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**FROM POLEMICS TO FICTION: FOUR EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
WOMEN WRITERS ON EDUCATION**

by

Joyce Grossman

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

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
Eighteenth-Century Female Education and the Vexed Position of the Woman Writer	20
Chapter 2	
Sarah Fielding's <u>Familiar Letters</u> and <u>The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy</u> : Fictive Conduct Books or Critiques of Education?	73
Chapter 3	
"Defective Organs, or a Mistaken Education": Nature versus Nurture in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft	121
Chapter 4	
Maria Edgeworth and the Relationship of Pedagogy to Domestic Fiction ...	171
Chapter 5	
Eros and Education: Elizabeth Inchbald as Playwright/Novelist	223
Conclusion	272
Works Cited	283

Introduction

The status of female education was vigorously debated in England throughout the eighteenth century, usually in the context of wider political discussions.¹ A typical plea for reform is Priscilla Wakefield's Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex (1798), published in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The Quaker philanthropist diagnosed the problem as follows:

In civilized nations it has ever been the misfortune of the sex to be too highly elevated, or too deeply depressed; now raised above the condition of mortals, upon the force of their personal attractions; and now debased below that of reasonable creatures, with respect to their intellectual endowments. The result of this improper treatment has been a neglect of the mental powers, which women really possess, but know not how to exercise. . . . (6)

Wakefield, like Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More, and Mary Ann Radcliffe, among others, concluded that women had mistakenly exchanged "the dignity of reason" for largely ephemeral gains (7). However, this amounted to strategizing on the part of reformers, for they knew that their contemporaries had not willingly entered into this bargain. Rather, demands for educational reform had met with continual public resistance, as can be seen in the polemics which appeared during the previous century.

While women of the 1790s attacked destructive notions of "masculine" chivalry and "feminine" delicacy which reinforced the strictures affecting women, during the

¹ Vivian Jones correlates educational debate with English women's and men's political activities in Women in the Eighteenth Century 98-101.

late 1600s, pedagogues argued for schools on religious grounds by insisting that women, like men, possessed minds and souls. Among the better known treatises are Hannah Wolley's The Gentlewoman's Companion (1665), Bathsua Makin's An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen (1673), and Mary Astell's A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interests (1694).² Although their arguments and plans were rhetorically different, all worked toward achieving similar goals: academies designed for girls and women and their greater access to books and academic curricula. A teacher of languages, Makin insisted that girls be permitted to study "Grammar and Rhetoric, Logick, Mathmaticks, Physick" and "The Tongues" (24). Astell tried to organize a seminary for celibate gentlewomen; the learned lady encouraged her peers to "Exalt and Establish" themselves by forsaking frivolous pastimes and embracing learning (5).

Between these two periods of foment came the development of the novel and with it, new alternatives for reform-oriented women. While they did not abandon the tradition of polemics, literary women began interpolating their critiques of education into new and hybrid forms of fiction, some of which they invented themselves. Arguments and recommendations about education for women appeared in fictive letter manuals, "sentimental" novels, "domestic" novels, "moral romances," "histories,"

² These are just several of the polemics written on the subject of female education and were preceded by Anna Maria Van Schurman's Dissertatio (1641), translated into English by Clement Barksdale as The Learned Maid (1659). Discussion of these authors' contributions can be found in Doris Mary Stenton's excellent survey The English Woman in History. Ruth Perry alludes to numerous other tracts and pamphlets in her introduction to George Ballard's Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain.

and occasionally in poetry, unusual types of satire, and non-traditional modes of literary criticism. At mid-century, stories for children began portraying girls as subjects and women as teachers, a trend which flourished.³ Ellen Moers coins the term "educating heroinism," and Mitzi Myers alludes to "domestic heroinism" to describe the actions of these powerful, rational governess figures--and their descendants in fiction--who offered readers models of female competence not only within, but also outside the home.⁴

By the turn of the century, women writers had expanded their sphere of influence by advocating educational reform in male-identified genres, including drama and book reviewing. Numerous male authors--among them Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Richardson, and Thomas Holcroft--tackled related issues. However, women writers had uniquely personal perspectives related to their gender. Many had to support themselves by working as governesses or operating schools, and their actual teaching experience influenced the style and content of their writing.

