for example, a woman lives in a patriarchal society in which the fulfillment of female sexuality is not considered legitimate, then the question of satisfying desires becomes more complex. To what extent can female desire be narratively imagined or experienced in a society that does not recognize its existence? And what effect does the lack of acceptable fulfillment have on the shape of plot for a woman writer?

It is my position that there are indeed major differences between plot structures in men's and women's fiction in the eighteenth century, and I do see a pattern in women's fiction that I will identify as "female plot." Women's novels from this period demonstrate patterns of

doubling and repetition that, I argue, cause problematic closure. For example, another novel by Eliza Haywood, her Love in Excess of 1719, explores an array of possible endings -- other than marriage, death, or the convent -- for stories of women in love. Her large cast of female characters tests all manner of plots, so that many parallel plots exist at once, repeating and doubling the theme. The hierarchy of plot and subplot is disturbed, which means that there can be several endings, or several possible endings even when one is chosen. In Love in Excess none of the plots proves to be entirely satisfactory from the heroine's point of view, since she cannot "realistically" be an active participant if she is to achieve a final position that the reading public would find satisfactory. The ending of Love in Excess is confusing because, in the absence of an acceptable resolution, Haywood returns to a "romance" marriage ending that in no way accords with the plot experimentation of the rest of the novel. Repetition and unconventional closure, the structural features of "female plot," have often been interpreted as technical flaws. It is my contention, however, that eighteenth-century fiction by women faced a narrative impasse -- social circumstances did not allow readers to accept endings that could fulfill female desire. The techniques of repetition and closure are a response to this impasse. These are the techniques I have isolated in women's fiction as "female plot"; they are also

the most important elements of Brooks' Freudian model.

Peter Brooks' Psychoanalytic Theory of Plot

Peter Brooks' Reading for the Plot is one of the most influential recent works on narrative. Brooks moves beyond a static, formalist view of plot and outlines a dynamic system that involves the reader and sees the text itself in Freudian terms as a deployment of energies leading to a psychologically satisfying resolution. His understanding of the dynamics of plot is based on Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In Brooks' description, the normal state of things is a quiescence, which is non-narratable. Then something happens to cause an irritation or tension that has to be resolved, and a sequence of events -- the narrative -- begins. The usual cause of this sequence of events is some form of desire, argues Brooks: erotic desire, or the desire to tell a story, or the desire for meaning (he derives this last from Barthes' concept of "passion for [of] meaning"). Once this desire, or drive, has been roused, the sequence of events follows, a series that through repetition manages to harness the initial energy of desire and bring it to what Freud terms a "significant discharge," or satisfactory resolution.

The idea of repetition is vital to Brooks' conception

of plot: he cites Freud's analysis of the child's fort/da game in Beyond the Pleasure Principle as model -- repetition as an attempt at mastery of an unpleasant reality. In the case of the child, throwing his toy away (fort) and bringing it back (da), the repetition is an attempt to deal with the mother's absence, which is by extension analogous to death:

If repetition is mastery, movement from the passive to the active, and if mastery is an assertion of control over what man must in fact submit to -- choice, we might say, of an imposed end -- we have already made a suggestive comment on the grammar of plot, where repetition, taking us back again over the same ground, could have to do with the choice of ends (p. 98).

By repeating the action, the child gains a sense of mastery over the unpleasant situation; a sense that he can choose the ending of this particular "plot." In narrative, the repetition is also closely connected to the pleasure of the ending; if the rush of energy occasioned by the start of the narrative were simply to surge to the resolution, there would be trauma rather than significant discharge. If, however, through repetition the energy is bound, to use Freud's term, then following the dictates of the pleasure principle the discharge is postponed until it can be satisfactorily channeled. In terms of the literary text, Brooks sees this binding and repetition as a way of putting textual energy into perceptible forms, forms in which it can be grasped by the reader: "repetition, repeat, recall,

symmetry, all these journeys back in the text, returns to and returns of, that allow us to bind one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution rather than mere contiguity" (101). The repetitions, which constitute the middle of the narrative, everything between the beginning and the end, are painful in that they retard the resolution, but pleasurable in that they anticipate it.

Through the repetitions of the text, the energy set free at the beginning of the narrative is tamed into a pattern that offers pleasure while it is occurring and leads to an even more pleasurable resolution. Repetition "is a kind of remembering, and thus a way of reorganizing a story whose connective links have been obscured and lost" (139). There are two concepts here that are important in readings of women's fiction: mastery and memory. The pleasurable resolution Brooks describes depends on repetition leading to a sense of mastery; if it does not, then the resolution is jeopardized. I will argue that in the women's fiction to be discussed in this chapter, the link between repetition and mastery is more tenuous than Brooks suggests: in these texts, repetition does not bring control over events, and the "significant discharge" of conventional plot resolution is replaced by a more tentative closure. In these texts, repetition is about possibility rather than inevitability -- not the predictable ending of quiescence/death that Brooks speaks of, but a questioning.

The other important concept is memory, the function of which, I will argue, is gendered. Who remembers and who forgets, and what they remember and forget, is a major theme in French eighteenth-century novels. In this chapter, the oubli of the heroine's lover in Les Malheurs de l'Amour is one of the major turning points of the plot. As in other 18th-century novels by women (Riccoboni's Juliette Catesby, for example), oubli has a specific sexual meaning: the hero momentarily forgets the woman he loves, and has a brief affair with another woman.²

Closure is, for Brooks, the most important aspect of plot; thanks to the temporal aspect of narrative, he argues, it is the end of plot that retroactively determines the entire structure, including its beginning. The end is the death instinct, which is finally the ruling principle behind the dynamics of plot. Using the formalist distinction between sjuzet, or discourse, and fabula, or story (fabula being "the order of events referred to by the narrative," and sjuzet "the order of events presented in the narrative discourse" [12]), Brooks argues that the sjuzet organizes the fabula in a particular way because of the anticipated end. He quotes Walter Benjamin to the effect that "a man's life 'first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death'" (p. 95); that is, the only real ending can be death, because until then the story is not completed. This insight works on the level of fabula; since Brooks has defined plot

as "the active interpretive work of discourse on story" (27), he can transplant the insight to the level of plot and to the entire engine of narrative.

The text takes on, for Brooks, the same dynamic balance as the organism itself, a balance as he sees it between the pleasure principle and the death instinct:

The organism must live in order to die in the proper manner, to die the right death. One must have the arabesque of plot in order to reach the end. (107)

With this idea in place, Brooks refines his statement that desire is at the root of any narrative: underneath the eros and ambition that seem to start the narrative motor is another drive -- the desire for quiescence: "The desire of the text is ultimately the desire for the end, for that recognition which is the moment of the death of the reader in the text" (108).

Brooks' argument is compelling, but it is hard to apply it to the plots of women novelists because of its built-in gender bias. Brooks himself indicates that there is a unresolved gender problem when he makes a distinction between women's plots and men's; taking male canonical novels as the norm for his discussion, he mentions women's plots only in a brief aside:

The female plot is not unrelated, but it takes a more complex stance toward ambition, the formation of an

inner drive to selfhood in resistance to the overt and violating male plots of ambition, a counter-dynamic which, from the prototype Clarissa on to Jane Eyre and To the Lighthouse, is only superficially passive, and is in fact a reinterpretation of the vectors of plot.
(39)

This is a passage that makes one wish for more: why is Clarissa the prototype for female plot, rather than any of the many earlier novels by women? (Is "female plot" something imagined by men, and if so, what is the woman writer's relation to it in Brooks' view?) And what specific shape might this "inner drive to selfhood" take in a novel? The three examples he offers in the passage quoted above all lead to marriage or death for the woman, and one would like to see Brooks discuss whether these endings are inevitable. However, Brooks' interest in female plot ends there.

Not only is Brooks uninterested in female plot, but his entire understanding of plot and his explanation of its dynamic are based on a specifically male sexuality that relegates women to the object position. "Desire" -- the very impetus for narrative in Brooks' view -- is limited to male desire in his explanations. The passage quoted above in its entirety described "female plot" as:

a resistance and what we might call an "endurance": a waiting (and suffering) until the woman's desire can be permitted response to the expression of male desire.
(330, n. 3).

In this scenario, the woman has no possibility at all of motivating the plot, of bringing it to a resolution other than that decided by the desiring male. The woman is not in the position of having desire herself, and so cannot set the plot in motion.

A different aspect of Brooks' negation of the female role occurs in his discussion of Zola's Nana. Nana is an enormously successful courtesan whose sexuality Brooks sees as the engine of this particular novel; still, although it is Nana's sexual desire that causes the novel's sequence of events, both the narrator and Brooks in his following commentary manage to deny the importance of that very sexuality:

"She had done it [achieved her success] with something else, with a little stupidity, with a bit of her delicate nudity, with this shameful and so powerful nothing, whose force could lift the world; with all this alone, without workers, without machines invented by engineers, she had moved Paris and built herself a fortune where corpses slept. -- 'In the name of heaven, what a tool!' exclaimed Mignon." In this remarkable passage [comments Brooks], Nana's sexual organ, which is nothing, absence, becomes a tool more powerful than all phallic engines, capable of supreme leverage on the world. (46-47; my italics)

The presence and subjectivity of the woman are here erased completely: her sex is seen as absence, despite its demonstrated power. Brooks repeatedly depicts the initiating desire and the resulting plot sequence in terms of male sexual arousal. For example, in his discussion of

Raphael, the hero of Balzac's La Peau de Chagrin, he describes Raphael's ultimately self-destructive desire thus: "desire as erection, as the tumescence of a self in a state of domination, an imperious and imperial self" (51). The norm for desire and sexuality is the male erection, whereas female sexuality is seen as absence or lack -- paradoxically, since its power has been demonstrated in Nana.

In order to envision a different view of female sexuality that would allow the woman to be the initiator of plot -- the desiring subject rather than the desired object -- it is necessary to turn to feminist commentators on Freud. Marianne Hirsch, in The Mother/Daughter Plot: Fiction, Feminism, Psychoanalysis, confronts Brooks directly on the grounds of his unmediated acceptance of Freud's view of female sexuality as lack. Hirsch's main object in her book is specific: to reinstate not woman in general but the mother in the subject position in plot and narrative. In so doing, however, she re-examines the ways in which woman-as-mother and woman-as-woman have been shifted by Freud into nonentity. Her description focuses on Freud's narrative of the socialization of women, a narrative in which a "successful" maturation and acceptance of castration sees women as gaining satisfaction only from their children, and from the act of sacrificing themselves for those children. Effectively, the Freudian view of female socialization

removes women entirely from the subject position.

Hirsch's project involves a re-examination of the pre-oedipal and oedipal stages, in which she takes issue with some of Brooks' major points. For example, she argues that the fort/da game is seen by Freud and Brooks as an initiation into language (and narrative) because of the absence of the mother, and thus the continuation of narrative entails the continued absence of the mother as subject. But to see this move as crucial is to see it as male: Brooks talks about the experience of the male child's move into language, not the female's -- the female child has a different experience of the oedipal conflict, and a problematic resolution of it that is deeply affected by her perception of her mother's powerless position in society. Thus for the female child, the move from the pre-oedipal to the oedipal stage involves traumatic compromise. In the view of feminist psychoanalysts, the female child has difficulty with the move from pre-oedipal to oedipal stage both because she is forced to reject what Hirsch calls "bi-sexual oscillation" in favor of exclusive heterosexuality, and also because of the degraded social position of the mother, who cannot offer her child a model to pattern herself on.

For Brooks, the absent mother in the fort/da game is not a problem because he sees literature as a process of handing on authority from father to son; the mother is not

offered as a model. As he says, "the question of fathers and sons [...] ultimately perhaps constitute[s] a theme and a structure incorporate with the very nature of the novel as we know it" (307). Hirsch, in her revision of Brooks, rethinks the meaning of maternal presence or absence for the female child -- and female writer:

It is the mother's absence which creates the space in which the heroine's plot and her activity of plotting can evolve. We have already been able to appreciate the pervasiveness of absent, silent, or terrible mothers in nineteenth-century novels by women. Freud's essay ["The Family Romance"], in all its implications, allows us to see that the maternal repression actually engenders the female fiction, a fiction which then revolves not around the drama of same-sex parent/child relations, but around marriage, which alone can place women's stories in a position of participating in the dynamics of ambition, authority, and legitimacy which constitute the plots of realist fiction. (57)

If, instead of concentrating on the oedipal period (which in Freud is mostly concerned with the male child's responses; he himself admitted that his account of female development was unsatisfactory³), we concentrate on the pre-oedipal period, in which the closest bond is between the female child and her mother, we come up with a narrative strategy that is very different from the one Brooks outlines. Brooks would see the marriage plot as the woman's passive endurance until she becomes the object of male desire. Hirsch sees the same plot as a result of the female child's problematic resolution to the rejection of the mother, a resolution that

leads her into the oedipal stage. Where Brooks sees male plot as a "natural" result of male desire, Hirsch describes the female marriage plot as a compromise, a strategy designed to gain access to the stories of power. These two views of the marriage plot are mirror images of each other. In both, the female character is seen as without power, needing to enter into narrative through becoming the object of men's desire. But in Hirsch's view, the mother's lack of power and her inability to serve as authority figure and model for the daughter/female writer are problematic, whereas for Brooks they are unquestioned results of "normal" female development.

Hirsch's feminist revision of Freud suggests another way of looking at the traditional marriage plot. She also suggests that there are other, very different kinds of plots that could be possible if one is willing to recognize the productive power of the pre-oedipal mother/child bonding. Gender inequality is formalized, in Freud's narrative, during the oedipal stage; moving back one stage to the pre-oedipal phase allows one to depict female relationships before they have undergone this trauma. Using the Demeter and Persephone story as an example, Hirsch suggests that although the pre-oedipal phase of "infantile plenitude" cannot offer plot itself, it offers a much more complex idea of the coming into being of plot than Brooks is willing to envision.⁴ Hirsch explains:

The Demeter myth illustrates well the complicated intersections of gender and plot raised by these texts. Narratability itself, the Homeric hymn suggests, demands some form of breach, some space of anxiety and desire into which to inscribe itself. The perpetuation of infantile plenitude cannot offer a model for plot. The story of mother and daughter comes into being only through Hades' rape, through the intervention of the father/husband. The compromise resolution, however, again rests not on 'retard, postponement' or 'deferral' [Brooks' terms] but on continued opposition, interruption, and contradiction. As we follow Persephone's return to her mother for one part of the year and her repeated descent to marriage and the underworld for the rest, it seems to me that we have to revise our very notion of resolution. At the end of the story, Persephone's allegiance is split between mother and husband; her posture is dual. The repeated cycle relies not on reconciliation, but on continued opposition to sustain and perpetuate it. Persephone literally enacts the "bi-sexual oscillation" of the Freudian female plot. (102-103)

The kinds of narrative pleasure to be gained from such pre-oedipal bases are very different from those Brooks describes. Instead of repetition leading to discharge, there is "oscillation," leading to compromise rather than clear resolution. The end of the plot is not quiescence, but a balancing between dual positions.

Brooks has not taken account of female sexuality, but has accepted male sexuality as universal. Hirsch, working with recent feminist rethinkings of Freud, problematizes the orthodox Freudian view of the female child's progress through the oedipal stage, and thus undermines Brooks' argument. Hirsch replaces Brooks' insistence on repetition with a very different notion of closure or resolution, one that rests on oscillation, contradiction, and a lack of

harmony at the end.⁵ She says:

No clearcut sense of closure ensues and the narrative remains prospective and proleptic, poised at break of day, or focused on the process rather than the product of vision. Contradiction itself is not, of course, a total rejection of repetition; it is merely one pole of it. (118)

Hirsch rejects Brooks' view of repetition as something that leads to quiescence as its end. As she says, contradiction is not a rejection of repetition, but for the modernist texts that are Hirsch's primary reference points, she is more interested in closure as a problem. However, in the eighteenth-century texts under discussion here, repetition is an equally striking aspect of their narrative structure. Following Hirsch, we can see repetition (as it appears in these particular texts) as oscillation, as opposition, as a refusal to bind the energy and let it be discharged, because neither of the two oppositions suggested in the repeated plots offers a satisfactory conclusion.

Hirsch's insights about repetition as opposition provide a commentary on Brooks' view of repetition as mastery. Where Brooks focuses on repetition as control, Hirsch sees it as a potentially dangerous struggle:

The content of plot is not a process of successive distancing but, rather, is a struggle with a bond that is powerful and painful, that threatens engulfment and self-loss even while it offers the very basis for self-

consciousness. In these writings the pre-oedipal realm figures as a powerful mythic space, not irrevocably lost but continually present because it is recoverable in ideal(ized) female relationships. Presymbolic and pre-cultural, it points to an alternative to patriarchy and the logos--a world of shared female knowledge and experience in which subject/object dualism and power relationships might be challenged and redefined. (132-33)

For women writers, Hirsch suggests, the mother's absence is not something that can be controlled, distanced, overcome, and left behind. Thus there is no moving on to a clear resolution. Extrapolating from this to the eighteenth-century texts under discussion here, we can read repetition as the constantly renewed struggle for mastery, which can only end with compromise: conventional novelistic closure is rare. Idealized female relationships become an important theme because they represent a sphere in which power relationships are different from those in the "realistic" world depicted -- the pre-oedipal sphere before the formalization of gender inequality.