³ Background on the rise of juvenile literature in England is available in F. J. Harvey Darton's Children's Books in England; Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, eds., Children and Their Books; Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children 1749-1820; and Geoffrey Summerfield, Fantasy and Reason. In Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic, Mary Jackson writes about the early model set by the fictive governess, Mrs. Teachum, in [Sarah Fielding], The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy (144-47). Another model for the wise governess can be found in the chapbook The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes. Otherwise called Mrs. Margery Two-Shoes.

⁴ See Ellen Moers's chapter "Educating Heroism: Governess to Governor" in Literary Women, 211-42, for discussion of Mme de Genlis and her English counterparts. Mitzi Myers writes about the educating heroine in "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books."

The majority were autodidacts and this, too, placed them in an unusual situation. Their lack of formal schooling was both a disadvantage and an asset. Literary women often felt insecure about their talent and were vulnerable to attacks by better educated males. At the same time, their eclectic programs of study provided them with rich stores of randomly organized material. Left on their own, they experimented with narrative technique and form: these women had not been constricted by rote learning, nor had they learned to fear violating classical traditions or deviating from generic rules. While contemporary critics tend to favor the study of novels, during the 1700s the novel was a nascent and also a suspect genre; women writers' allegiance to the novel as a preeminent form is in no way clear.⁵ Writing women perceived themselves primarily as moralists, reformers, and educators of children and adults. They used a panoply of forms, including the novel, to articulate their social grievances and pedagogical ideals.

Sarah Fielding (1710-68), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), and Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) earned their reputations by writing in multiple genres, which they used interactively to espouse their causes. Their texts

⁵ J. Paul Hunter discusses readers' mistrustfulness of the novel in Before Novels; Hunter states it took one hundred years for the novel to achieve "respectability" (18-19). Lennard J. Davis, Factual Fictions stresses Puritan prohibitions against novel reading. Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelists from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen outlines prejudices against a genre associated with women writers and readers. Lynne Agress in The Feminine Irony mentions that Hannah More, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and Jane West, among others, feared novels made women "giddy" (120). Mary Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth were also suspicious of novel reading. J. M. S. Tompkins's chapter on "The Female Novelists" provides rich background material; Tompkins contends, as I do, that most of these 1700s writers were chiefly moralists.

reflect upon the ways in which men attained intellectual, political, sexual, and economic control over women, largely by restricting them to the acquisition of drawing room skills or to the basics women required to run a household. Beginning with Sarah Fielding at mid-century, one can see in these women's texts a range of approaches to educational reform. Together, they provide a complex analysis of the power dynamics inherent in mentoring activities and the relationship of education to a changing English social order.

The three late-century writers whose works I discuss are all in some way indebted to Fielding. Though important critics such as Janet Todd and Jane Spencer have classified her as a "sentimental novelist" who rather complacently accepted the terms of her culture, Fielding produced several significant but neglected hybrid texts, and on the basis of this group, she might easily be viewed as an experimental writer of fiction about education.⁶ Lisette Ferlet Carpenter once described Fielding as a "mid-century link" between Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft.⁷ Sarah Fielding is indeed a transitional figure, but not simply because Fielding was sympathetic to feminist causes such as educational reform. Sarah Fielding links Astell and

⁶ Spencer refers to The Adventures of David Simple as "both sentimental and satirical" but emphasizes the former (92). Janet Todd, in The Sign of Angellica locates Fielding with Frances Sheridan in a chapter entitled "Novelists of Sentiment" (161-75). Fielding is said to endorse the passive suffering of her characters.

⁷ Carpenter associates Fielding with Mary Astell on the basis of common themes: the need for sisterhood, emphasis on female scholarship, and "the establishment of non-traditional roles" (Diss. 11). Deborah Downs-Miers defines the nature of Sarah Fielding's feminism in "Springing the Trap."

Wollstonecraft in terms of narration: her experimental fiction collapses the boundaries between late 1600s polemics and 1790s conceptions of novels as sociopolitical documents.

My main focus will be on her little known epistolary fiction Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple (1747) and her novel for children The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy (1749), described by Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., as "the first and most influential eighteenth-century school story."⁸ Familiar Letters was published in 1753-54 as the nucleus of a five-volume trilogy consisting of that work, The Adventures of David Simple (1744), and her conclusion of 1753, Volume the Last, but has never been reprinted in this format.⁹ Through a close reading of Familiar Letters, I will reveal how Fielding amends the sentimentalism of The Adventures of David Simple by offering readers a rigorously unsentimental sequel. Familiar Letters, with its unique blend of inset narratives, apologues, fables, and a fifty-page fairy-tale "Fragment," uses these diverse forms to interrogate aspects of social and domestic tyranny resulting in the intellectual suppression of women. She conducts an attack on the flawed educations received by

⁸ For Pickering's assessment of Fielding's legacy, see his chapter on "School Stories" in Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children 1749-1820, 31-57.

⁹ Andrew Millar sold the three works of fiction as a five-volume set, dated 1744-53, once Volume the Last was completed. In his introduction to The Adventures of David, Malcolm Kelsall suggests that the Letters represent "a collection of miscellaneous essays and short tales in letter form, having very little to do with The Adventures" (xi). Kelsall may have concluded this because Henry wrote his Miscellanies in 1745 and various of his biographers have assumed Sarah either emulated her brother's style of writing or that of her friend Samuel Richardson, who printed several of her works.

members of both sexes and questions a society adverse to the notion of female scholarship.

Two years after her Letters were published, The Governess; Or, Little Female Academy (1749) was printed by Sarah's friend Samuel Richardson for A. Millar. This novel is commonly relegated to histories of juvenile literature, where it has been dismissed as an "amusingly naughty" collection of schoolgirls' narratives, imbued with charm, but having no particular pedagogical significance.¹⁰ However, as in Familiar Letters, The Governess contains a sophisticated mixture of fables, fairy tales, and inset narratives, again used in the service of social commentary. The Governess requires evaluation not only for its place in the history of juvenile literature, but also for its narrative structure, which is closely aligned with the author's pedagogical scheme. Sarah Fielding tried to improve negative images of female boarding schools and their teachers, to increase her readers' self-esteem, and to establish girls as credible and worthy subjects for fiction.

Sarah Fielding was an impoverished, unmarried gentlewoman who is believed to have spent much of her adult life supporting her poor health in Bath. Her situation differed markedly from those of Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, and Elizabeth Inchbald. The latter three travelled, attracted the notice of men, affixed their signatures to fiction, and expressed political opinions in their writings. The 1790s, the period during which all three began to publish, were marked by tremendous social change and political tensions. These women experienced the

¹⁰ Mary Jackson, Engines of Instruction 146.

turmoil surrounding the French Revolution of 1789, England's declaration of war on France and the Treason trials of 1794, troubles in Ulster between Catholics and Protestants, and England's Catholic Relief Acts. Mary Wollstonecraft visited France and studied Talleyrand-Périgord's report on education; the minister's program inspired her to respond to his ideas in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) and to consider how his recommendations might be adapted to England. She was later to marry William Godwin, who was associated with revolutionary causes, as was her publisher, Joseph Johnson. Elizabeth Inchbald moved in these same professional and social circles; friends with Godwin and Thomas Holcroft, she visited the latter in prison when he was arrested for sedition. Inchbald wrote two political plays, The Massacre: A Tragedy (1792) and A Case of Conscience (1800-01).¹¹ The Massacre concerns "the unhappy state of a neighboring nation," Inchbald's allusion to France; A Case of Conscience takes place during the Spanish Inquisition. Neither play was produced, and A Case of Conscience, although tentatively cast for production, was not published until after her death.

Maria Edgeworth is regarded by critics as more the humanist than the radical. Nonetheless, Edgeworth, who was of the landed gentry, advocated parliamentary and educational reform for her native country, Ireland. She witnessed disturbances at home during the French invasion and experienced the terror of a mob mentality

¹¹ Inchbald's A Case of Conscience was published posthumously in James Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald. A Case of Conscience was cast with John Philip Kemble and Sarah Siddons, but was never performed. The Massacre, taken from a play by Louis Sebastian Mercier, concerns the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, involving the persecution of Protestants in France.

when her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, was almost lynched by loyalists who questioned his allegiance to their cause. In letters to relatives, she comments sorrowfully on the hanging of the French writer and activist, Mme Roland. The latter's imprisonment is also referred to in Practical Education (1798), a detailed program she coauthored with her father. Her allusion suggests the ways in which a seemingly innocuous manual on education could be used by a "proper lady" to quietly communicate her political sentiments.