Turning now to some eighteenth-century fiction by women, it will become clear that Hirsch's model of oscillation, repetition, and inconclusive closure is more useful as an interpretive tool than Brooks' male-centered theory. Brooks' pattern has produced only the type of disparaging commentary on women's fiction that we saw in the quotation from John Richetti, the epigraph to this chapter; it has not provided insight into the structuring techniques

used by women writers. The following analyses of Eliza Haywood's The British Recluse (1722), Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791), and Claudine-Alexandrine de Tencin's Les Malheurs de l'amour (1727) attempt to offer new ways to read women's fiction of the eighteenth century.

The British Recluse

Eliza Haywood's The British Recluse, published in 1722, offers a clear illustration of the problems of repetition and closure in female plot and demonstrates how Brooks' model fails to give a satisfactory reading of women's fiction. Short (114 pages in octavo), and partly epistolary, the novel is set in London and tells the story of two young women whose lives have been ruined by love. There are many parallels between the two women's stories: both have run away from home to avoid a marriage they think is going to be forced on them; both fall in love with another man, who seduces or almost seduces them and then abandons them; both go to London to find this lover, and end up in the same boarding house. Cleomira, the British recluse, has lived there for a year in complete retirement, after her illegitimate baby by her lover, "Lysander," is stillborn. Belinda has just arrived in search of her lover, "Courtal," who after almost seducing her and fighting a duel

with her fiance has left her and come to London. The two women become friends, and tell each other their stories; it turns out that it is the same man, Bellamy, whom they have loved under his various aliases, and that he is now married to someone else. After discussing their experiences, the two women decide to go and live together seventy miles from London, abandoning the world.

The British Recluse, in my reading, is a self-conscious novel about plot: or rather, a novel in which the problems of plot form the plot itself. The main story of the novel is the friendship between Cleomira and Belinda, which does not begin until they have compared life stories, or plots. These have to be written rather than spoken: the two women start their confidences by each writing a summary of their stories. Cleomira writes, "Undone by Love, and the Ingratitude of faithless Man"; Belinda writes, "For ever lost to peace by Love, and my own fond Belief" (10). The exchange of stories has to be made simultaneously, and is therefore written rather than oral. It is as if each woman needs to be established as the heroine of her own story, already existing, before her plot can be offered as an alternative version of the other woman's. After this link has been established, each woman tells her full story in turn. Their plots are doubled, and then doubled again by another story told within the novella: Bellamy has a third victim, Miranda, whose story is relayed to the two friends

in their boarding house. The plots are almost identical, and the hero/villain of each plot is not only similar but the same man; this kind of coincidence has been seen as a romance element seeping into the novel, but it is more useful to read it as evidence for the importance of doubling in this novel.⁶

Brooks sees the function of subplot as an exposition of the endings the main character should avoid. In The British Recluse, however, the hierarchy between main plot and subplot is disturbed -- all the plots are equal. There is no main plot with a choice of action that is shown to be superior to those in subplots. There is, in fact, no choice that offers a satisfactory resolution to the plot of seduction and betrayal, as it has been set up. The only solution is to abandon that plot altogether, which is what Haywood does.

What are we to make of all this repetition? As a practical result, Belinda is saved from the classic resolution of her plot when the stories she hears reveal her lover's true nature to her. She abandons London, which symbolizes the problems of male/female relationships, and goes to live with Cleomira in a utopian female friendship. Haywood's audience, trained by their reading of popular novels, might very well expect that Cleomira, after her shameful pregnancy, would die, and that Belinda, who actively came to London in search of her lover, would either

meet the same fate or -- in a less plausible ending -- tame this libertine lover and marry him.⁶ In The British Recluse, repeating the plots without allowing them to achieve conventional resolution is a way of resisting that closure. Closure, when it eventually comes, is a rejection of the heterosexual marriage plot and of all it entails. The two heroines abandon that plot and retreat to a scene of female friendship. They reject a scenario of seduction or courtship and marriage in which they are unsuccessful and do not see a way to be successful. They turn instead to idealized female bonding:

[A]nd in a short Time, both their resolutions of abandoning the World continuing, the Recluse and [Belinda] took a House about seventy Miles distant from London, where they still live in a perfect Tranquility, happy in the real Friendship of each other, despising the uncertain Pleasures, and free from all the Hurries and Disquiets which attend the Gaeties of the Town: And where a solitary life is the Effect of Choice, it certainly yields more solid Comfort than all the publick Diversions which those who are the greatest Pursuers of them can find. (113-114)

Rejecting the world means rejecting the male plot; the result of this is "Comfort" and "Tranquility." This closure also emphasizes the importance of female agency: happiness ensues because the retirement is "the Effect of Choice."

The retreat to a female utopia is caused by repetition; it is only after hearing how her story has been doubled and tripled by other characters that Belinda comes to a

realization about her lover, and to her decision to abandon him and men in general. Brooks saw repetition in the male plot as a binding of erotic energy that tamed it and led toward significant discharge. Repetition was a step towards mastery, a control of the ultimate ending. In The British Recluse, repetition leads to an abandonment of heterosexual erotic energy, and an abandonment of control. This is why "female plots" can seem to the reader to be unresolved -- they do not provide catharsis.

Let us stay with that Aristotelian term, "catharsis," for a moment. I have argued that The British Recluse was a novel "about" plot; most of the characters are concerned with constructing narratives and defining them, forcing others to play roles in their fictions. This means that a constant question raised in the novel is "Who has the power to direct plot, to decide its outcome?" As we will see, the narrator also recognizes that male and female plots are different. Here is Bellamy alias Lysander, for example, writing to Cleomira when he is about to leave her:

The little Storms of Fury which appear in your Letter, are too frequently met with in Stories, to be wonder'd at, and are as of little Consequence to move me to either Fear or Pity, as your proclaiming the Occasion wou'd be to the Disadvantage of my Reputation. (63)

Lysander operates in the Aristotelian world of male plot, whose resolution is "significant discharge" in Freud's

terms, or "catharsis" in Aristotle's. Lysander is telling Cleomira that she is not in control of this plot, and cannot lead it to a resolution that will satisfy her: she is failing, he says, to produce the "Fear or Pity" that Aristotle said was necessary to effect catharsis. She has been reading the wrong stories, he says. And of course he is right. Cleomira cannot succeed in the Freudian/Aristotelian plot, and so she chooses another ending.

A Simple Story

Like The British Recluse, Elizabeth Inchbald's 1791 novel, A Simple Story, relies on doubling to achieve its narrative effects. But where Haywood's novel has three seduction subplots running simultaneously, Inchbald's has a closely related sequence; a mother's story, followed by her daughter's.

The first heroine of A Simple Story is Miss Milner, who, after her father's death, is put under the guardianship of his friend, the Jesuit priest Dorriforth. At the time she is eighteen and beautiful, and this new responsibility is difficult for Dorriforth. Miss Milner is lively, vivacious, likes to go out and have admirers; she finds it very hard to do as she is told. Eventually, she falls in

love with Dorriforth, but he is a priest and she can say nothing. Then, fortuitously, his cousin Lord Elmwood dies, and Dorriforth inherits the title; since it is one of the oldest remaining Catholic peerages in England, Dorriforth is granted dispensation from his vows by Rome, and becomes a layman. He and Miss Milner are ready to marry, but she will not change her behavior: she still attends balls and encourages admirers. In a final confrontation, Dorriforth gives her an ultimatum: if she insists on going to a masquerade she has been invited to, he will break the engagement. Miss Milner will not tolerate being told what to do, and although she loves Dorriforth, she goes to the masquerade. Dorriforth breaks the engagement and plans to go on a long trip to Europe; but at the last moment, the two are reconciled, and Part I ends with their marriage.

Part II opens seventeen years later, with an unexpected turn having taken place in the interim. Miss Milner and her daughter, Matilda, are in exile in a dingy castle in Scotland, because she had an affair with an old admirer some years after her marriage. The affair took place because Dorriforth withheld information from his wife: he let her think his extended absence was due to neglect, when in fact it was caused by illness. (Such are the unforeseen results of paternalistic behavior.) Miss Milner is dying, and her last wish is that Dorriforth should allow his daughter to live with him, even if he refuses to see her. An elaborate

plan is made: Matilda will be allowed to live in Dorriforth's summer house, but when he is there she must remain completely hidden. If he ever sees her face, he says, the arrangement will be annulled (it is the same kind of ultimatum he gave her mother). One day the terrible event happens: by accident she is in the same corridor as he, and she is told to leave the house. Soon after, an unwanted admirer tries to abduct her. When her father hears of this, he rushes out to save her, and they are reconciled. The novel ends with the probability that she will marry Dorriforth's nephew and chosen heir, who had fallen in love with her when he saw her by accident.

What first strikes the reader of A Simple Story is that Part II is a mirror image of Part I: in both parts, the young woman is under the control of the guardian/father figure, who issues ultimatums and dictates the law. The central plot of the two parts is the struggle between the heroine and this paternal law: critic Terry Castle reads the novel as "restlessly anti-authoritarian," radically transgressive, a story of women rebelling against masculine law (292).

Castle's commentary on this novel clarifies the point that began to become apparent in the discussion of Hirsch and Haywood's British Recluse: if plot is to be understood in terms of psychoanalytic theory, then this understanding of plot will mirror the social bases of gender inequality

that are reflected in psychoanalysis. Discussions of eighteenth-century plot have to take into account the ways in which gender impinges on plot. Simply put, mastery, as the very word implies, is a state that is much easier for a male character to achieve in these plots than for a female character.

Castle crystallizes this point immediately: she sees Miss Milner's behavior in Part I, when she consistently rebels against all Dorriforth's attempts to control her, as a "sexual and ideological struggle," Miss Milner's attempt to compensate "for a lack of any real power within the fictional world"; in that world she is always treated like a willful and rather stupid child (306). Miss Milner is a woman who has not accepted the submissive place society has prepared for her, who will not accept Dorriforth's authority, and will not accept the boundaries society places on her relationships: the narrator suggests that Miss Milner has never learned to recognize the barriers society put up between Dorriforth and her. Castle sees Miss Milner as a woman who has not been "properly socialized" -- that is, "enwomaned," or symbolically castrated, as Simone de Beauvoir would put it (292). Miss Milner's mother was responsible for her education, and she was brought up nominally protestant but in fact with no principles whatever: "'Her little heart employed in all the endless pursuits of personal accomplishments, had left her mind

without one ornament, except those which nature gave, and even they were not wholly preserved from the ravages made by its rival, Art" (Inchbald 4).

The theme of a socializing education, or lack of it, recurs often in A Simple Story. The narrator attributes many of the plot's turns to this deficiency:

Yet that passion, which had unhappily taken possession of her whole soul, would not have been inspired, had there not subsisted an early difference, in their systems of divine faith -- had she been early taught what were the sacred functions of a Roman ecclesiastic, though all her esteem, all her admiration, had been attracted by the qualities and accomplishments of her guardian; yet education would have given such a prohibition to her love, that she would have been precluded from it, as by that barrier which divides a sister from a brother. (63)

Miss Milner's failure to stay within boundaries is ascribed by the novel itself to her faulty education. This is curious, because in the case of her love for Dorriforth, the problem of this particular boundary is soon resolved when he is made a layman, and immediately returns her love. The narrator here is using the particular case to make a general statement: however one problem is resolved, another similar one will always recur because it is in Miss Milner's nature to ignore what her society sees as her place.

Education of the daughter is seen as the mother's duty, and a deficiency in education is a deficiency in the mother, who should have prepared her daughter better for her place

in the world. There is a problem in this novel with absent or inadequate mothers. Miss Milner's mother educated her badly and then died; Miss Milner herself causes her own daughter's banishment, and then also dies. The seventeen years of Matilda's childhood and relationship with her mother are not described; they pass in the temporal gap between Parts I and II, and Part II opens at Miss Milner's deathbed. The plot in A Simple Story revolves around the oedipal stage rather than pre-oedipal maternal bonding: the daughter turns from the inadequate or despised mother and seeks satisfaction in the bond with the law-giving father.

In the oedipal struggle between father and daughter, Castle sees the endings of both Part I and Part II as victories. In the first, Miss Milner marries Dorriforth: he has given in, and been unable to enforce his punishment (ostracism), and so as victor, instead of vanishing into marriage Miss Milner retains her autonomy. She does not use that autonomy well, however; by overstepping the boundaries of monogamy and having an affair (the extenuating circumstances of which are explained, if not excused), Miss Milner loses the victory and sets the stage for the replaying of the plot. In the repetition, the outcome is once again a victory, but the terms are different: Matilda manages to force Dorriforth to go back on his ostracism, to renounce the patriarchal punishment, but the ending does not suggest that she will retain her autonomy.

The difference between the first and second halves is one of character: the energetic Miss Milner of Part I who delights in rebellion, and the subdued Matilda of Part II. Miss Milner crosses boundaries not through ignorance or simple bad education: she delights in her transgressions, and uses them in her revolt. Castle sees Miss Milner as someone who has been able to "articulate her most compelling manifesto of passion to date -- a theory, in fact, of transgressive desire" (303). In a conversation with her mother substitute, Miss Woodley, she describes this philosophy:

"Strange," cried Miss Woodley, "that you, who possess so many follies incident to your sex, should, in the disposal of your heart, have sentiments so contrary to women in general."

"My dear Miss Woodley," returned she [Miss Milner], "put in competition the languid love of a debauchee, with the vivid affection of a sober man, and judge which has the dominion? Oh! in my calendar of love, a solemn lord chief justice, or a devout archbishop ranks before a licentious king."

Miss Woodley smiled at an opinion which she knew half her sex would laugh at; ... (104-105)

The attraction of the unobtainable lies in the very fact that in wanting it, one desires what one clearly is not supposed to have. But from the context of the remark, it is also very clear how different Miss Milner is from other women of her time: the narrative itself stresses this at all possible moments. She is a rebel; she has no complicity with the patriarchy.

In contrast to this, her daughter, Matilda, is a conformist, specifically described in the novel as being properly educated (read: having learned to behave as a woman should behave). When Matilda comes face to face with Dorriforth, thus breaking his tyrannical injunction, she faints rather than rebelling. Part II ends with Rushbrook, Dorriforth's nephew and heir, proposing to Matilda:

Whether the heart of Matilda, such as it has been described, could sentence him [Rushbrook] to misery, the reader is left to surmise -- and if he supposes that it did not, he has every reason to suppose their wedded life was a life of happiness.

He has beheld the pernicious effects of an improper education in the destiny which attended the unthinking Miss Milner -- On the opposite side, then, what may not be hoped from that school of prudence -- though of adversity -- in which Matilda was bred? (294)

Miss Milner's rebellion, specifically directed toward the social practices that left her powerless and uneducated in the intellectual rather than moral sense (for surely that is Inchbald's real complaint, displaced though it may be) is negated in this conventional marriage-plot conclusion. Yet to say that one conclusion negates the other is to assume that they are both operating on the same plane; this is not so, and it is the doubling of the plot that leads us to this conclusion.

The repetition in A Simple Story subverts the happy ending of the marriage plot. If she had left Part I as the conclusion of the novel, Inchbald would have showed the

taming of a rebellious girl by marriage; by continuing the story in Part II, showing the failure of the marriage and the implacability of the paternal figure, Inchbald calls into question marriage as an ending. After the failure of Part I's conclusion, Part II's repetition of the plot has to be seen in a different light, as a dreamlike re-enactment in an attempt for mastery. As Castle says, "one senses Inchbald moving closer and closer, in the second half, to an unmediated presentation of a basic wish fulfillment" (326). Castle continues, describing the endings of both parts as romance endings, not realist ones:

For the second time in A Simple Story, patriarchal violence is quelled, and feminine delight made paramount. We sense again, compellingly, that for this author the romance conclusion is the only conclusion: she seems unable to tolerate any restriction on her heroine's happiness. In this charmed recapitulation Inchbald undoes the problematic "death" of Miss Milner, relives her own charismatic story, and achieves, like Richardson, a sequel that is also the spectral reenactment of its utopian original. (325)

Inchbald presents not one but two marriage plots, and yet the very doubling undermines the apparent adherence to the male plot line. Whenever a plot goes beyond the ending, when it ends not with the wedding but with the events of the marriage itself, the Freudian plot has been subverted. After marriage should come quiescence, according to Brooks, yet Inchbald refuses this closure: the heroine is not yet satisfied, and so she repeats the plot until she arrives at

the ending she wants.

Les Malheurs de l'Amour

Claudine-Alexandrine de Tencin's Les Malheurs de l'amour (1727) tells the story of Pauline, the daughter of wealthy merchant parents, who is sent off to the convent to be educated. There she receives her first real knowledge of the world: she is humiliated in public by another pensionnaire from a noble family, who points out to her the difference between new money and old blood. She is taken under the wing of Eugénie, a nun who becomes her moral preceptor and great friend. Soon, she leaves the convent to go back to her family and start the real business of her life: marriage. Her mother is a social climber and has great plans for her, so she arranges a marriage with the marquis de N., a duke's son. Pauline has meanwhile fallen in love with Barbasan, whom Eugénie tells her is too far above her. She resists her mother, and manages to persuade her father to help her avoid the marriage; her father is portrayed as a man whose natural goodness and common sense have been perverted by the mother's desperate desire to move up in the world. But he never completely loses his good instincts, and when he realizes that he is dying he makes a careful and astonishing arrangement that will give Pauline

freedom in marriage. He converts all the wealth she would have inherited into deeds that will fit into an envelope; he gives this to her, so that now she appears poor according to what has openly been left to her in his will, but in fact has absolute control of a large amount of money. Now fortune hunters such as the duke's son leave her alone, and she can choose a husband who will marry her for love.

Pauline, of course, wants to marry Barbasan, but matters become complicated. She must wait until she is twenty-five to marry (apparently because her mother will not give her the permission she legally requires). Her mother marries the marquis who had originally been planned for Pauline, and when her mother becomes pregnant Pauline, according to French law, comes under the marquis' control. The marquis wants her to remain unmarried so that this child will eventually inherit even what apparently little money her father has left her. Her mother dies in childbirth (as the narrator makes clear, she is deliberately sacrificed by the father so that the child will live). The marquis is more than ever determined to keep Barbasan from marrying Pauline: the definitive separation occurs when Barbasan duels with and kills someone who insults Pauline. He flees, but is captured and imprisoned; Pauline bribes his jailers and he escapes to Germany. But then his letters stop; desperate to find out what has happened to him, Pauline dresses as a man and rides off to Frankfurt, where she is

told that he is married and his wife is pregnant. She herself sees Barbasan in church with a very pretty young woman, and rides back to France in despair.

There her friends, Eugénie and the commandeur de Piennes, eventually persuade her to marry the worthy Hacqueville, who adores her. As Eugénie says, this will "mettre fin à votre roman" (174). She is so averse to this union that she cannot bring herself to consummate her marriage until some months later. Then, one day, she learns the truth about Barbasan's supposed marriage and betrayal of her. His "wife," destitute and with child in hand, comes to beg for her mercy: she was the jailer's daughter, Hypolite, who had fallen in love with Barbasan when he was in prison, and passed herself off as a man so that she could go with him in his escape. When he discovered the trick he wanted to send her to a convent, but she delayed until one night she managed to entice him to bed. She became pregnant, and Barbasan agreed to look after her in Frankfurt until after the baby's birth. But when he saw Pauline in the church, he could no longer bear the situation, abandoned Hypolite, and went off to fight for the king of Sweden.

When Pauline finds out that Barbasan was never married, and has always loved her except for one moment of "oubli," she is shattered. She can barely look at her husband anymore, and he (thinking in his jealousy that Hypolite's child is actually Pauline's), falls into a fever and dies.

In a plot turn reminiscent of Lafayette's Princesse de Clèves, Pauline feels extremely guilty: she knew her husband to be a good and generous man, even though she could not love him, and she feels that she has caused his death. Every day, she wanders deep into the forest, in a miserable reverie. One day, in the forest, a man seizes her and tries to carry her off; another man springs to her defense, and in the ensuing fight is gravely wounded. Her savior, as it turns out, is Barbasan, who has come back from Sweden and is following her to catch a glimpse of her while he tries to get enough courage to speak to her; the kidnapper was the marquis de N., her stepfather, who was making a final bid to get by force the money that her husband left her. Barbasan dies of his wounds. Pauline goes back to live with Eugénie in the convent.

The tale of Pauline's bad luck is mirrored by the intercalated tale of Eugénie's love affair. When Pauline's mother is trying to force her to marry the marquis de N., Pauline tells Eugénie she would rather go into the convent. Eugénie mocks her romanesque plans: "voulez-vous faire l'héroïne du roman, & vous enfermer dans un cloître, parce qu'on ne vous donne pas l'amant que vous voulez?" (65), and tells her her own story in an attempt to make her submit to her mother's wishes. Eugénie too is put into a convent when young, and told she is a poor orphan. Because she is very beautiful and seems unsuited to conventual life, the kind

abbess sends her to her sister in Paris to try to find a husband. She has two suitors, one of whom -- la Valette -- she loves; when there are certain scandals about la Valette, the abbess's sister pushes her into a hurried marriage with the other suitor, Blanchefort, who seems a paragon of honesty. But Blanchefort refuses to declare their marriage publicly, even after she is pregnant, and takes steps toward contracting a much more socially advantageous one, thereby abandoning Eugénie, who is back in the convent with the abbess. When her newborn son dies, Eugénie gives up hope of forcing Blanchefort to recognize the marriage, and plans to become a nun. At the same time, she discovers that she is a rich heiress, whose parents had abandoned her in the convent in order to increase their son's inheritance. Just before she takes her vows, la Valette comes back to see her, and justifies himself fully for all the scandalous reports about him. La Valette, who often appeared scandalous, had true honor, whereas Blanchefort, who appeared virtuous, had no honor at all. Even though la Valette begs Eugénie to marry him, since Blanchefort has now died, she will not, and takes the veil; she says she cannot live with him, knowing that she had married Blanchefort to spite him. She and La Valette continue as friends for many years.

The themes that recur in both narratives -- Eugénie's and Pauline's -- are emphasized by being doubled. In both

stories, a young girl with apparently only a small dowry (in reality, enormous wealth), falls in love with a man who is too far above her in fortune and birth. Although both men are also in love with the women, the women are given no chance to work out a solution and overcome what the world would see as a mismatch; they are hurried into other marriages, with men they do not love, by their mother-figures. The role of these mother figures is to convince the girls that love does not matter in marriage, and that they should marry to spite the men they really love, but who have apparently spurned them. As Eugénie (Pauline's mother figure) says specifically, she wants to discourage her protegee from acting as if she were in a novel. In both cases, events show that the love marriage would have been the better one; the arranged marriages are disasters.

Money and its relation to love are recurrent themes. The power that money gives a woman is symbolized by Pauline's portefeuille, left to her by her father. She uses this several times to get Barbasan out of trouble (bribing his jailers, offering his "wife" money), and even more often she talks about what she can do for him with money. But at the same time, this money is what makes her an object of the marquis de N.'s envy, and causes all his successful plots against her: he never gets her money (in fact, he never realizes how much she really has, thanks to her father's duplicitous will), but he does succeed in preventing her

marriage to Barbasan. Money makes women into objects as well as subjects: objects of men's envy, as well as subjects who can decide what to do with their wealth.

When women do not have money, they lack the power they need in marriage. Eugénie, for example, does not want to marry a man who is much richer than she:

"Vous connaissez, répliqua mademoiselle d'Essei [Eugénie], ma répugnance pour le couvent; mais je vous avoue aussi que j'aurois beaucoup de peine à épouser un homme qui feroit tant pour moi: il me semble qu'il faut plus d'égalité dans les mariages pour qu'ils soient heureux, & je ne voudrois pas devoir mon bonheur à une illusion que je craindrois toujours qui ne vint à finir." (13)

A related theme is marriage and appearance, as it is affected by gender. In Eugénie's story, the man she truly loves is La Valette, who has a terrible reputation in the world, caused by his breaking off of a contracted marriage to a respected noblewoman. Later Eugénie discovers that it was the woman who wanted the marriage broken off, because she was in love with someone else, and La Valette who generously offered to take the blame because her father would not allow her to avoid the marriage. In other parts of the novel, plans are upset because the women do not tell the men that they love them; they are simply following conventional modest etiquette (which represents the woman as desired object, never desiring subject).

In this context, Tencin's repeated allusions to the

laws that affect women become more significant: the alternatives offered to women in this novel are limited not only because of cultural attitudes but also because of the concrete codification of those attitudes in law. While her mother is still alive, Pauline may not marry until she reaches her majority (the age of twenty five), because her mother will not agree. As soon as Pauline's mother becomes pregnant, Pauline becomes part of the Marquis' family, and her inheritance is also under this stepfather's control. The Marquis subjects her to lawsuits, trying to get control of even more of her money. Thanks to the laws on women's property, it serves the Marquis' interests to prevent her from any marriage at all; in the same way, Eugénie's father abandoned her anonymously at the convent in order to increase her brother's inheritance. In this novel, the law is closely linked to the laws of property, and together they form a web that controls women's lives.

Les Malheurs de l'amour does not follow as clearly the path Hirsch mapped for a narrative of pre-oedipal infantile plenitude. Here, mother figures are controlling, and the heroine's struggle is anchored on the moment when she rejects the mother and turns toward the father. Pauline has a good father, who offers her money (that is, power), and who then dies, leaving her apparently free. But even when the individual father is willing to give up power, the patriarchal system of law that stands behind him is not.

More than any novel we have yet examined, Les Malheurs de l'amour concentrates on exposing the institutions that support individual characters. Tencin is explicit about the legal system that prevents Pauline from making choices about her future and her marriage.

Standing on the brink between pre-oedipal and oedipal, there is nowhere for Tencin's heroine to turn. In front of her is the wall of male worldly power, which she cannot break through. Behind her are the mother and the mother figures who try control her, and who are deeply enmeshed with male power (both Pauline's mother and Eugénie try to convince Pauline that the best marriages are those that accord with the patriarchal system of property and money, rather than those based on love). In this scenario, narrative repetition is an attempt to see if control can be gained by any other strategies: Eugénie's story has essentially the same plot elements as Pauline's, except that Eugénie is from the beginning more compliant with the wishes of her mother figures. It makes no difference: both stories end in disaster; the heroines are left in the convent, without love, without the men they desired.

A Simple Story showed faulty mother figures, who did not educate their daughters properly. Les Malheurs de l'amour goes further; here, the mother figures abandon their daughters in convents for the sake of the brother's inheritance (Eugénie), or abandon their daughters for the

pleasures of a new husband (Pauline). At every turn, mother figures thwart the daughters' desires. This is the other side of Hirsch's infantile plenitude: the all-powerful mother who withholds rather than nurtures. Where A Simple Story ended with what Castle called a form of dreamlike wish-fulfillment, Les Malheurs de l'amour is a nightmare of frustration. It is hard to avoid drawing the conclusion that this is a moral tale blaming the failure of mothering: mothers who choose complicity in male power structures abandon their daughters to misery.

* * *

Hirsch's suggestions for a pre-oedipal reading of women's plots are helpful for all three of these novels. Yet, as my reading of Les Malheurs de l'amour shows, Hirsch's optimism may not be adequate for a reading of darker texts. Hirsch does not discuss the possibility of less nurturing mother-daughter relationships, and the effect these would have on the shape of narrative. Resisting the male-defined oedipal plot does not necessarily provide a writer with a satisfying pre-oedipal plot.

Hirsch's re-evaluation of Freud offers one new way to read female plot. There are other critics who have also radically rethought the gendering of plot. For example, in

an essay called "Coming Unstrung," Susan Winnett takes Brooks' comment on "desire as ... the tumescence of a self," and imagines what would happen if this concept were made specifically female. The temporarily tumescent female body is, of course, a pregnant one, and just as Brooks does, Winnett uses "tumescence" as the grounds for a "narrative sense-making operation" (509). She proceeds to produce a compelling reading of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, explaining the structure and unresolved closure of the novel by analogy with the rhythms of birth and nurturing.

Winnett's strategy, like Hirsch's, is a way of pointing out that the masculine experience is not the universal. Feminist criticism has only just begun to explore the ways in which social experience -- especially certain primal physical experiences, seen through the lens of our culture's conception of gender roles -- provides the framework of narrative. As Winnett says, quoting George Eliot, "the other stories" -- the women's stories -- "have already been written; we simply have to learn how to read them" (515).

NOTES

¹ Eliza Haywood, The British Recluse: or, The Secret History of Cleomira, Supposed Dead (3rd ed. London: D. Browne, 1722); Elizabeth Inchbald, A Simple Story (London: Pandora, 1987); Claudine-Alexandrine de Tencin, Les Malheurs de l'amour (Paris: 1727). All further references to these works are given in parentheses in the text.

² Nancy K. Miller, "Mémoires, oublis, et les pouvoirs du genre," Actes du Colloque: Femmes et pouvoirs sous l'Ancien Régime, ed. Danielle Haase-Dubosc (Paris: Rivages, forthcoming).

³ As Winnett notes, "Even Freud was troubled by his theory's inadequate explanation of female experience," "Coming Unstrung," PMLA 105.3 (1990): 506.

⁴ The pre-oedipal bond is the stage that Julia Kristeva has identified with the semiotic, whereas the oedipal stage is the moment of movement into the symbolic and into language.

⁵ It should be noted that Hirsch confines her arguments to a specific period; thus when she talks about this replacement of closure with a new formula, she is specifically talking about the modernist period. It is I who am extrapolating.

⁶ "A reformed rake makes the best husband" was a common saying. In his preface to Clarissa, Richardson says that "one of the principal views of the publication" of his novel was to caution young people against believing it. See Clarissa (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985) 36.

Chapter 5

Women, Parody, and Satire

The names associated with parody and satire in the eighteenth century are Pope, Swift, Voltaire, Boileau: men trained in the classical tradition, who wrote in a variety of genres but rarely the novel; men whose often cruel invective was turned against any aspect of society or any person they chose. If Boileau's Tenth Satire, Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Pope's Dunciad, Voltaire's Candide are representative of the eighteenth century, then what role can women play in parody and satire? To write satire, one needs to be in the subject position; to write parody, one needs complete mastery of the forms and traditions one parodies. I have argued throughout this study that during the eighteenth century women writers began, with some difficulty, to construct female characters as subjects, rather than objects, in their novels, and to shape plot lines according to this new narrative standpoint. Women's exclusion from the classical education so important to the literature of the period prevented them from mastering many traditional forms in order to parody them. It is not surprising, then, that women writers were often unable in their writing to take the authoritative stance of a Pope, unable to assume the mastery and authority that derived from

his position. I am going to argue here that despite the difficulty of their manifesting those attributes in their work, women writers do in fact use satire and parody. When women use these forms, however, I will argue that gender changes the genre: the actual social position of women means that they cannot take the same authoritative stance as male satirists and parodists, and therefore the structure of these genres changes in their hands.

The way a writer uses satire and parody depends on his or her position in society; I have suggested that narrative authority derives from that position. To do so means to enter a current debate in feminist theory on the theoretical status of the concept of standpoint. The debate centers on the question of whether there exists a specific, constructed "female" standpoint, or whether this notion falls into the trap of biological essentialism.¹ Without entering into that ongoing debate, which is taking place mainly in the area of the sciences, I would like to borrow from some of its participants to put forward a working definition for use in the context of this literary study. Donna Haraway has coined the term "situated knowledges," which she defines as a type of objectivity that does not claim transcendence: "Feminist objectivity," she claims, "is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we see and do" (583). This is not a

claim to relativism, in which all standpoints are seen as equal; Haraway is careful to note the power attached to various positions. In this argument, "subject" and "object" are not eternally fixed positions, but are constructed in a particular context and confer authority in that context. In literary terms, then, I argue that "standpoint" -- the narrator's position in the text -- is determined by historical and social conditions, inevitably including gender. In a particular period, narrative positions confer differing amounts of authority. For example, as Susan Sniader Lanser has argued in Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in western Europe the male narrative voice carries more authority than the female (22-23).² Access to particular narrative positions may also be restricted; for example, in the period under discussion, class and gender affect, through education, the writer's ability to choose the narrative positions of satire and parody, among other "learned" discourses. The opening assertion of this paragraph should be revised, then; to speak of a male or female narrator's "position" is to speak of a narrative point of view whose availability and accompanying authority have been (but do not have to be) arrogated by, among other things, gender.

Before elaborating on women's use of satire and parody, we need to define the terms. The most important recent

theory of parody is Gérard Genette's Palimpsestes, in which Genette develops a complex model of the relations between the new work of art and the model against which it is measured (called respectively the hypertext and the hypotext³). More pertinent to the present study, however, is Linda Hutcheon's A Theory of Parody, even though it deals with modern art rather than literature. Hutcheon, building on Genette's formulation of parody as difference, extends his argument in order to define satire as well as parody and to examine their potential for subversion. She also gives the clearest distinctions of any critic between the two terms, which have often been confused in practice. For Hutcheon, both satire and parody operate as difference -- difference between hypotext and hypertext. Parody is unlike satire, however, in that it is "intramural," whereas satire is "extramural." That is, parody always uses as its model another work of art, whereas satire uses something in the world -- politics, for example, or manners. The difference in model signals a difference in intent between the parodist and the satirist: although parody is often thought to use another work only in order to denigrate it, Hutcheon argues that this is not a necessary trait, whereas satire always has the aim of correcting the vices it depicts. Parody can be, and has been, used to denigrate its model, but that is only one of its two main functions; Hutcheon suggests "serious parody" as a formulation to note the distinction:

"Parodie sérieuse": [...] à la différence des parodies plus classiques, ridiculisantes et dévalorisantes, cette forme moderne n'implique pas qu'un texte ait un destin meilleur ou pire que l'autre; c'est leur action de différer qui est mise en relief, et en réalité actualisée, par cette parodie.⁴

For Hutcheon, the essence of parody is in its marking out of difference; the use made of that difference is secondary.⁵ The noting of difference is what Hutcheon calls parody's "aesthetic norms" (25), while satire has the "ameliorative aim to hold up to ridicule the vices and follies of mankind, with a eye to their correction" (43). Parody, then, is a more purely literary device, while satire is a social device. Parody can be a tribute to a literary tradition, whereas satire uses literature as a vehicle for a moral purpose.