Many perceptive studies have been written about the activities of women writers during this period. Marilyn Butler offers a historical and literary overview in Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830, as do Janet Todd in The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800, and Katharine Rogers in Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England. Gary Kelly pays particular attention to the role played by "radical" women writers in several historically oriented studies: The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805, Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft, and Women, Writing, and Revolution 1790-1827. Other helpful texts include Eleanor Ty's Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s and Mona Scheuermann's Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel. These critics capture the frictions ensuing between women writers reputedly sympathetic to Jacobin causes and conservatives such as Edmund Burke, who defended the behavior of Marie Antoinette and a court culture abhorrent to these middle-class reformers. Such texts provide a foundation for my own inquiry.

My work differs from theirs insofar as I concentrate on narrative strategies in order to reveal the integral, but largely unexplored, relationship existing between polemics on the subject of education and fiction. J. Paul Hunter, in Before Novels, writes about the didacticism of eighteenth-century novels and the authors who have been marginalized, if not ignored, by critics who fail "to embrace the didactic rhetoric in their books and see their accomplishments both as units of discourse and as novelistic wholes" (56). Hunter urges us to question the nature and function of this didacticism. Not only do I agree, but I would expand Hunter's parameters to include a range of genres, given that the debate cut across genres marked by fluidity and instability. I would further argue that if narratives are contextualized within the cultural debates which spawned them, it becomes easier to appreciate women's writings and to assess their methods and goals. By studying particular authors as pedagogues who consciously dramatized their ideas in multiple modes, I hope to prove that educational reform was foremost among their concerns and that they participated in a longstanding rhetorical tradition which they hoped to enhance through their use of plot and character. Novels do not represent the sum total of authors' views, nor should we automatically assume that authors were more invested in the adult novel than in other forms of literature.

Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman was written as a polemic and represents just one of the literary forms she used: eager to earn money, to establish a literary presence, and to make her views known, she also wrote a conduct book, juvenile fiction, book reviews, and two adult novels, which all reveal

aspects of her thoughts on education. Her children's novel, Original Stories from Real Life: With Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truthfulness and Goodness (1788) is said by Julia Briggs to have been "inspired" by Fielding's The Governess, "now nearly forty years old, but still unrivalled as popular fiction for children."¹² Using some of Sarah Fielding's techniques, Wollstonecraft offered readers the stoic but socially conscious governess, who teaches her girls the importance of reason and need for greater "justice" within English society.

Her concern with educational reform is pervasive. In an earlier conduct book, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life (1787), Wollstonecraft points out the lowly status of the private governess, denouncing the latter's lack of opportunity, and intimating her rivalry with the more economically privileged wife and mother. She adapted juvenile stories from the continent: Young Grandison (1790), taken from a text by the Dutch author Maria Geertruida van Werken de Cambon, who derived her title from Samuel Richardson's novel, and Elements of Morality (1790), which Wollstonecraft translated from the German of Christian Gotthilf von Salzmann.¹³ Each of these texts

¹² For reference to Fielding's influence on Wollstonecraft and other women writers such as Mary Sherwood, see Julia Briggs's essay "Women Writers: Sarah Fielding to E. Nesbit," in Gillian Avery and Briggs (eds.), Children and Their Books 221-50.

¹³ Young Grandison is named for Samuel Richardson's The History of Sir Charles Grandison (1753-54), although there are few similarities between these texts.

contrasts the upbringings of brothers and sisters, enabling readers to see the differences between educational reform as it was envisioned for boys and girls. Her adult novels, Mary, a Fiction (1788) and the posthumously published The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria (1798), both show the debilitating aspects of fashionable education as well as the problems posed by autodidacticism. However, Wollstonecraft's prose is not without ambiguities and signs of ambivalence, for she questioned whether women were innately inferior or handicapped by their poor educations. This debate preoccupied many pedagogues of her time, but its presence in her work has been obscured by greater critical emphasis on the dialectic of sensibility and reason evident in her adult novels.

Maria Edgeworth, the most commercially successful of these authors, was among the most adroit in her use of narrative. Edgeworth produced domestic novels, a polemic, "moral tales," and juvenile short stories, all oriented toward pedagogical reform. Acquainted with the precepts of the Lunar Society of Birmingham, a group of scientists, engineers, and physicians devoted to promoting industrial research, Edgeworth showed concern for teaching girls about spinning jennys rather than dancing.¹⁴ Her first publication, Letters for Literary Ladies (1795), said to have been influenced by Wollstonecraft's Vindication, objects to educational discrimination

¹⁴ For background on Maria Edgeworth and the Lunar Society, see Marilyn Butler, Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography. Isaac Kramnick observes the growing emphasis on industrialization and mechanization as themes in 1790s juvenile literature; see "Children's Literature and Bourgeois Ideology," where he reads many such stories as summaries of "the values and concerns of the new bourgeois age" (232).

against women.¹⁵ In this hybrid text, Maria Edgeworth experiments with several rhetorical methods, including dialogue, debate, and satire, the latter being a genre which was not usually associated with women during the eighteenth century. I connect Edgeworth's work to that of her feminist forebears, analyze her literary strategies, and situate her on a continuum alongside her peers.