Both parody and satire use irony, whose function in a text is to signal the critical distance between hypertext and hypotext. However, Hutcheon again separates the ironic function into two, one of which she associates with parody and one with satire. Parody, she argues, uses irony structurally or semantically: parodic irony "can be defined as a marking of difference in meaning or, simply, as antiphrasis" (54). Satire uses irony pragmatically; "the pragmatic function of irony [...] is one of signaling evaluation, most frequently of a pejorative nature" (53). In parody, irony serves to

point out to the reader the differences between the hypertext and its model, so that the reader can appreciate the performance; in satire, irony is a mark of judgment.

Because of this fundamental difference between the two tropes, they function differently in terms of their effects on their readers and their relation to the literary and social tradition. Hutcheon argues that "Satire tends to defend norms; it ridicules in order to bring deviation into line" (79). Satire tells its readers how to react and how to evaluate whatever is being satirized, and places the correct reaction in a context of the "norm." A satirist, then, operates from within a tradition, as keeper of that tradition, punishing deviance. A satirist has to feel in close agreement with the idealized view of the society that he criticizes, since he criticizes it only in order to bring it back to what it "should" be. Parody, on the other hand, does not necessarily ally itself with the social norms, and has more potential for transgression:

... parody presupposes both a law and its transgression, or both repetition and difference, and [...] therein lies the key to its double potential: it can be both conservative and transformative, both "mystificatory" and critical. (Hutcheon, "Theory" 101)

In those cases where parody does not denigrate its

model, but maintains an ironic but non-judgmental distance, then it can transgress the aesthetic norm by flaunting its distance from the model, showing how two sets of "norms" can pertain and thus undermining the authority of any one set. But parody can also remain conservative by denigrating the model; in this case the hypertext itself rejects the old norms of the hypotext and creates new ones, thus maintaining the authority of the singular norm.

The patterns Hutcheon describes fit the quintessential eighteenth-century male satirists and parodists. Often, male writers combine both forms, as in Pope's parody of mock-epic form to satirize London's intelligentsia in The Dunciad, Swift's parody of the homiletic advice pamphlet in "A Modest Proposal," Voltaire's use of the conte moral in Candide. In these works, whose primary purpose is satire but which use parody as a form, the writer occupies the position of commentator and social critic. As Hutcheon points out, this position constitutes a defense of existing norms and of the act of judgment; that is, the satirist criticizes what is seen to be a deviation from the agreed-on model society. The satirist's position is one of moral superiority within the existing system. We might expect, then, that women writers would turn more toward parody, given the difficulty of a woman obtaining

the necessary social position for satire. In fact, as we will see by examining particular novels by women, this is not the case.

We are now at the point where we can begin to consider how parody and satire operate in some eighteenth-century novels by women writers: Mary Davys' The Accomplish'd Rake, or Modern Fine Gentleman (1727), Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote (1752), Isabelle de Charrière's Lettres de Mistriss Henley (1784), and Françoise de Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne (1747). I have chosen these particular works because each calls into question narrative standpoint and its authority: each has a female narrator whose assumption of an authoritative narrative position upsets readers' expectations of authority and gender. The results of these experiments are different in each case. It is now necessary to move beyond Hutcheon's definitions. The model Hutcheon proposed for modern art works well to describe the position of male literary satirists and parodists, and to explain structurally the position they achieve within the two genres. I will argue, however, that this model does not adequately explain what happens in women's parody and satire. As we will see in the discussion of these four novels, the position of the female satirist or parodist is not one of moral superiority within the social system. Instead, her

choice is to be either an apologist for the criticized (rather than taking the unequivocal position of criticizer) or a transgressor (rather than upholder) of those norms. The implications and particularities of those two choices will become clearer in the contexts of the novels themselves. Hutcheon made the point that satire and parody have different conservative or transgressive possibilities: parody can underline its difference from the hypotext and thus suggest a different set of norms, a different structure. This provides a foundation for introducing a discussion of gender difference. Karen Newman, in a discussion of Jane Austen, has argued that for women writers parody has particular feminist transgressive potential:

The French feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray claims that women's writing is impossible because men control language. Women's access to all language, to the Word, is determined by the cultural constructions of patriarchal power. Their only recourse, according to Irigaray, is mimesis, imitation of male forms, but imitation that is self-conscious, or reflexive, what we might call imitation with a difference. Parody is that literary form which most openly declares its status as imitation, its difference. We might say, then, that [...] parody [...] is [a] means of interrogating patriarchal plots and power. (Newman 708)

Hutcheon's comments and Newman's elaboration suggest the possibility of feminist parody -- a gender-specific parody that deliberately transgresses patriarchal norms

and creates a new norm, a new model. We will see, however, that while this feminist parody may exist in Austen's novels, as Newman claims, it does not in the eighteenth century. Instead, we find female realist satire and parody, which both represent the state of women's lives; but only the satire moves beyond female realism to feminism.

There are important differences between the French women's tradition and the English. The novels to be discussed here fall into two categories, divided sharply by nationality. Charrière's Mistriss Henley is an indictment of a male conception of rationality, and how this can impose unbearably on a woman in marriage; Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne is an ambitious indictment of colonial brutality, sexism, French manners, and marriage. Both are serious social satires, aimed at exposing the injustices of institutions. They are not, however, devoid of parodic intent, since they are both modeled on particular literary works: Mistriss Henley is explicitly a response to a novel called Le Mari sentimental, while Graffigny's novel is patterned, though less explicitly, on Montesquieu's 1721 Lettres persanes. Both also call into question the tradition of female epistolarity. One could therefore call them satires that use parody, or parodic satires. There is, however, no English equivalent of these by a woman

writer. Instead, Davys' The Accomplish'd Rake and Lennox's The Female Quixote are very funny satiric parodies aimed more specifically toward literary types and genres rather than institutions. Davys pokes fun not at the institution of marriage but at the behavior of rakes (as depicted in literature) who try to avoid it and the young women these debauched men try to ensnare. Lennox satirizes her heroine, Arabella, who (like her namesake Don Quixote) has read so many heroic romances that she believes the world they describe is real, and tries to live her life according to romance principles. I call these English novels satiric parodies rather than simply parodies because although their intent is mainly parodic, they use the formal aspects of parody for satiric, judgmental purposes.

The category of gender offers a challenge to the definition of parody and satire we have been using because, when written by women, the satires are more transgressive than the parodies. One could argue, of course, that these particular novels are all transgressive to a certain extent: thematically, they deal with the problems of women, arguing openly against some aspect of the treatment of women in their societies. In Chapter 1 of this study I defined "female realism" and argued that it was not necessarily the same as feminist writing: I have looked at female realist

works as a body, demonstrating that there are indeed specific techniques used by women writers for representing the effects of gender, techniques that have not been recognized as realist. The techniques of female realism can be identified in a wide variety of works from this period. Specifically feminist writing, however, is a different matter. Any particular feminist work from this period uses many of the techniques of female realism. But feminist writing also has to, as Nancy K. Miller has pointed out, "figure the existence of other subjective economies, other styles of identity" ("Writing Feminist Criticism" 8); feminist writing goes beyond female realism in that it projects an actual or (more often) potential feminist existence rather than simply representing the "real." Taking this criterion as the essential mark of feminist writing, which distinguishes it from female realism, we will see that feminist writing's ability to project an imaginary state into the future combines with an essential element in satire -- the position of the morally superior outside commentator -- to form a new hybrid: feminist satire.

I have called the French examples parodic satires, and the English novels satiric parodies; these terms, although clumsy, indicate that there is, among these examples, no purity of genre (no parody without satiric moments, nor satire without parody), but that in each

work one intent is paramount. If we use Hutcheon's definition, the English novels should, or at least could, be more transgressive and less conservative than the French, since their main intent is parody rather than satire. Yet that is not the case: taking the fundamental question of marriage as an indicator, we see that both Davys' and Lennox's novels end with marriage, whereas Graffigny's heroine deliberately refuses marriage and Charrière's is disillusioned by it. A narrator's attitude toward marriage, as we have seen throughout this study, is an indicator of conservatism or transgression: here, the satires are more radical than the parodies. The narrator's attitude toward the female protagonist is another such indicator. Both Charrière and Graffigny use the epistolary form, with a single first-person narrator. Their critiques are therefore personal; there is no distance between the narrative voice and the object described. Both Davys and Lennox use intrusive omniscient narrators -- intrusive in the sense that they draw attention to themselves as being outside the action, and break the narrative illusion. This third-person stance creates an ironic distance between the heroines and the narrators, so that often it is the heroine herself who is the object of the satire (especially in Lennox). In the French novels, the heroine is given the position of

satirist and commentator; in the English novels, the narrator, separated from the heroine, performs the satiric function, often directed against the heroine. In the French novels, then, the narrator has the authority to criticize the world; in the English novels, the narrator's authority operates in a much smaller range. The range of the female protagonist in the two English novels is necessarily even more circumscribed. Even the briefest glance at these two measures by which a novel can be judged as conservative or transgressive indicate that the French satires are more radically feminist than the English parodies. Hutcheon's initial proposition, that satire is necessarily conservative, needs to be reevaluated in the light of gender and nationality.

I will speculate -- and it can only be speculation, given the narrow confines of this study -- that the difference between the eighteenth-century French and English approaches to satire and parody (for women writers) arises from two factors: the strong French tradition of women's writing throughout the seventeenth century, which gave eighteenth-century writers a foundation that was not duplicated in England; and the availability to French writers of the epistolary novel as a vehicle for subjects other than love. The history of the seventeenth-century salons in France, whose

importance has been explored in works such as Joan DeJean's Tender Geographies and Carolyn Lougée's Le Paradis des femmes, offered to a female writer in eighteenth-century France the sense of an ongoing female writing tradition. Whatever opposition she faced for her specific writing project, the French novelist did not have to reinvent herself completely as a writer with every word. In England, although many women wrote in the seventeenth century, they did not as a group achieve the same level of acceptance; to be a writing woman was always to be an anomaly, never to be part of a movement. The English woman writer could never claim for herself the title of salonnière; the nearest English equivalent to the salon was the coffeehouse, which was very definitely a male preserve. Without any tradition of acceptance, I would surmise that it was harder for English women than for French to take the position of satirist.

The second point concerns the importance of the epistolary novel and the narrative standpoint it affords women writers in particular. In France, the epistolary form was early associated with women; critics claimed that it was a "natural" form for women since it supposedly duplicated the private letters they would have written anyway.⁶ In this sense, the epistolary genre was a trap for women writers, since it was

relentlessly classified as "artless" and most usually took as its subject the seduced and abandoned woman. In fact, critics often saw no boundary between epistolary fiction and real letters, as is clear from the belief that the most famous epistolary novel of the eighteenth century, Les Lettres portugaises, was thought until the twentieth century to consist of a real Portuguese nun's actual love letters.⁷ Even in mid-century, Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd (1757) was read by many critics as a series of her own real love letters, rather than as a novel.⁸ For a French woman writer, then, the epistolary was more easily open to her than other genres, but offered the danger of forcing her into a narrative standpoint confined to the private and lacking authority. Still, since a parallel male epistolary tradition existed, some women writers managed to use the genre and transform it for other purposes: this is precisely what Katharine Jensen has argued for Graffigny, whose Lettres d'une Péruvienne draws on the epistolary tradition of abandoned woman and yet, by grafting on the male tradition of works such as Montesquieu's Lettres persanes, breaks the mold of the "feminine" tradition.⁹ This female epistolary tradition, like the salon background, does not exist in England; there are isolated epistolary novels by women - notably Aphra Behn's Love Letters Between a Nobleman

and His Sister, as we have seen -- but no series of women's novels that can be pointed out as forming a tradition of their own.¹⁰ In England, the letter novel is seen as a testing ground for narrative techniques that will later find their way into the mainstream novel, rather than as a genre whose technique is important in its own right: the great exceptions, of course, are novels by a man, Samuel Richardson.¹¹

The tradition of female epistolarity, then, differs in France and England, and the epistolary genre turns out to be crucial for female satire. As I have suggested, the narrative stance in an epistolary novel gives the narrator a particular position: a first-person narrative voice that constructs the action and also comments on it. This, one would think, is not the best voice for satiric purposes. The most effective satire occurs when the satirist's position is neither specified nor questioned: his knowledge of his society's actual state and ideal values must be taken for granted by the reader, as must his moral right to comment. In an epistolary novel, on the contrary, the first-person voice is always in question, never omniscient, always fluctuating under the pressures of the current situation or emotion. The first-person letter writer cannot assume the distanced authoritative perspective of an outsider. True, the first-person epistolary voice can

pass satirical judgment on another society, as Montesquieu's Persian traveler does, and that "exotic" conceit appears to be necessary for male epistolary satire to function effectively. I specify "male epistolary satire" because I will argue that female satire operates in a different way, a way that makes the choice of the epistolary genre more evident. Since women can only with great difficulty assume the "normal" satirist's position (of a moral superiority taken for granted), the normal form of satire -- in which the satirist belongs within the society he criticizes -- is almost closed to them. Thus arises feminist satire, in which the satirist has to take a third position, turning the dual structure of satire into a triangle: instead of satirizing the excesses or vices of a society that is intrinsically capable of living up to its values, the feminist satirist stands outside both the standpoint of criticizer and the standpoint of the criticized. She is outside society, criticizing it from the point of view of an imaginary and ideal feminist society that does not exist; she assumes a position of moral superiority in a world that she herself has to create. The flexibility of the epistolary voice here becomes an asset rather than a liability for feminist satire, since it is pliable enough to allow the narrator to create this imaginary world. The essential condition that separated

feminist writing from female realism -- the ability to figure a feminist existence beyond the "real" -- finds in the structure of satire a healthy environment for this hybrid genre. In order to write such satire, however, a woman has to take a feminist stand: the normal form of male conservative satire is closed to her, and feminist satire is the only option if her intent is satiric. Thus writing that is female realist but not feminist tends toward parody rather than satire, as the relative conservatism of Davys' and Lennox's works shows.

Satire is usually an attack on deviations from what the satirist considers the norm. For satire to work, the satirist has to have authority and also has to feel that he or she can articulate the consensus gentium; that is, the satirist has to either impose an agreed community response of what the norms are or be the mouthpiece for it. But in the case of feminist satire, it is impossible for the satirist to articulate community norms -- it is in the nature of feminism to resist and react against those misogynist norms. The feminist satirist, then, creates an imaginary community with its own norms, opposed to those of the general society -- "imaginary," because these norms refer to a possible but not yet existing community of women who could create them. It is these imaginary norms that are

used to measure the distance between reality as the satire depicts it, reality as the existing society would judge it, and reality as it should be according to the new feminist norms. Feminist satire is a double-layered satire. Its purpose is to delineate an "as if": to judge as if feminist norms were indeed norms, as if there were a community that had the authority to enforce them.

Because the typical male satirist's position is not open to the feminist satirist, then the woman writer's narrative standpoint will differ. The third-person omniscient narrator suits the purpose of a writer who criticizes or parodizes from within the norms of a society; but a writer who by her feminist intention puts herself outside those norms may choose rather to use a narrative stance that allows her more easily to create that imaginary world she needs in order to stand outside her society and criticize it. For the writers we will examine here, the first-person epistolary voice provides that opportunity. Hutcheon argued that satire was necessarily conservative, and that parody was the genre that had the potential to be transgressive. As we will see, gender inverts that assertion. It is the French satirists, who, through their feminist stance, move beyond the "normal" male satirist's position to a radical new critique; while the English parodists, by

finally allying themselves with the male satirist's position, remain within conventional closure.

Davys, 'The Accomplish'd Rake'

Synopsis

Sir Galliard is a good man, married to a flighty, pleasure-loving wife. They have two children, and when Galliard dies, the boy, John, is only fourteen and the sister a little younger. Sir Galliard, as he is dying, worries what will happen to them under the faulty care of his wife, but has too much respect for her to appoint them a different guardian. His worst fears come true: his wife neglects their education, lets them do whatever they want, and occupies herself more pleasurably with the footman. The young Sir John, who had talents and good instincts, grows up vicious and idle. When sent off to Cambridge, he goes instead to London and plunges into dissipation, becoming an "accomplish'd rake." Not content with prostitutes, John concocts elaborate schemes for seducing virtuous young noblewomen, going so far as to drug one young woman (Nancy Friendly, an old friend of his family's), so that he can rape her without her even being aware of it, leaving her pregnant and utterly bewildered about how she became so. For several years, John manages to quell whatever pangs of

conscience he has, but finally he is brought up short: he has maneuvered Belinda, a young woman of good family, into a position where he can take her by force, but she manages to outwit him, and gives him a good tongue lashing into the bargain. (Throughout the book, John and his rakish friends are made very nervous by articulate, scolding women.) Thwarted and a little chastened, he is more susceptible to Nancy's claims -- Nancy who still, with a two-year-old son who looks just like his father, does not know how she got pregnant and has been reviled by everyone for "lying" about her sin. At the end, John is about to marry Nancy, and all is apparently well.

Structurally, this novel is more parody than satire because it relies absolutely on the readers' recognition of its literary hypotexts to achieve its ironic distance. The Accomplish'd Rake is based not on any one particular novel, but on a series of literary conventions, especially the figure of the rake from Restoration drama and the convention of the omniscient narrator as it was still developing in the novel in the seventeen-twenties.

Let us start with Davys' parody of novel conventions. Her main focus is the problem of the omniscient third-person narrator, and the suspension of

disbelief that allows the reader to trust this narrator's perfect knowledge of the action and the characters. A typical omniscient narrator never identifies its position in regard to the text, thus producing a certain authority that appears unquestionable. Davys' narrator, in keeping with that convention, is not named, nor is its precise relation to the characters ever specified; but this narrator is presented as female, and speaks in the first person, chattily discussing the problems of finding out all the necessary facts. This very act of positioning the narrator changes its authority. As in the following quotation, Davys constantly draws attention to the problem of an omniscient narrator's trustworthiness by calling into question the source of information:

How Lady Galliard digested this return from her son I never heard, because I never inquired. (279)

Later she mocks the convention that allows the narrator to leave the reader in suspense while temporarily turning to a different point of view:

Each new minute filled his mind with tender sentiments succeeded by grief, till at last revenge took place, of which more hereafter, for I am this minute going to take coach to London again, where I left my young knight in the careful hands of Mr. Friendly and Mr. Teachwell. (277)

The above citation refers to the footman's reaction to his wife's death, caused by the venereal disease he had contracted in his affair with Lady Galliard; his revenge, mentioned by the narrator, will figure materially in the plot, but the narrator abruptly and physically drops this thread of the story by running off to take a coach.

These examples are parodies of literary convention in that they take the form of narrative intervention as it was found in contemporary and slightly earlier novels, and repeat this form. The two quotations cited here call into question what should, with an omniscient narrator, remain unquestioned: the narrator's authority and the integrity of the information. Davys' narrator insists on her own physical presence -- to the point of absurdity -- as a guarantor of information, and thereby undermines the conventional narrator's claim to "know all." Davys' way of making fun of narrative convention does denigrate the hypotext to some extent, which is one of the possibilities attributed to parody in Hutcheon's definition; to that extent, her work is conservative. What is attacked, however, is not manners or morals but a formal convention, a method of representation. The narrator gives herself license and authority to criticize literary technique, but does not attempt to move into a critique of the extraliterary world.

The second major area of parody is Davys' treatment of the rake figure. The Accomplish'd Rake parodies the life of a rake, a "modern fine gentleman," as it had been depicted in Restoration drama and in novels.

William H. McBurney has pointed out in passing the links between Davys' novels and stock characters and themes from the Restoration stage.¹² Her debt to these stock characters can immediately be seen in her characters' names: Friendly, Teachwell, Galliard, Sir Combish Clutter, for example. The prime importance that the figure of the rake in particular had in the literature of the period is demonstrated by the power it still held in 1748, when Richardson's Clarissa gave the ultimate portrait of a figure that was by then changing its manners in real life. Davys' parody of the rake makes the figure ridiculous, but rather as a literary figure than as a way of behavior in the world. Her parody comments on literature, and is therefore "intramural"; if her attack were to be "extramural," moving out into the real world, then she would cross the border into satire.

The stereotyped behavior of the rake consists of drinking till one falls down, gambling away one's estates, and catching such a collection of venereal diseases from prostitutes that one's health may be forever ruined. Davys is writing early enough in the

century to share the raw quality of Behn's and Manley's prose: not for her the circumlocutions and euphemisms of sensibility. Lady Galliard (John's mother) gives her footman a pox that he passes on to his innocent wife, and which kills her; the rakes talk freely about women's sole purpose on earth being their pleasure: in Davys' novel, sexual politics is a rough game, with potentially dire consequences that she does not try to varnish.

There is also an awareness of class strife. The rakes make little distinction between women based on rank (a lower-class woman can be bribed into submission, a noblewoman can be seduced with false promises or drugged if all else fails), but events point out the differences in justice that a lower-class man can expect to receive. I say "man" advisedly: this book is about sexual conflict, and "justice" only appears in the context of sexual crimes. For example, Betty Dimple is engaged to William, the footman of John's friend Sir Combish Clutter; Clutter tricks her into giving up her virginity to him rather than to her beloved William. When the story comes out, Betty scolds Clutter and makes a laughing stock of him in front of his friends, but although she mentions the law, there is no question that the aristocrats will allow her to use it in her favor. Instead, she and William have to be content with some money from Clutter. Virginity is socially less

important in a lower-class woman, and so it is really William who is being recompensed for having his rights impinged on. On the other hand, for an upper-class woman such as Nancy Friendly, loss of virginity and the shame it entails is enough to make her father waste away in grief.

The most interesting conflict in the novel is between the rakes' view of women and the actual depiction of the female characters. For the rakes, women are simply there to be used and abused sexually; whatever their own behavior, they allow no woman the same kind of sexual freedom they give themselves. At first glance, many of the women seem to be as bad as the men: there is an array of money-grabbing prostitutes and madams, and society women who cheat on their husbands while their husbands cheat on them. But the portraits of these women are more complex than they first appear. Sir John's mother, for example, is always described as brainless and amoral, but she offers to marry the one footman she is shown to be involved with; Belinda's sister has an affair with John, but only in a calculated fashion, because her husband is desperate for an heir that he cannot himself produce, and she refuses to repeat the experience after her husband's death; the maidservant Betty Dimple only sleeps with Sir Combish Clutter because she is tricked into it; Nancy Friendly

and Belinda, who are both by their own definition flighty and fun-loving young women, fight bitterly against seduction and rape -- Belinda through her common sense and quick tongue, and Nancy through her determination to tell the truth as she knows it. The female characters are fighting throughout the novel to be recognized as more than Sir John and his friends would allow them to be. As Jean B. Kern suggests, wit is the only tool available to women to achieve this.¹³ There is thus a tension around the issue of representation: if the rakes' representation of women has a powerful effect on the women's lives, then literary representation is perhaps not as separate from the world as Hutcheon proposes to make it. We may want to suggest a rethinking of the borders between "intramural" and "extramural" categories. Davys' attack on the representation of women, made through an attack on the literary figure of the rake, suggests that in women's novels the relationship between literary and extraliterary may be more complex than anticipated.

The structure of this novel follows the conventional story of a courtship and marriage, although Sir John's treatment of Nancy Friendly is in no sense a conventional courtship. Davys' novel does not make marriage seem like a wonderful ending: when John finally offers to marry Nancy, after admitting that he is the

father of her child, she is so angry at him for raping and abandoning her that she would prefer to refuse. Like the later Clarissa, Nancy does not feel that marriage wipes out all earlier sins. She does agree to the wedding, but only for the sake of her child, and she insists on a legal settlement that will make the child sole heir to John's estate. John's proposal is hardly the dream of a romantic heroine: "Madam, [...] I have promised to marry you and if I can but keep that in mind till the deed confirms my word, I shall never after deny you anything" (372). Here Davys is parodying the literary convention that a novel ends in a marriage, of which the result is happiness ever after. This is a parody that ridicules the literary model, since it shows the marriage taking place a couple of years after the birth of Nancy's child, and with Nancy's serious reservations. It is pragmatic, not romantic, and it suggests the difficulties that the heroine faces with a rake-husband who has barely begun to reform. Yet the novel does not suggest any attempt to subvert those conventions in the world; this parody makes ridiculous the literary convention of marriage, but does not attack the social conventions that underlie it. Nancy Friendly marries Sir John because she has little choice; Davys' parody makes clear the sordid considerations that force her hand, and the force of the parody lies precisely in

the honesty and clarity with which the novel pulls the veil away from the romantic literary ending. But this novel does not preach revolution.

The Accomplish'd Rake is a parody because it turns on difference: class difference, sex difference, the difference between various representations of reality. It uses the techniques of female realism to represent the social conditions of its female protagonists -- which it both depicts and deplores with great success and wit -- but it does not move beyond that depiction toward a feminist reworking of those conditions. It is a transgressive parody in that it slyly undermines the norms of which it makes fun; but its transgression is limited by the genre. The transgressive possibilities of parody are confined to undermining what is; parody cannot suggest what could be.

Lennox, 'The Female Quixote'

Synopsis

A marquis who was for years the most important minister of England is removed from power by his enemies; haughtily, he retires to the country, marries, and has a child. The mother dies in childbirth; the marquis and his daughter, Arabella, live in complete

seclusion on his huge estate. Arabella receives a wonderful education from her father; she sees no one, but is allowed to read in the library at will. She soaks up heroic romances, and by the time her father dies, when she is beautiful and of marriageable age, she, like Don Quixote, is convinced that the world operates on the principles she has read in her Clélie and her Astrée. Her father has recently allowed her cousin, Mr. Glanville, to visit, and has encouraged him to marry her. But Glanville continually offends Arabella by refusing to act as she expects a romance hero and suitor to do. As the book continues, more new people are introduced, and the clash between Arabella's view of the world and the worldly, jaded society life she is introduced to creates a dissonance that satirizes both. Arabella sees adventure everywhere: this gardener is a nobleman dressed as a menial as part of a plan to ravish her; that passing horseback rider is in league with her cousin to carry her off. Surely no lover is worthy of her who has not singlehandedly felled an army of a thousand, who has not languished years awaiting the favor of a glance?

Arabella, apart from this one foible, is not only beautiful but also extremely intelligent and well-read. Glanville loves her and wants to "bring her to her senses," since most people consider that her head is

slightly turned. Just as Don Quixote is duped into believing that real adventures are befalling him by the Duke and Duchess (in Book II), Glanville's rival concocts an elaborate scheme that convinces Arabella she is about to be kidnaped and ravished. This scheme ends badly, however, when Arabella imitates Clelia and leaps into the Thames to escape her supposed ravisher, bringing on such a fever that she almost dies. The clergyman who attends her in her illness has long discussions with her about romances, and finally convinces her that life is not as it is depicted in these books. Ashamed of her previous beliefs, she marries Glanville.

The parodic intentions of The Female Quixote are announced by its title and carried through in its structure: the novel is based on Cervantes' book in its theme of a protagonist who has permanently, rather than temporarily, suspended disbelief when reading romances. Lennox's novel follows Cervantes' in its episodes in which the heroine's view of the world clashes with that of everyone around her; it also mirrors the deathbed (or, in Lennox's case, near-death and recovery) conversion to reality. In this sense, The Female Quixote is a pure parody, using the model of the hypotext to recast its themes in contemporary terms. It

does not in any way make the hypotext ridiculous, or denigrate its conventions. The Female Quixote, however, manifests a different kind of ambivalence about its protagonist's authority than does its predecessor. The narrator of Don Quixote walks a fine line: some episodes seem to show that his character is wrong in his delusion, but the tone in which certain scattered events are narrated sometimes belies that. The question, Is Don Quixote mad? (and therefore culpable, foolish, to be chastised) is impossible to answer definitively. In the same way, Lennox's narrator seems to make fun of Arabella, and to suggest that she should be punished or "cured"; yet, as Deborah Ross has pointed out, the narrator's tone does not match this position. Ross suggests that the narrator's secret sympathy for Arabella, despite the hatred of romances that supposedly motivates this parody, arises from the particular situation of the heroine as an eighteenth-century woman:

...as we read on, we begin to sense Lennox's real sympathy for Arabella; she is drawn with a conviction that seems to have come from the author's own experience. By adding realistic details about growing up female in the eighteenth century, Lennox further enlists the reader's sympathies on what the novel formally designates as the wrong side. (461)

The Female Quixote, then, is a parody at war with itself. It deliberately chooses as hypotext a novel

that apparently condemns romances unequivocally, but then picks up on the underlying complexities of that model and translates them into a profound ambivalence about woman's role in a novel -- any novel. Although the novel supposedly turns on the heroine's relation to literature, rather than real life, what Ross calls the "realistic details about growing up female" suggest that there are in fact problems with reality that Arabella notices but that her narrator is not willing to grant her the authority to comment on. This is the core of the narrator's ambivalence: how much credence to lend to the experience of a female protagonist and, by analogy, how much to a female narrator.

This ambivalence can be explained by the role women play in the romance as opposed to the role they play in the novel. I read The Female Quixote as an eighteenth-century response to a seventeenth-century situation. Joan DeJean has argued that the French seventeenth-century heroic romances that Lennox also draws on for her parody were a female genre, describing a world that women built to give themselves power. Madeleine de Scudéry in particular, says DeJean, described a world in which women were at the center, the ones who made the rules, whose wishes governed; in Clélie, Scudéry literally drew a new world map, the Carte de Tendre, the "tender geography" that signaled the world of powerful

women (DeJean, Tender Geographies). Love was the domain, and all politics and wars were decided by it. The women in romances had the absolute power of choice in love and marriage, and could make these choices according to their own principles. By attacking romances, Lennox attacks precisely this notion of the power and importance of women.

There are many points in The Female Quixote in which the narrator explicitly takes on some of the issues that DeJean sees as central to the female heroic romance. For example, at one point Sir George is "giving his history," as knights do when they meet strangers. (Sir George has read as many romances as Arabella, and makes fun of her by speaking and acting in their style when he is with her.) In this history, he has almost been killed by an enemy, but the enemy's sister and he then fall in love; from now on, Sir George announces, he would do anything to save the enemy brother for the sake of the beloved lady. One of his listeners, an old soldier, laughs and ridicules this. But Arabella disagrees: in the world of romances knights are no longer guided by the old rules, but by higher rules, and she lists several examples:

You will see there a lover, whose mistress has been taken from him either by treachery or force, venture his life in defence of the injurious husband who possesses her, and though all his

felicity depends upon his death, yet he will rescue him from it at the expence of the greater part of his blood. [...]

A third, having contracted a violent friendship for the enemies of his country, through the same generous sentiments, draws his sword in their defence, and makes no scruple to fight against an army where the king his father is in person. (255)

Knights in romances do not follow normal masculine codes of honor, since those are built on the principle that men and their concerns are primary, while women are simply objects of exchange within the male system. In the masculine code of honor, a man fights for his male allies, and would never compromise his honor for a woman. In the romance ethic, however, the masculine code is displaced, and replaced with the primacy of women. The man's love for a woman is the central rule; since she is no longer the object of exchange but the object of worship, he will not kill to get her back, but will sacrifice his "honour" to her new husband in order to maintain her peace. Even a father, symbol of the closest male bond, will be sacrificed to the principles built on this womanly code.

The conflict between the two codes of ethics is made even more explicit as Arabella is brought out into the world, and as her ideas cause even more practical confusion through her dealings with strangers. Strangers are not as willing to accommodate her

"eccentricities" as Glanville and his family have been, and there are several serious incidents. One of these arises when a Mr. Selvin has begun to pay some attention to her, and Arabella is led to believe that he is in love with her. For a romance princess, when a knight is in love with her he has put himself into her power, and she has complete empire over him. No knight, however, has the right to declare his love except under extraordinary circumstances, and certainly no right to expect any acknowledgment of it. In this case, Arabella is offended at Mr. Selvin's "free" behavior (in making his intentions known to her), and commands him to leave England, but not to let his hopeless love for her cause him to die of despair. Glanville loses patience when he hears this, and challenges Arabella's view of the world:

I know, madam, that Mr. Selvin does not think himself under a necessity of obeying your sentence; and has the impudence to question your authority for banishing him from his native country. -- My authority, sir, said Arabella, strangely surprised, is founded upon the absolute power he has given me over him. -- He denies that, madam, and says that he neither can give, nor you exercise, an absolute power over him; since you are both accountable to the king, whose subjects you are, and both restrained by the laws under whose sanctions you live. [...] -- The empire of love, said she, like the empire of honour, is governed by laws of its own, which have no dependence upon, or relation to, any other. -- Pardon me, madam, said Glanville, if I presume to differ from you. Our laws have fixed the boundaries of honour as well as those of love. (357)

Glanville represents the masculine view of the world, in which men decide the laws and women are the object of exchange; Arabella continues to defend the romance view of the world, in which women have an extraordinary power over men. In the end, Glanville will win.

When she is dangerously ill after her plunge into the Thames, and discusses with her learned clergyman the nature of the romances that induced her to believe she was about to be ravished, Arabella sets up three areas of discussion. She challenges the clergyman to prove "That these histories you condemn are fictions; next, That they are absurd; and lastly, That they are criminal" (415). These are the arguments most commonly leveled against the novel in the eighteenth century (see Chapter 1 of this study). In the course of the discussion, only Richardson's Clarissa is singled out for praise:

An admirable writer of our own time, has found the way to convey the most solid instructions, the noblest sentiments, and the most exalted piety in the pleasing dress of a novel, and, to use the words of the greatest genius in the present age [Samuel Johnson], "has taught the passions to move at the command of virtue." (417)

The clergyman shows her that her French romances are fictions, not based on historical evidence, and that in fact they distort the historical record as it is known

from other sources; that they are absurd because they picture heroes with inhuman strength and heroines subjected to an improbable amount of ravishings and carryings-off that bear no resemblance to daily life; and that they are vicious because they concentrate on two passions that ought to be suppressed -- revenge and love. Another friend who had earlier tried to wean Arabella from her romantic worldview used the same argument: the heroes of romances are not Christians, and cannot be praised in today's world for their un-Christian bloodthirstiness. At this point in the book, though, this clergyman is even more specific: a large part of the corrupting influence of romances derives from the attention they pay women, and the attention they lead women to expect. Romances "soften the heart to love," he says; they "teach women to expect not only worship, but the dreadful worship of human sacrifices" (420). Worse, they not only lessen humility, and destroy women's natural compassion, but women readers are "in danger of being betrayed to the vanity of beauty, and taught the arts of intrigue" (421).