While Sarah Fielding emphasized women's aptitude for classical studies, by the turn of the century the usefulness of Latin and Greek was being disputed by middle-class pedagogues; in Practical Education, Maria and Richard Edgeworth encourage boys and girls alike to concentrate on science and mathematics. Maria Edgeworth's non-fiction and fiction are rarely, if ever, discussed together; yet many of the ideas she expresses in Practical Education can be used to illuminate the plots and themes of her later domestic fiction. Her current reputation warrants reevaluation. She has been labelled a "daddy's girl" and "mistress of orthodoxy" on the basis of the ideology she articulates in novels such as Belinda (1801), Leonora (1805), and her final novel, Helen (1834).¹⁶ However, her ideas about education

¹⁵ Gina Luria, in her introduction to the 1974 reprint, suggests Edgeworth was influenced by Wollstonecraft's Vindication.

¹⁶ Critics have discussed Edgeworth in terms of "complicity" with a patriarchal order. See Miriam Lerenbaum, "Mistress of Orthodoxy: Education in the Lives and Writings of Late Eighteenth-Century Women Writers" and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth & Patriarchal Complicity. Nicola J. Watson groups Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Jane West together as "conservatives" in a chapter entitled "Redirecting the Letter: Counter-Revolutionary Tactics 1800-1819" in Revolution and the Form of the British Novel 69-108. Mitzi Myers challenges complicity arguments in "Daddy's Girl as Motherless Child: Maria Edgeworth and Maternal Romance; An Essay in Reassessment." Claudia L. Johnson seems divided in her

are surprisingly modern and portend twentieth-century views. I pair Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth to reconsider the accuracy of their respective reputations as radical and conservative, using as my criteria their respective programs for change.

Elizabeth Inchbald was Maria Edgeworth's favorite author: the romance between an older, well-educated guardian and his younger, fashionably educated ward in the novel A Simple Story (1791) reduced Edgeworth to tears and left her despairing over the "cold tameness" of her own heroine, that "stick or stone" Belinda.¹⁷ Like these other authors I discuss, Inchbald was a woman of many talents.¹⁸ Although she earned her livelihood primarily by writing comedies for the British theater, to date little attention has been paid to her acting and play writing career, which provided the source for many of the theatrical techniques she applied to fiction. Inchbald was quite familiar with works written by other playwrights, including her contemporaries in England and on the continent and her predecessors, especially Shakespeare. It might be said that her stage experience had a liberating

opinion: she feels Edgeworth "upholds traditional social arrangements" but also writes that Edgeworth "scrambles the Burkean codes she sets up" in Belinda (160; 24).

¹⁷ Maria Edgeworth wrote to her cousin Sophy Ruxton in December of 1809, praising A Simple Story; see Augustus J. G. Hare, ed., The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth 1: 177-78. Inchbald describes the novel as "the most powerfully interesting tale I ever read." Both Edgeworths corresponded with Mrs. Inchbald and their letters can be found in Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald.

¹⁸ Judith Stanton describes Inchbald's play writing success in her essay, "This New Found Path Attempting," in Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski, eds., Curtain Calls 325-54. Another useful essay in this anthology is Katharine Roger's discussion of Inchbald as "Britain's First Female Drama Critic," 177-290.

effect on Inchbald the novelist and that this accounts for one of her main themes, the relationship of erotic feeling to the educating process.

Fielding, Wollstonecraft, and Edgeworth shied away from the concept of female sexuality, either out of personal reticence or because they feared a sexual woman would never be seen as rational. Inchbald actively uncovers the hidden attractions and antipathies resulting from unequal forms of schooling. In A Simple Story, the hero's and heroine's "masculine" and "feminine" forms of education lead to misunderstandings but also generate sexual sparks. In Nature and Art (1796), Inchbald takes the popular theme of the "seduced British maiden" and correlates it with a heroine's inability to read or write.¹⁹ Inchbald's work, like Wollstonecraft's, registers overt and covert messages of social protest, often relative to the genre being employed. And much as Wollstonecraft used her Analytical Review articles of the 1790s to reinforce her ideas on education, Inchbald, in the twenty-five volume anthology, The British Theatre (1808), which she compiled and edited, used her "Remarks" to campaign for female literacy.

There are various reasons why these authors' works deserve to be juxtaposed. Although Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Inchbald express common insights, they do so with narrative and generic diversity. Where one author finds that epistolarity offers her the most meaningful venue for registering protest, another finds liberation in writing reviews, or children's stories. The fact that each wrote for

¹⁹ Susan Staves analyzes reasons for the prevalence of this theme in English novels; see "British Seduced Maidens."

more than one audience, sometimes within one piece of work and sometimes under separate covers, also places them in similar situations. Dual audiences created stimulating problems for these writers, who knew that to engage one readership they often had to assuage another, whether their audiences were segmented by age, social standing, level of education, and/or gender. Each handled the problem of dual, or even multiple audiences, differently, and this can best be seen from comparisons of their work.

All four identify education as an instrument of social and psychological control. Their works often describe power struggles between classes; however, my stress will be on gender, since, as Nicholas Hans indicates, even working-class boys had more educational opportunities during the 1700s than girls from any stratum of society.²⁰ Each of these writers has a particular area of sensitivity; together, they provide a map of social anxieties provoked by the notion of reform. Sarah Fielding walks a tightrope between the aspirations she wishes to cultivate in females and her desire not to instill false hope in those who inhabit a society where female authorship and scholarship were discouraged. Wollstonecraft, while not possessed of a bluestocking sensibility, can be seen trying to reconcile divergent goals: she fights for more democratic forms of education but is, at the same time, a romantic thinker drawn to images of the "natural" genius who thrives without formal schooling. Maria Edgeworth, with her pragmatic orientation, can be found puzzling over the ways in which a woman might move from a private, domestic sphere to a public arena

²⁰ Nicholas Hans, New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century 194.

without coming under attack. Elizabeth Inchbald expresses ambivalence over the effect that comparable educations might have on individuals' libidos, given her feeling that many men derived pleasure from the spiritedness of untutored women, much as women often pined for the virile beneficiaries of "masculine" educations. Their attitudes are complementary: each raises important issues on her own, but their works, if taken in aggregate, reveal the full measure of problems involved in improving education for middle-class women.

In the process of establishing connections between these authors, I do not mean to obscure their differences or deny them their individuality. They disagreed on critical points, such as what constituted the best pedagogical environment--school or home--and who served as best teacher--mother, father, celibate uncle, older male mentor, governess, or peers. They differed on the issue of what constituted appropriate curricula for girls, and their feelings about the desirability of class mobility varied. Despite this, these literary women shared an urge to insure that future generations would face fewer obstacles to learning than they did, and all display a commitment to ameliorating prejudices against educating women. A goal of this study is to identify their strategies of instrumental feminism, which have, on occasion, been mistaken for complicity with a patriarchal culture.

My first chapter will provide background on female education during the eighteenth century in order to show what these writers were rebelling against. Subsequent chapters will discuss problems related to male education as well. Literary women did not wholeheartedly embrace or covet classical male schooling,

as might be expected. Eleanor Ty comments that Mary Hays's novel Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796) provided readers with "negative illustrations of the Burkean idea of the benevolent patriarch."²¹ This tendency is visible in the works of the authors I discuss. All inveighed against amoral education in an age when educated men were presumed to exemplify reasoned benevolence; each of these authors challenges and revises traditional idealizations of the patriarchal mentor.

A final issue to be explored is that of authorial reputation and how it evolves. In a recent essay entitled "Elizabeth Hamilton's Domestic Politics," Janice Farrar Thaddeus contests Hamilton's purported conservatism. Thaddeus remarks: "The fact is that the liberal versus conservative yardstick--no more than the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin one--simply does not adequately measure women's politics."²² Thaddeus arrives at this opinion on the basis of a wide-ranging study of Hamilton's work, including her novel Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800) and a final "original" piece of non-fiction, Hints Addressed to the Patrons and Directors of Schools (1815). I obviously agree with this comprehensive approach and feel an intergeneric study can best reveal where women stood on important issues and situate them more accurately in relation to their colleagues and their culture.

Ironically, for all the contemporary critical focus on the novel, many women of the 1700s felt awkward about producing them: Sarah Fielding wrote The

²¹ Unsex'd Revolutionaries 49.