The clergyman's discourse is supported by the revelation to Arabella of the hoax that Glanville's rival had played on her. This combination "brings her to her senses," and, suitably chastened, she marries Glanville on the last page.

The nature of Arabella's "madness" is that she believes that women wield extraordinary power in the empire of love. In her world, the first duty of a male lover is fidelity to his mistress, and then to consider her the absolute arbiter of his fate and all his actions; women are the center of the world, and Arabella cites endless examples from her books to show that the true motives for many male actions are love. Discussing Pisistratus, Arabella says:

Neither is it true, that ambition alone inspired Pisistratus with a design of enslaving his country: those authors who say so, must know little of the springs and motives of his conduct. It was neither ambition nor revenge that made him act as he did: it was the violent affection he conceived for the beautiful Cleorante, whom he first saw at the baths of Thermopylae, which put him above those designs.
(299)

Arabella sees romances as giving the true histories of famous men; women guide these heroes' conduct. Male historians assume that the masculine code of honour is what motivates wars and conquests; romances show a different story, in which women play a huge part.

In the real world that Arabella is finally forced to accept, men are not faithful (as evidenced by Glanville's rival, Sir George), nor do they consider women particularly important. In London society, the attributes of virtue and heroism are no longer extant,

and Arabella must be satisfied with the men she sees there, men "sunk in sloth and effeminacy," who "continually followed the sound of a fiddle, sauntered in public walks, or tattled over a tea-table" (315).

As with Davys' novel, the plot of The Female Quixote is shaped by Glanville's attempts to "bring Arabella to her senses," to make her act in conformity with the world, so that he can marry her. It is a quest on the man's part, a Bildungsroman on the woman's, but in both cases the desired result is normalcy and marriage, at which point the woman's story is over. The narrator's description of the romance heroine's life shows an awareness of this problem:

[F]or, by the laws of romance, when a lady has once given her lover that permission [to merit her affection], she may lawfully allow him to talk to her upon the subject of his passion, accept all his gallantries, and claim an absolute empire over all his actions; reserving to herself the right of fixing the time when she may own her affection: and when that important step is taken, and his constancy put to a few years more trial, when he has killed all his rivals, and rescued her from a thousand dangers; she at last condescends to reward him with her hand; and all her adventures are at an end for the future. (151-52)

This account is a feminist's dream, to be contrasted with the "reality" described in, say, Clarissa. Here, in the romance, the woman has the absolute right of choice in love, and control of her lover; she can decide when to declare her love, and what results her

declaration will have. Like all courtship novels, though, all excitement ends with the ceremony itself; no wonder the heroine delays the marriage as long as possible. In a realist novel such as Clarissa, the woman has no choice over her husband, is married off not for love but for sordid profit interests, and has no power or importance at all unless she can, through some extraordinary action, put herself outside the circle of female exchange. Interestingly, the crux of Clarissa is the heroine's abduction and rape, precisely the circumstance that Lennox most ridicules when her heroine suspects such ravishment everywhere.

Like Davys' novel, The Female Quixote is a work of female realism: it shows the differences between a reality that the protagonist would like to believe in and the real world that actually impinges on her. In Lennox's case, the narrator's attitude toward the protagonist is extremely ambivalent, since it is Arabella (not the male figures, as in Davys) who is made fun of and brought to conform. As Rachel Brownstein has put it, the novel's conclusion -- Arabella's quick conversion and immediate marriage -- is "belittling" to the protagonist: "It suggests women have an infinite capacity for both harmless self-indulgence and effective self-control, and it implies women are fragmented and trivial, not serious" (Brownstein 11). The Female

Quixote is, then, definitively not feminist, in that it does not imagine a world that resists these conventional solutions for women.

Let us return for a moment to Hutcheon's formulation: parody has the potential to be transgressive by showing how a new work differs from the norm and by celebrating that difference, whereas satire tends to be conservative because it stands in judgment, usually voicing the community judgment of norms, and measures distance from the norm pejoratively. Yet we have seen that the two English satiric parodies discussed above tend toward the conservative. Both The Accomplish'd Rake and The Female Quixote begin to do what Newman suggested -- to "interrogat[e] patriarchal plots and power." These novels show up patriarchal power, how it works and what its effects on women are. But as parody they are not transgressive; these novels seem resigned to not making a difference. They do not play with the possibilities of transgression beyond making fun of a dominant power structure that they do not displace.

The two French novels in question, however, go much further. They display a kind of anger that is missing from the satiric parodies. I have called these French novels parodic satires, and much of their anger comes out in their satiric, critical tone. Form is also vital

to their effect, though. In form, the two French novels differ from the English in that they are epistolary, with only the heroine's letters collected. This means that they give a weight to the female protagonist's voice that was not possible in the third-person narratives of the English novels: the choice of first-person narrative gives the female protagonists exactly that power and importance that Lennox's novel specifically denies to women. As we will see, the choice of the epistolary form also opens up possibilities for refusal of the narrative norm, since both novels avoid conventional closure.

Looking at these two French parodic satires, it will become clear that once gender is taken into account, we will have to rethink the ways in which women subvert or support conventional genres. The satires of Graffigny and Charrière are far more transgressive and less conservative than the English parodies, and demonstrate more liberating potential. When satire is linked with feminism, it performs a complicated maneuver that allows it to judge both the hypotext and the social norms: rather than using the social norms as a standard, feminist satire calls them into question and creates a new set of norms.

Graffigny, 'Lettres d'une Péruvienne'Synopsis

Zilia is a Peruvian princess, who, just before she is to be married to Aza, and ascend to the throne, is captured by the Spaniards who destroy her city and her entire civilization. En route to Europe, the Spaniards on her boat attack a French ship but are subdued by it; Zilia is taken under the protection of Déterville, who brings her back to France. Since her capture, she has been "writing" her experiences to Aza by way of knotted ropes called quipos that she stores in the hope of meeting him again; she translates into this medium her bewilderment at the strange languages (French and Spanish), customs, and objects (a boat, a coach) she encounters, commenting on them and thus providing a distance between the French reader and his or her familiar French world.

Déterville brings Zilia to love with his family, where she learns to speak and write French; she learns that Aza is at the court of Spain, alive and well, and wishes to join him. But Déterville is now in love with Zilia, and discourages her from leaving. She sends him her letters, and awaits the reply. Meanwhile, Déterville and his sister, understanding Zilia's love for solitude, and the disdain she has for much of French

society (she comments on all its aspects, from marriage and female education to inheritance laws) buy her a small country house. At last, Aza arrives, but he no longer loves her: he has become catholic, and the church's laws of consanguinity forbid him to marry Zilia. He is about to marry a young Spanish woman instead. The last letters are written to Déterville, not Aza; Déterville hopes that Zilia will now marry him, but she refuses, preferring the solitude of her country house and Déterville's friendship.

Parody

Lettres d'une Péruvienne borrows as model Montesquieu's Lettres persanes (1721), whose protagonist is also a foreigner who looks on French society with a fresh eye and notes many of its absurdities in a series of letters. Lettres persanes in turn builds on a tradition of epistolary travel literature in both French and English. The shadow model for Lettres d'une Péruvienne is Guilleragues' Lettres portugaises, which offers a portrait of seduced and abandoned woman letter writer that Graffigny's novel must explicitly resist. Graffigny's novel has a parodic side, then, in that it emerges from a tradition of the "literature of the exotic," with its main conceit a protagonist whose absolute unfamiliarity with Europe provides an

unparalleled mirror to reflect a society back to itself. In fact, parody is an important element of the basic structure of Lettres d'une Péruvienne, because the audience's awareness of the models highlights the one enormous difference between Graffigny and Montesquieu: the discussion of gender and of women's place in society. In this case, using Montesquieu as model is important to how Graffigny positions her novel for the audience. As Nancy K. Miller has noted, to follow in Montesquieu's footsteps is to become a philosophe:

To invoke the genre of the philosophe may be read as a desire to be counted if not among the philosophers -- at least among the authors who count; a producer, then, not merely of novels -- a genre abundantly associated with women in the eighteenth century -- but of knowledge, of cultural information. ("The Knot, the Letter, and the Book," 131)

Parody is, in this case, a strategy to give the author authority; to imitate a genre associated with Enlightenment philosophers is to take on, by the same association, their right to pass judgment. At the same time, the inevitable comparison between the model text and Graffigny's novel demonstrates the difference in subject matter. So parody helps the author appropriate authority from the model, while at the same time implicitly criticizing it by differing from it (in this case, by writing about women, thus silently questioning

Montesquieu's approach). Here, for a woman writer, parody is a double move, in which one takes authority and then turns it against the model.

Satire

Lettres d'une Péruvienne is also an openly feminist satire on the contemporary restrictions on women.

Zilia's commentaries on French life directly address marriage and women's role in it. Two of the most often-quoted comments are those on the sexual double standard practiced in marriage and on the education of women. In Letter XXXIV she explores the situation of inequality between women and men in its various manifestations; as an example of the ways in which women are held to laws that men can evade, she discusses marriage:

Enfin, mon cher Aza, il semble qu'en France les liens du mariage ne soient réciproques qu'au moment de la célébration, et que dans la suite les femmes seulent y doivent être assujetties. (345)

This double standard is seen not as an isolated fact but as part of an immense web of social practices that subordinate women. In this letter, Zilia discusses the full array of methods used to intimidate women, from gossip and the ruin of reputations to physical force and laws. Sexual practice, however, is one of the main matrices of subjection. The other is education; Zilia

sees women's lack of education as a deliberate ploy and comments on its motives:

En général il me semble que les femmes naissent ici ... avec toutes les dispositions nécessaires pour égaler les hommes en mérite et en vertu. Mais comme s'ils en convenoient au fond de leur coeur, et que leur orgueil ne put supporter cette égalité, ils contribuent en toute manière à les rendre méprisables, soit en manquant de considération pour les leurs, soit en séduisant celles des autres.
(344-345)

As Zilia notes here, women's subordinate position is maintained by these two elements: the way they are treated sexually by men, and their lack of careful upbringing and education.

These commentaries are a small sample of the picture Zilia paints of a society in which women are powerless and, more important, so ignorant that they have no sense of their own lack of power. In The Female Quixote, the narrator turned Arabella's lack of a coherent education against her; the heroine was "cured" only when she had given up her own "faulty" way of thinking to embrace the social norm, or, one might say, when she had been re-educated. Here, as Katherine Jensen has convincingly argued, Zilia as narrator draws different conclusions: she notes that women have abilities, and that if only they had the language to formulate and express their oppression, they would be

able to resist it. When Zilia notes that through her own hard work she now speaks French more correctly than many native French women, Jensen comments:

What Zilia clearly realizes for herself and for French women is that language is power. Without an ability to speak, "correctly" and fluently, how can women revolt against the unjust laws of men? Silenced, they are unable to articulate in a public, political way their refusal of oppression. More insidiously, French women may not even formulate conceptually, for themselves, the need for revolt because they do not have the words to think it. (Jensen 50-51)

Zilia's consciousness of French women's position and its causes has a double effect: it moves her writing beyond female realism into feminism, since she is able to figure (and even herself to embody) another possible way of being; and it moves her beyond parody to satire, since she is able, within this utopian world she has constructed, to take the position of morally superior commentator. That Lettres d'une Péruvienne is a feminist satire depends on the narrator's ability to project a possible world beyond the one she is enmeshed in.

That Graffigny's feminist satire is subversive becomes clear if we return to Newman's formulation of feminist transgressive parody. Miller, in her chapter on Lettres d'une Péruvienne, notes the relation between Graffigny's text and Irigaray's concept of women's

writing as subversive mimeticism that concerned Newman:

The woman writer reenacts in narrative that relation to the dominant discourse [described by Irigaray]: she plays with her cultural subordination in the symbolic order by replicating herself in the syntax of its familiar grammar, but always as a commentary on it. From within literature's commonplaces, she performs an operation of displacement. ("Knot" 133)

As Newman suggested, repetition can be subversive when the writer of that repetition uses it deliberately to mark difference, as Graffigny's protagonist does. From this, Miller concludes that what Zilia writes is feminist -- and therefore not conservative but deeply transgressive:

...when Zilia translates her own letters [from Peruvian into French], she enacts and reproduces through her double-voiced discourse [...] the peculiar situation of the female critical subject: writing from the "wild zone," perhaps, but trained to negotiate the spaces of the dominant structures [...], Zilia produces feminist writing. (137)

Miller calls that space from which Zilia writes the "wild zone"; we could also call it, following Teresa de Lauretis, the "space-off."¹⁴ Whatever the terminology, it is a standpoint beyond the conventional position reserved for the woman writer, the standpoint that makes feminist satire possible. Its implications are subversive because they suggest possibilities for restructuring male-female relations.

The Issue of Closure

The central point of feminist satire is its ability to judge not only the society it depicts (all satirists do that) but the standards by which that society itself judges. Swift was of his society, and judged it to maintain and improve it; the feminist is outside her society, and judges it to destroy it. The special position of the feminist satirist is often reflected formally in the very structure of her novel, by the refusal of conventional closure. Elizabeth MacArthur has pointed out the link between conventional novel closure and the refusal to transgress social norms:

Perhaps the preoccupation with closure, which characterized the nineteenth-century novel to a greater extent than its eighteenth-century predecessor, can be linked to a fear of deviance and a desire for stability. ("Devious" 5)

Using as analogy Hayden White's discussion of historical narrative, MacArthur suggests that "closure in fictional narrative might imply a moral judgment, and might even depend upon a reaffirmation of the social and political order of the time" (6). To close one's novel in a conventional way means to accept the plot trajectories that contemporary society offers. For the woman novelist, this is especially problematic, since the limitations on possibilities for women's lives are

precisely what she is satirizing and attacking.

In the same article MacArthur points out that the epistolary novel is a form that generically resists closure, so the very choice of this genre can be a strategic move for the woman novelist. In an epistolary novel, each letter is written as a description of the present, without hindsight: "a series of present moments of letter-writing predominates and the future is yet to be decided" (MacArthur 2). At the same time, the epistolary novel lacks an organizing narrator who can take some distance on events. The general effect of the genre, then, is to be able to change plot trajectories with great ease as a response to new events that arise.

These two points are important in understanding the satire of Lettres d'une Péruvienne. This is a novel that resists conventional closure, and its plot swerves three times: first, the opening plot of Zilia and Aza's love, interrupted by the Spanish invasion but pursued by Zilia when she gets to France, is thrown off its original track when Aza turns out to be unfaithful. Then Zilia rejects the alternate plot of abandoned woman (the Portuguese nun scenario), in which she would spend the rest of her life bemoaning Aza's infidelity. Finally, she refuses the reconstructed love story in which Déterville replaces Aza as love object.

By picking a genre that gives her authority by

associating her with the philosophes, but which is also a genre that resists closure, Graffigny puts herself in a unique position: she can both openly critique male-female relations, and structurally refuse the current state of affairs.

Charrière, 'Lettres de Mistriss Henley'

Synopsis

Lettres de Mistriss Henley was written as a rebuttal to a novel called Le Mari sentimental, by Samuel de Constant, which had appeared a few months earlier.¹⁵ Constant's novel describes a husband, M. Bompré, who marries for the first time in middle age, and whose wife becomes his scourge. Finally, she drives him to suicide. He is pictured as reasonable, kind, and equable, whereas his wife is pictured as selfish and cruel. In Mistriss Henley, Charrière takes the situation of Le Mari sentimental and some of the episodes from Le Mari sentimental, transports them from Constant's Geneva to England, and retells them from the wife's point of view -- a perspective from which the husband's rationality takes on the aspect of cold selfishness. For example, when Constant's husband complains that his wife has moved a family picture,

Charrière's Mistriss Henley moves the portrait of her husband's deceased first wife out of her own bedroom; when Constant complains that his wife wants to change everything, Charrière shows a wife whose husband will not stretch his routine one iota to accommodate her inclusion in the household. Constant ends his novel with the husband on the point of suicide; Charrière ends with a wife wasting away from lack of love, and from always being told she is wrong. She ends by telling her friend: "... le chagrin tue aussi. Dans un an, dans deux ans, vous apprendrez, je l'espère, que je suis raisonnable & heureuse, ou que je ne suis plus" (122). These are the last words of the novel.

Parody

Mistriss Henley is a parody in that it follows its model, Le Mari sentimental, very closely in tone and structure. That Charrière's work was recognized as a direct response to Constant's is clear from the appearance in 1785 of the two works bound together.¹⁶ Constant's novel is a series of letters from a M. Bompré to his friend, describing and complaining about his marriage late in life to a woman who makes him so miserable that finally he feels he has no choice but to commit suicide. In both novels, the husband owns a country estate to which the wife comes on her marriage;

the husband has a settled routine, which he is unwilling to give up, and the wife is the newcomer who must find her place in it. Both husbands have a fixed idea about the role and behavior of a wife that the physical existence of such a wife does nothing to change. The difficulties brought up by this rearrangement show up the incompatibilities that make the marriages miserable. Charrière's work takes up not only this main theme but many of the main incidents. For example, the new Mme Bompré has the portrait of Bompré's father removed, while Mistriss Henley removes the portrait of her husband's first wife from her own bedroom; each new wife complains of her husband's dogs and old servants, and finally has them let go; and there are parallel sexual scandals involving the servants of M. Bompré and Mistriss Henley. Each incident is accompanied by an accounting of the unbridgeable gap in the points of view of husband and wife.

Interestingly, many of M. Bompré's complaints center on his wife's reading habits. Again and again he notes that she prefers to read when he would like her to take part in his pursuits (94, 101); he comments at length on the difference between his part of the country and Geneva, where he met his wife:

Dans les pays où les femmes font des livres, elle
[the question of whether it is good that women read

a lot] sera bientôt décidée; et même je passerai pour un homme sans goût de l'avoir faite; dans celui-ci, ou les femmes font le sort de leur maison et de leur famille, ou leur économie et leur raison décident de la fortune et du bonheur de leurs maris, il n'est pas très sûr que la lecture soit utile aux femmes, et qu'elle produise un grand bien. (101)

M. Bompré is especially against the reading of novels, but at the same time feels that women do not have the educational background to read science profitably (101). Like Lennox's narrator, M. Bompré feels that his wife -- through her reading -- has strayed, and that it is his duty to re-educate her: as he says, "c'est à moi à la ramener" (103). In Constant's version, Bompré fails to persuade his wife to change her ways; in Charrière's version, the outcome is left open, but clearly the husband is winning this battle of wills.

Satire

The title page of Mistriss Henley has a quotation from La Fontaine, "J'ai vu beaucoup d'hymens, &c," which gives the first indication that the satire of this book will be directed against marriage. The continuation to that quotation, which Charrière does not supply, is, "aucuns d'eux ne me tentent."¹⁷ What interests Charrière is not so much the legal entanglements of marriage or the construction of women as weak,

uneducated sexual objects within it (as Graffigny demonstrates), but the struggle for power between husband and wife. The vital question is that of who will have the voice that makes the judgments, who will be in the position of commentator. Charrière's first move toward satire is simply the taking over of the narrative voice from Constant's male protagonist: recasting his novel points up the differences between the male and female point of view. Because Charrière's novel is a response to Constant's, it is an explicit criticism of Constant for what he left out.

Charrière's satire does not take the same form as Graffigny's, however. The two are alike in that they both use the epistolary genre, including only the letters of the female protagonist and not the replies; they both also refuse conventional novelistic closure. But where Graffigny's protagonist learns a language (literally French but metaphorically an "enlightened" language of reason) and then uses it to construct a position from which she can both comment on French society and suggest the possibility of a different, feminist society, Charrière's protagonist is not so outspoken. Both her satire and her feminism are more ambivalent than Graffigny's. Mistriss Henley goes beyond the English writers' parody in that the protagonist finds a voice that criticizes her own

situation, but she does not then deploy that voice in a larger arena.

The satire in Mistriss Henley consists in measuring the difference between the realms of rationality and sensibility, which are already marked in the culture as respectively masculine and feminine. I have argued that feminist satire can exist only when the female narrator imagines a world beyond the existing social norms; in Mistriss Henley, the protagonist manages to suggest that the world of female sentiment is preferable to that of masculine rationality. She does not go so far as to depict what that world might be if allowed to develop, but the suggestion is enough, structurally, to afford the narrator the feminist satirist's morally superior position of commentator. The narrator's continuous opposition of sentiment to her husband's ruthless rationality is a challenge to the system of judgment that splits the rational from the emotional and places one above the other in a hierarchy. Mistriss Henley does not openly criticize her husband -- one of the major differences between this novel and Graffigny's -- but she constantly contrasts her own "vivacité" and range of emotion with Mr. Henley's phlegmatic lack of feeling. That the results of Mr. Henley's treatment lead to her physical decline and possible death demonstrates the narrative point of view.

To write about rationality and sensibility at the end of the eighteenth century is to write not only about personal styles associated with gender but also about literary traditions -- equally defined by gender. The Enlightenment ideal of rational thought was almost wholly a male tradition, starting with Voltaire and including Diderot and the Encyclopédie group. Literary sensibility, defined as the emphasis on expressed sentiment as an indicator of spiritual virtue, was a trend associated with women novelists -- although one of the great examples was Rousseau's Nouvelle Héloïse. The turn toward sensibility at the end of the eighteenth century was accompanied by the ascendancy of women novelists¹⁸; it also limited them, for sensibility quickly became associated with the domestic sphere, so that women writers were expected to write about the emotions rather than "masculine" subjects such as politics. Charrière's novel criticizes this gender split, challenging it in the very arena where it was practiced.

Closure

Like Graffigny's Lettres d'une Péruvienne, Charrière's Mistriss Henley is epistolary and therefore rooted in the present, refusing the judgmental hindsight of the third-person narrator. And like Graffigny's

novel, Mistriss Henley refuses closure: it begins where a conventional novel should end (with marriage), and ends with that terribly ambiguous statement, "Dans un an, dans deux ans, vous apprendrez, je l'espère, que je suis raisonnable & heureuse, ou que je ne suis plus" (122). The reader knows that the story is not finished, and that the ending will never be known. The final sentence is loaded with possibilities: the placement of "je l'espère" suggests that Mistriss Henley will want to die if she cannot fit herself into her husband's scheme of life. The projection of her despair into the future -- "dans un an, dans deux ans" -- suggests that the second alternative is more likely, especially after the long and unflattering dissection of "raison" that constitutes the novel's main topic.

* * *

We began with a definition of satire that suggested it was a defense of judgment and norms. For male writers, that appears to be the case. Yet we have seen that in the French female epistolary tradition of satire, there is a clear impulse toward feminist rejection of social norms. As MacArthur concludes from her comparison of Lettres d'une Péruvienne and another

Charrière novel, Lettres écrites de Lausanne, the epistolary form is in itself subversive:

Rather than presenting an obstacle to be overcome in the telling of a story, the epistolary form seems to have been an integral part of an attack against the limits imposed on women's lives. The absence of central authority and the ambiguous closure that characterize epistolary novels apparently corresponded, in these novels, to a desire to escape centralized power structures, with their accompanying fixed meanings, and to a desire to leave the outcome of lives (particularly women's lives) perpetually open. (18)

To use the epistolary form is already to reject the status quo by rejecting authority; to use the epistolary form and then also to refuse conventional closure is not only to practice satire but to embody it. Epistolary satires such as Lettres d'une Péruvienne and Mistriss Henley are satiric in the sense that they attack what Hutcheon called "extramural" deviations from the norm. But Hutcheon did not allow for the special perspective that gender gives to this formulation: for the norm that these works refer to as a measure or standard is not the norm of contemporary society; it is a norm that does not exist except in the imagination of the writer. Both novels end in the space-off of potential narrative: Zilia in her library, alone; and Mistriss Henley at Hollowpark, seeking a chink in her husband's impenetrably reasonable ordering of their lives.

Compare this to the very real space of the endings of the English novels: Nancy Friendly married to John Galliard, trying to reform him, and Arabella married to Glanville, trying to reform herself. Nancy Friendly has a raised consciousness in that she has no illusions about what marriage or men can give her; Arabella has been forced to subscribe to the male view of women's powers and privileges: both operate in the circumscribed arena of marriage. This fact cuts off the possibility of a different imaginary space beyond the end of the novel.

Feminist parodic satire of this French type operates in a complex way. It is a parody in that it is based on an earlier model, and relies on its difference from that model to create some of its effects. It does not openly denigrate its model, and in that sense it is what Hutcheon called a "parodie sérieuse," which points out the difference between the hypotext and the hypertext without rejecting the model absolutely. Yet feminist parody does something that Hutcheon does not describe: it does not openly denigrate its model, but by rejecting the hypotext's concept of judgment, it rejects the hypotext as thoroughly as if it had in fact made it ridiculous. The difference articulated in this type of parody between hypotext and hypertext is so profound that a new relationship between the two is created, a

relationship that is not to be found on the scale Hutcheon describes -- the scale ranging from worshipful imitation through to angry rejection. This feminist parody does not judge its hypotext, it merely measures the gulf between the two.

Feminist satire, then, is a new formulation that structures a narrative differently than its male counterpart. What makes this possible is the author's willingness to reject not the concept of judgment itself, but the criteria of judgment used in a patriarchal society. The ability to reject those criteria leaves the writer free to project her version of a feminist world. Writers who are unwilling to break those rules find themselves trapped in an anomalous position: using parody to mark their difference from the literary models available to them, but unable to go beyond parody into a positive statement. In Lennox's case, particularly, this inability mars the novel: as Rachel Brownstein comments, "...had [Lennox] been, herself, less like Arabella, less intimidated by men and less bound by their authority, things might have turned out better for her novel" (13). Feminist satire is an active resistance to patriarchal norms, and it produces novels that break even the boundaries of what satire is expected to be.

NOTES

¹ See especially Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (Feminist Studies 14.3: 575-599); Sandra Harding, "Other 'Others' and Fractured Identities; Issues for Epistemologists" (The Science Question in Feminism, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986); and Nancy Hartsock, "Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories" (Cultural Critique, Fall 1987: 187-206).

² In the introduction to her study, which discusses French, English, and American fiction from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, Lanser asserts:

It is my position that both narrative structures and women's writing are determined not by essential properties or isolated aesthetic imperatives but by complex and changing conventions that are themselves produced in and by the relations of power that implicate writer, reader, and text. In modern western societies during the centuries of "print culture" with which my study is concerned, these constituents of power must include, at the very least, race, gender, class, nationality, education, sexuality, and marital status, interacting with and in a given social formation. (7-8)

Lanser thus specifically rejects a "pure" narratological point of view, arguing instead for the interconnections between the narratological results and their socio-historical causes.

³ Gérard Genette, Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), 7 ff.

⁴ Linda Hutcheon, "Ironie et parodie: stratégie et structure" (Poétique 36 [1978], 467-77). Cited in Naomi Schor, "La Pérodie: Superposition dans Lorenzaccio" (Michigan Romance Studies 2 [1982]: 73-86), 74.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, in "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," chooses to label the "ridiculisantes et dévalorisantes" types of parody as pastiche rather than true parody:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its humor. (Quoted in Judith Butler, Gender Trouble, 138).

Jameson's definition makes laughter rather than difference the distinction between what Hutcheon has labeled transgressive and conservative parody. His distinction is confusing in this context because what he sees as comic parody, Hutcheon has labeled "parodie sérieuse": but beyond the terminology, the spirit of the two definitions is not so different -- Hutcheon too sees transgression as playful.

⁶ The argument has been made by many critics: see, for example, Laurent Versini, Le Roman épistolaire (Paris: PUF, 1979), and Henri Coulet, Le Roman jusqu'à la Revolution (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967, Collection U).

⁷ For the history of the critical reception of Les Lettres d'une Péruvienne, see the "Notice" in the Garnier-Flammarion edition: Lettres portugaises, Lettres d'une Péruvienne, et autres romans d'amour par lettres, ed. Bernard Bray and Isabelle Landy-Houillon (Paris: Flammarion, 1983). See also Peggy Kamuf's chapter "Writing on the Balcony: The Portuguese Letters," in her book Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Héloïse (Lincoln, Neb.: U of Nebraska P, 1982).

⁸ See Joan Hinde Stewart's "Introduction" to her edition of Les Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd (Geneva: Droz, 1979).

⁹ Katherine Jensen, "Writing as a Péruvienne, Or How Women Came to the Epistolary Novel," ms. See especially pages 9-15.

¹⁰ See Robert A. Day, Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1966) and Ruth Perry, Women, Letters, and the Novel (New York: AMS Press, 1980) for a history of early epistolary fiction in England and of women's part in the tradition.

¹¹ For a long time, critics considered

Richardson's work to be almost *sui generis*; the work of critics such as Day and Perry has shown the forgotten tradition behind Richardson, and the important part women writers played in that tradition, but what is important here is perception: the French tradition of female epistolarity is recognized and accepted, whereas there is no equivalent accepted tradition in England.

¹² See McBurney's "Introduction" to his edition of The Accomplish'd Rake in Four Before Richardson (Lincoln, Neb.: U of Nebraska P, 1978).

¹³ Jean B. Kern, "Mrs. Mary Davys as Novelist of Manners" (Essays in Literature 10 (1) [1983]: 29-38). Kern also suggests that it is through the female characters' wit and repartee that the links between Davys' novels and the Restoration stage are most clearly demonstrated: the exchanges between the rakes and the women they wish to subdue have echoes of stage dialogue in a comedy.

¹⁴ De Lauretis defines the space-off as "the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible" ("The Technology of Gender" 26). She continues:

In classical and commercial cinema, the space-off is, in fact, erased, or, better, recontained and sealed into the image by the cinematic rules of narrativization (first among them, the shot/reverse-shot system). But avant-garde cinema has shown the space-off to exist concurrently and alongside the represented space, has made it visible by marking its absence in the frame or in the succession of frames, and has shown it to include not only the camera (the point of articulation and perspective from which the image is constructed) but also the spectator (the point where the image is received, re-constructed, and re-produced in/as subjectivity).

The analogy with literature is useful: writer and reader construct a space that is not fully delineated but that can be inferred from what is actually marked in the text. Avant-garde texts -- or in this case, revolutionary feminist texts -- emphasize the space-off and work with it, rather than erasing it as conventional texts might do.

¹⁵ For a brief review of Constant's novel, and Charrière's reaction to it, see the Introduction to

Lettres de Mistriss Henley in her Oeuvres complètes (Amsterdam: G. A. Van Oorschot, 1980), vol. VIII, 93-98. See also Le Mari sentimental, ou le mariage comme il y en a quelques-uns (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1975), edited and with notes and introduction by Giovanni Riccioli.

¹⁶ See the Riccioli edition of Le Mari sentimental, 45.

¹⁷ Charrière, Oeuvres complètes, 613 n.2.

¹⁸ The Appendix, which lists translated works, shows an enormous preponderance of fiction by women toward the end of the century.

Appendix:
A Preliminary Bibliography of Translations of
Women's Fiction in the Late Seventeenth and
Early Eighteenth Centuries

The information is taken from the following sources:
[B] Andrew Block, The English Novel, 1740-1850; A Catalogue (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1961); [D] Robert A. Day, Told in Letters (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1966); [G] Josephine Grieder, Translations of French Sentimental Fiction in Eighteenth-Century England (Durham: Duke UP, 1975); [R] Charles Alfred Rochedieu, Bibliography of French Translations of English Works, 1700-1800 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1948); and [S] J. Seguin, French Works in English Translation: A Bibliographical Catalogue, 1731-1799 (Jersey City: R. Paxton, 1965-1970). Sources are noted by identifying initial in brackets following the entry; if the source identifies works by number, the number is given; if the information comes from a commentary rather than a bibliography, page numbers are given. Contains only prose fiction and drama. Novels are listed alphabetically by author's name, with publication date in the original language given in parentheses. The translated title and date of publication of the translation follow. The translator is given where known.