²² Margaret J. M. Ezell questions scholars' need to prove that eighteenth-century women writers were "good" feminists and argues for greater historical specificity in Writing Women's Literary History 27-33.

Adventures of David Simple as a didactic "Moral Romance"; Wollstonecraft was dismayed by lady novelists and attacked a number of their books in the Analytical Review; Inchbald struggled with the novel form and felt far more at ease when writing plays; Edgeworth took perhaps her greatest pleasure from the positive responses to Practical Education. These writers' feelings suggest it is all the more important for scholars to appraise entire bodies of work, and not to view them as one-dimensional writers or failed novelists of a pre-Austen era.²³ Reductive literary and political labels have been too readily applied to eighteenth-century women, despite the complexity of their social, political, and educational circumstances. For those who identified education as the cornerstone of individual civil rights, reductive classifications least apply.

²³ Terry Castle, in the London Review of Books (Feb. 1995) uses terms such as "excruciating" and "sublimely bad" to describe texts by Eliza Fenwick, Sarah Fielding, Sarah Scott, and others whom she attacks for their "ineptitude" in writing novels (18). My argument is that few, if any, of the authors Castle assails wanted to be seen as novelists; rather, they were pedagogues and reformers who used fiction for a specific purpose.

Chapter 1

Eighteenth-Century Female Education and the Vexed Position of the Woman Writer

In order to develop a context for the pedagogical debates of the eighteenth century, it is helpful to look at the actual forms of schooling available to girls, as well as the public and familial anxieties surrounding the issue of female education. Education was haphazard by design; prohibitions against teaching academic subjects to females were part of a larger scheme which included at best minimal standards for teaching the laboring poor. Nicholas Hans comments that while English boys of the middle and upper classes attended public schools such as Eton and Westminster and, later, the Anglican-run universities such as Oxford or Cambridge, "girls were not included in these culture requirements of the State and of the Church."¹ Ruth Perry identifies a demise in institutionalized female education occurring during the

¹ Nicholas Hans, New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century 194. A valuable source is Barbara Brandon Schnorrenburg's "Education for Women in Eighteenth Century England: An Annotated Bibliography" and her follow-up article, "The Eighteenth-Century Englishwoman," coauthored with Jean E. Hunter. See Myra Reynolds, The Learned Lady in England 1650-1760 for a discussion of bluestockings. Margaret Ezell analyzes the efforts of early educational reformers in The Patriarch's Wife. Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity, ed. Vivian Jones, offers a compilation of excerpts from pedagogical texts, as does The Female Spectator: English Women Writers before 1800, ed. Mary R. Mahl and Helene Koon. Eva Figes discusses women and the growth of libraries in Sex and Subterfuge: Women Novelists to 1850 9. An overview of education is provided by H. C. Barnard in A History of English Education from 1760 and Katharine Rogers in Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England. Philippe Ariès's chapter on "Scholastic Life" is devoted primarily to French education but offers insights into English attitudes and practices as well.

Reformation, when women's monastic orders were disbanded.² Spain and Italy maintained convent schools, but England repudiated this tradition of female scholarship, associating it with a Papist threat. According to Perry, by 1694, when Astell's A Serious Proposal to the Ladies advocated the creation of a women's seminary, the majority of English women were illiterate and could barely sign their names (103).

Middle- and upper-class females, expected to marry and have children, were offered piecemeal options; a girl might work with a private governess for a year or two and also have some brief experience with day or boarding school.³ Live-in governesses were likely to be the daughters of naval and military officers, clergymen, barristers, and physicians; educated by their fathers, they had better than average knowledge but came from families without wealth. Day schools, or dame schools, were often supervised by the local widow, who received a few pence each week for teaching rudimentary skills; by most accounts, dame schools functioned as a form of babysitting for overburdened parents in an age when seven or more children per household were not unusual. Boarding schools for girls began sprouting in London

² Perry, The Celebrated Mary Astell 103.