French to English

- Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Comtesse d'. Relation du voyage d'Espagne (1691). Tr. as The ingenious and diverting letters of the Lady's voyage into Spain (1691-2). [D 243]
- . Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne (1690). Tr. as The Present Court of Spain (1693). [D 243]
- . Contes de fées (1696). Tr. as History of the Tales of the Fairies (1758). [S]
- . Histoire d'Hippolyte, comte de Douglas (1690). Tr. as The Earl of Douglas. An English Story (1774). [An earlier trans. of this work appeared in 1741 as The History of Hippolytus, Earl of Douglas.] [S V.266]
- Beaumont, Anne Louise Elie de. Lettres du Marquis de Roselle (1764). Tr. 1765. [G 93]

- Beaumont, Marie le Prince de. Tr. as Letters from Emerance to Lucy (1766). [S IV.410]
- . Tr. as The History of a Young Lady of Distinction (1766). [S IV.411]
- . Tr. as The Virtuous Widow: or, Memoirs of the Baroness de Batteville (1766). [S IV.412]
- . Tr. as The Young Misses Magazine, containing Dialogues between a Governess & Several Young Ladies of Quality, her Scholars (1767). [S IV.505]
- . Tr. as The New Clarissa: a True History (1768). [S IV.568]
- . Tr. as Moral Tales (1775). [S V.380]
- . Tr. by Miss R. Roberts as The Triumph of Truth; or, Memoirs of Mr. de la Vilette (1775). [S V.380a]
- Bernard, Catherine. Inès de Cordoue (1696). Five translations printed between 1781 and 1800. [G 88]
- Charrière, Isabelle. Lettres écrites de Lausanne (1785). Tr. 1799. [G 29]
- Du Noyer, Anne-Marguerite Petit. Lettres historiques et galantes (1704). Tr. by John Weaver as Secret Memoirs historical and gallant (1709). [D 248]
- . Tr. as Letters from a Lady at Paris to a Lady at Avignon (1716). [Day 249]
- Fauques, Marianne-Agnes Pillement, dame de. Les Transmigrations d'Hermès (n.d.). Tr. as The Transmigrations of Hermes, a Roman Philosopher (1768). [S IV.568] [G 93 gives 1774]
- . Le Triomphe de l'amitié (1751). Tr. 1768. [G 93]
- . Tr. as The Last War of the Beasts (1758). [S]
- . Tr. as The History of the Marchioness de Pompadour (1758). Other editions. [S]
- . Tr. as Abassai, an Eastern Novel (1759). [S]
- . Tr. as The Vizirs; or, the Enchanted Labyrinth. An Oriental Tale (1774). [S V.285]
- Gomez, Madeleine-Angelique Poisson de. L'Entretien des

- beaux esprits. Tr. by Eliza Haywood (1734). Other editions. [S]
- . La Belle Assemblée. Tr. by Eliza Haywood (1736). Other editions. [S]
- . Tr. as The London merchant, a Tale (1767). [S IV.494]
- Graffigny, Francoise d'Issembourg d'Happoncourt, dame de. Cénia (1750). Tr. as Cenia and Eugenia (1752). [S]
- . Lettres d'une Péruvienne (1747). Tr. as Letters written by a Peruvian Princess (1771). [S V.45] Also tr. by Miss R. Roberts as The Peruvian Letters. With an additional original volume (1774). [S V.290]
- La Roche-Guilhem, Anne de. Histoire des favorites (1697). Tr. as The History of Female Favourites. Selected and Translated from Histoire des favorites par Mlle D*** (1772). [S V.139]
- Lafayette, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, comtesse de. La Princess de Clèves (1678). Tr. as The Princess of Clèves. An Historical Novel (1777). [S V.554a]
- . Zayde (1669-1671). Tr. by P. Porter [?] as Zayde, a Spanish History, being a pleasant & witty Novel. In Elizabeth Griffith, A Collection of Novels (1777). [S V.553]
- Lambert, Anne-Therese de Marguent de Courcelles, Marquise de. The Works of the Marchioness de Lambert (1769). [S IV.655]
- Ormoy, Charlotte Chaumay d'. Les Malheurs de la jeune Emélie (1777). Tr. 1783-4.
- Riccoboni, Marie-Jeanne. Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby (1759). Tr. by Frances Brooke as Lady Catesby's Letters (1760). Other editions. [G 17, 40] [S]
- . Histoire de M. Le Marquis de Cressy (1758). Tr. as The History of the Marquis de Cressy (1759). Other editions. [S]
- . Suite de 'La Vie de Marianne.' Tr. as The Continuation of the 'Life of Marianne.' To Which is added the History of Ernestina, with Letters (1766). [S IV.435]
- . Lettres d'Adelaide de Dammartine, comtesse de Sancerre, à M. le comte de Nancé, son ami (1767). Tr.

as Letters from the Countess de Sancerre to the Count de Nancé, her Friend (1767). [S IV.529]

- . Lettres d'Elisabeth Sophie de Vallière à Louise Hortence de Canteleu, son amie (1772). Tr. by Mr. Maccuen [?] as Letters from Elizabeth Sophia de Valiere, to Her Friend Louisa Hortensia de Canteleu (1772). [S V.150]
- . Lettres de Mylord Rivers à sir Charles Cardigan (1777). Tr. by P. Stockdale as Letters from Mylord Rivers to Sir Charles Cardigan & to other English Correspondents, while he resided in France (1778). [S V.682]
- Tencin, Claudine-Alexandrine. Le Comte de Comminge (1735). Tr. by Charlotte Lennox as The Count de Comminge (1760). [G 40] [S gives 1755]
- . Le Siège de Calais (1738). Tr. as The Siege of Calais (1751). [S]
- Villedieu, Marie-Catherine Desjardins. Les Exilés (1672-1678). Tr. as The Exiles of the Court of Augustus (1754). [S]

English to French

- Behn, Aphra. Agnes de Castro (1688). Tr. in Mme Thiroux d'Arconville's Romans traduits de l'anglais (1761). [R]
- . The Lover's Watch, or the Art of Love (1696). Tr. as L'Art de faire l'amour, ou la Pendule de l'amant (n.d.) [R]
- . Oroonoko, or the Slave (1688). Tr. by La Place as Oronoko, ou le Royal esclave (1745). Other editions and translations. [R]
- Bennett, Agnes Maria. Agnes de Courci (1789). Tr. as Agnes de Courci (1799). [R]
- . Anna, or the Memoirs of a Welch Heiress (1785). Tr. by J. Gaspard Dubois-Fontanelle as Anna, ou l'Heritière galloise (1788). Other editions and translations. [R]
- . The Beggar Girl and Her Benefactors (1797). Tr. by Louise Brayer de St. Leon as Rosa, ou la Fille

- mendiante et ses bienfaiteurs (1798). [R]
- . Henry Bennett and Julia Johnson (1794). Tr. by D. Leriquet as Henry Bennett et Julie Johnson ou les Esquisses du coeur (1794). [R]
- . Juvenile Indiscretions (1786). Tr. by Mme la baronne de Vasse as Les Imprudences de la jeunesse (1788). [R]
- Blower, Elizabeth. Features from Life, or a Summer Visit (1788). Tr. by M. de la Montagne as La Visite d'été, ou Portraits modernes (1788). [R]
- . Maria (1785). Tr. as Maria, ou Lettres d'un gentilhomme anglois à une religieuse (1787). [R]
- . The Parsonage House (1780). Tr. as La Maison du Curé, roman (n.d.). [R]
- Bonhote, Elizabeth. Olivia, a Novel (1789). Tr. by Lemierre d'Argy as Olivia (n.d.). [R]
- . Rambles of Mr. Frankly, by His Sister (1773). Tr. as Les Promenades de M. Frankly (1773). [R]
- Brooke, Frances Moore. All's Right at Last, or The History of Miss West (1773). Tr. as Histoire de Miss West, ou l'Heureux dénouement (1777). [R]
- . The Excursion (1777). Tr. by H. Rieu as L'Excursion, ou l'Escapade (1778). [R]
- . The History of Emily Montague (1769). Tr. by J.-B. R. Robinet as L'Histoire d'Emily Montague (1770). Another translation by M. Frenais (1770). [R]
- . The History of Lady Julia Mandeville (1763). Tr. by M. A. Bouchard as Histoire de Milady Julia Mandeville, ou Lettres traduites de l'anglois (1764). [R]
- . Memoirs of the Marquis of St. Forlaix (1770). Tr. by Framery as Memoires de M. le Marquis de Saint-Forlaix, recueillis dans les lettres de sa famille (1770). [R]
- Burke, Ann. Ela, or the Delusions of the Heart (1788). Tr. as Ela, ou les Illusions du coeur (n.d.). [R]
- . Emilia d'Aubigné, a Novel by the Author of Ela (1790?). Tr. by J.-B. Sanchaman as Emilia Fairville, ou la Philosophie du sentiment (1789). [R]
- Burney, Frances (D'Arblay). Camilla, or a Picture of Youth

- (1796). Tr. by J.-B. Denis Desprès and Jean-Marie Deschamps as Camilla, ou la Peinture de la jeunesse (1797). [R]
- . Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress (1782). Tr. by H. Rieu as Cecilia, ou Mémoires d'une héritière (1783). Other editions. [R]
- . Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World (1778). Tr. by Henri Renfner as Evelina, ou l'Entrée d'une jeune personne dans le monde (1779). Other editions. [R]
- Burton, Mrs. Laura, or the Orphan (1797). Tr. by Cantwel as Laure, ou la Grotte du père Philippe (1799).
- Cartwright, Mrs. H. The Platonic Marriage (1786). Tr. (imitée) by Mme la Baronne de Vasse as Le Mariage platonique (1789). [R]
- Cavendish, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. The Sylph (1779). Tr. by Le Tourneur as Le Sylphe (1784). [R]
- Centlivre, Susanna Carroll. A Bold Stroke for a Wife (1718). Tr. by Dacier as L'Orpheline (1751). [R]
- . The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret (1714). Tr. as Le Prodige, ou la Femme discrète (1784). [R]
- Charlton, Mary. Andronica; or the Fugitive Bride (1797). Tr. by le general Lasalle as Andronica, ou l'Epouse fugitive (1799). [R]
- . Phedora; or the Forest of Minski (1798). Tr. by l'abbé Morellet as Phoedora, ou la forêt de Minski (1799). [R]
- Collyer, Mary. Felicia to Charlotte; Being Letters from a Young Lady in the Country to her Friend in Town (1744). Tr. by l'abbé Hélaine as Les Amants vertueux, ou Lettres d'une jeune dame, écrites de la campagne, a son amie à Londres (1774).
- Fielding, Sarah. The Adventures of David Simple in Search of a Faithful Friend (1744). Tr. by La Place as Le Veritable ami, ou la Vie de David Simple (1749). Other editions. [R]
- . History of Betty Barnes (1753). Tr. as Betsy Barnes (n.d.). [R]
- . History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl (1749). Tr. by La Place as L'Orpheline Angloise.

- ou Histoire de Charlotte Summers (1751). Other editions. [R]
- . History of Ophelia (1760). Tr. by Mme Belot as Ophélie, roman traduit de l'anglois (1763). [R]
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- . The Count of Poland (1780). Tr. as Le Comte de Pologne (n.d.). [R]
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- . Cleomelia, or the Generous Mistress (1727). Tr. as Histoire de Cleomélie; nouvelle dans le genre intéressant (1777). [R]
- . Female Spectator (1744-46). Tr. as La Spectatrice, traduction abrégée du Spectateur féminin d'Eliza Haywood (1750). Other editions. [R]
- . The Fortunate Foundlings (1744). Tr. by Crebillon fils as Les Heureux orphelins, histoire imitée de l'anglois (1754). [R]
- . History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless (1751). Tr. by chevalier de Fleuriau as L'Etourdie, ou Histoire de Miss Betsy Tatless (1755). Other editions. [R]
- . Idalia, or the Unfortunate Mistress (1723). Tr. as Idalie, ou l'Amante infortunée (1770). [R]
- . A Letter from H.... G....g, Esquire, One of the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber to the Young Chevalier (1750). Tr. as Lettre de H... G...g [Henry Goring], Ecuyer, un des gentilshommes du jeune chevalier de Saint-Georges et la seule personne de sa cour qui l'ait accompagné d'Avignon dans son voyage en Allemagne et autres lieux; contentant plusieurs aventures touchantes et remarquables qui sont arrivées à ce jeune prince pendant le cours de son voyage secret... (1757). [R]
- . Love Letters on All Occasions (1730). Tr. as Lettres traduites de l'anglois (1751). [R]
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- Benediction (1787). Tr. by J. G. Dubois-Fontanelle as Clara et Emmeline (1788). Other editions. [R]
- . Louisa, or the Cottage on the Moor (1787). Tr. as Louisa, ou la Chaumière (1787). Other editions. [R]
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- . Georgina, or the Memoirs of the Bellmour Family (1787). Tr. as Georgina, histoire veritable, par l'auteur de 'Cecilia' (1788). [R]
- Hugell, Mrs. Isidora of Galicia (1797). Tr. by P. L. Lebas as Le Château de Galice (1798). [R]
- Hughes, Anne. Caroline; or the Diversities of Fortune (1787). Tr. as Caroline, ou les Vicissitudes de la Fortune (1788). Other editions. [R]
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- . Interesting Memoirs (1785). Tr. by P.-P.-F. Le Tourneur as Mémoires intéressants, par une lady (1788). [R]
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- . Waldorf, or the Dangers of Philosophy (1798). Tr. as Waldorf, ou les Dangers de la philosophie (1798). [R]
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- . The Young Lady's Tale, or the Two Emilys (1798). Tr. by M. Christophe as Les Deux Emilies, ou les Aventures du duc et de la duchesse d'Aberdeen (1800). [R]
- Lee, Margaret. Clara Lennox, or the Distressed Widow (1797). Tr. as Clara Lennox, ou la Veuve infortunée (1798). [R]
- Lee, Sophia. The Recess, or a Tale of Other Times (1783-85). Tr. by P.-B. Lamare as Le Souterrain, ou Mathilde (1786). Other editions. Also: La Vie d'Eleonore, episode faisant suite à l'histoire du Souterrain, ou Mathilde, extrait dans le 9e volume de la Nouvelle Bibliothèque des romans (1799). [R]
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- . Henrietta (1758). Tr. by G.-J. Monod as Henriette (1758). Other editions. [R]
- . The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself (1751). Tr. by J.-P. Claris de Florian as Harriette Stuart, ou le Danger du désir de plaire (1795). [R]
- . Sophia (1762). Tr. by de La Flotte as Sophie, ou le Triomphe des graces sur la beauté, imitation de l'anglais de Mrs. Charlotte Lennox (1770). [R]
- Mackenzie, Anne-Maria. Dusseldorf, or the Fratricide (1798). Tr. by F.J. Delbarre as La Fratricide, ou les Mysteres du château de Dusseldorf (1798). Other editions. [R]
- . The Gamesters (1796). Tr. as Les Joueurs (1790). [R]
- . The Neapolitan, or the Test of Integrity (1796). Tr. as La Famille napolitaine (1800). [R]
- Manley, Mary De La Riviere. The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians (1705). Tr. as Histoire secrete de la reine Zarah et des Zarasiens, ou de la Duchesse de Marlborough demasquée, traduite de l'anglois du docteur H. Sacheverelle, fameux ministre anglican. Dans le royaume d'Albigion. (1708). Other editions, with different titles. [R]

- . Secret Memiors and Manners of Several Persons of Quality (1709). Tr. by Henry Scheurleer and Jean Rousset as L'Atalantis de Mme Manley, contenant les intrigues politiques et amoureuses d'Angleterre, et les secrets des revolutions depuis 1683 jusqu'à present (1713). Other editions. [R]
- More, Hannah. Florio, a Tale for Fine Gentlemen and Fine Ladies (1786). Tr. as Florio, histoire morale, extraite des papiers anglais (n.d). [R]
- . Percy (1778). Tr. as Percy, tragédie en cinq actes (1782). [R]
- Peacock, Lucy. Ambrose and Eleanora; or the Adventures of Two Children, Deserted on an Uninhabited Island (1796). Tr. by M.D.M. Ducray-Duminil as Lolotte et Fanfan, ou les Aventures de deux enfants abandonnés dans une île déserte (1788). [R]
- Pilkington, Mary. Tales of the Hermitage (1798). Tr. by Aug. Adet as Contes de la chaumière, ou Recueil d'histoires instructives et amusantes à l'usage des enfants (1798). [R]
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- . The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents (1797). Tr. by A. M. Morellet as L'Italien, ou le Confessionnal des pénitents noirs (1796). Other editions and translations. [R]
- . A Journey Through Holland and the Western Frontiers of Germany (1795). Tr. as Voyage en Hollande et sur les frontières occidentales de l'Allemagne (1797). [R]
- . Mysteries of Udolpho (1794). Tr. by Mme Victorine de Chastenay as Les Mystères d'Udolphe (1797). [R]
- Reeve, Clara. The Champion of Virtue (1788). Tr. by De La Place as Le Vieux baron anglois, ou le Revenans vengés, histoire gothiques imitée de l'anglois de Mistress Clara Reeve. (1787). Other editions and translations. [R]
- . The Two mentors, a Modern Story (1783). Tr. by De La Place as Les Deux mentors, ou Memoire pour servir à l'histoire des moeurs angloises au 18e siècle. Traduction libre.... (1784). Other editions. [R]

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- . The False Friend (1799). Tr. as Le Faux ami (1799). [R]
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- . Vancenzen, or the Dangers of Credulity (1792). Tr. as Vancenzen, ou les Dangers de la crédulité (1793). [R]
- . Walsingham, or the Pupil of Nature (1792). Tr. as D'Hardourt, ou l'Héritier supposé (1798). Another translation. [R]
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- . Clermont, a Tale (1798). Tr. by André Morellet as Clermont (1799). [R]
- . Vicar of Lansdown, or Country Quarters (1789). Tr. as Le Curé de Lansdowne, ou les Garnisons (1787). Other editions. [R]
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- . Desmond, a Novel (1792). Tr. by L.C.D. as Desmond, ou l'Amant philanthrope (1793).
- . Elfrida, or Paternal Ambition, by a Lady (1786). Tr. by F. C. Bellin de La Liborliere as Elfrida (1798). [R]
- . Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle (1788). Tr. as L'Orpheline du château, ou Emmeline (1788). Other editions and translations. [R]

- . Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake (1789). Tr. by M. de La Montagne as Ethelinde, ou la Recluse du lac (1789). [R]
- . Montalbert (1795). Tr. by Soules as Montalbert et Rosalie (1800). [R]
- . The Old Manor House (1793). Tr. by Marquand as Roland, ou l'Héritier Vertueux (1799).
- . Rural Works in Dialogues Intended for the Use of Young People (1795). Tr. as Promenades champêtres (1799). [R]
- . The Young Philosopher, a Novel (1798). Tr. as Le Jeune philosophe (1799). [R]
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