³ Books devoted to female education in the eighteenth century include Josephine Kamm's Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History and Dorothy Gardiner's English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries. Allusions to specific schools can be found in memoirs by Mary Robinson, Mary Russell Mitford, Hester Thrale, Charlotte Charke, Sarah Trimmer, Mary Sherwood, and Mary Sewell, among others. A fine essay is P. J. Miller's "Women's Education, 'Self Improvement' and Social Mobility--A Late Eighteenth-Century Debate." Miller writes about schools as potential vehicles for social advancement, as does Dorothy George in England in Transition 91-93.

during the latter part of the 1600s and proliferated throughout spa and commercial centers, including Leeds, Bristol, Manchester, and Bath, during the 1700s. Women opened schools in their own homes, taking in day students along with parlor boarders who paid for additional comforts, which might include a single bed or the privilege of supping with the governess. The headmistress sometimes taught, but usually hired tutors; her primary duties were those of housemother, moral arbiter, and fee collector. Sarah Maese, a headmistress and author of The School: Being a Series of Letters between a Young Lady and Her Mother (1766-72), prefaces the lessons taught to a fictive girl with a fee schedule for her own academy at Beaufort Square: quarterly rates were advertised as three guineas for entrance, five guineas for basic board and washing, with extra charges for French, geography, drawing, dance, music, and writing.⁴ Average annual school fees fell within the forty to sixty pound range, making this option relatively expensive.⁵ However, many parents saw these academies as sources for finishing skills and hoped the expenditure would improve a daughter's marriage prospects.

Parents had more than one motive for sending girls to school. Typical boarding school pupils were described by Clara Reeve in Plans of Education (1792) as "girls who unexpectedly came into money and want to support themselves properly,

⁴ Maese's front page advertises "The Plan for a School in Beaufort Square, Bath Commenced February 20, 1764." A number of such "fictive" manuals promoted actual schools as well as the headmistress's teaching methods.

⁵ P. J. Miller 305. Miller takes his £40 to £60 fee range from prospectuses of the period, but notes much less expensive schools existed.

those with fathers who marry again, young ladies sent from the East or West Indies" (173). Mary Russell Mitford, who attended the St. Quentin school, which also claimed as former students Jane Austen, Mary Sherwood, and Lady Caroline Lamb, refers to pupils as "the luckless daughters of the newly wealthy, on whom the magic air of a London seminary was expected to work as sudden a transformation as the wand of Cinderella's fairy godmother."⁶ England, in the second half of the century, was a densely packed society with easier transitions from rank to rank than had previously existed; schools, as one of many new commodities available, reflected a growing consumerism of "revolutionary proportions."⁷ Any art form which was ladylike and labor intensive attracted a female following. Ellen Pollak alludes to an "economic superfluity" among middle-class women, encouraged to occupy their leisure hours; this led to the pursuit of "expensive entertainments."⁸ In keeping with this

⁶ Mary Russell Mitford, Our Village 85. Mitford attended the St. Quentin school, run by a French emigré and son of a diplomat; his other students included Jane Austen, Mary Sherwood, and Lady Caroline Lamb. Mary Sherwood describes the man and his school in The Life of Mrs. Sherwood, ed. F. J. Harvey Darton 132.

⁷ For a discussion of entrepreneurship and its effects on consumer demand, see Neil McKendrick's "The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England" in The Birth of a Consumer Society, ed. McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb 9-33. McKendrick identifies consumerism as a "multi-causal phenomenon" with significance for the role of women (13). Gerald Newman raises important points in his chapter on "Cosmopolitanism and Aristocratic Supremacy" in The Rise of English Nationalism 21-47. Newman questions "the fond legend of English social mobility" and relates it to England's love-hate relationship with French culture (28).

⁸ Pollak summarizes the economic situation of women in "The Eighteenth Century Myth of Passive Womanhood" in The Poetics of Sexual Myth 22-76. Pollak writes about Alice Clark's analysis of the diminishing economic contributions made by eighteenth-century wives. Also see Randolph Trumbach's

philosophy, boarding school girls were taught to embroider; they copied flowers and constructed shell grottoes: producing intricate but useless objets d'art was seen as having a value beyond that of mental improvement.

Less frivolous schools did exist, particularly if the headmistress had a religious affiliation such as Methodism or Calvinism.⁹ Still, even these academies set out to take a girl, "improve her moral character, make her able to take part in general conversation without making a fool of herself, and equip her to educate her own children."¹⁰ Educating girls to become more respectable than their dissipated mothers was one goal. This sentiment was expressed by Lord Halifax, who in the Lady's New Year's Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter (1688) depicted women as "dangerously weak-minded"; the sentiment held equally true in 1798, when Priscilla Wakefield denounced the lifestyles of women of fashion, characterized by "crowded rooms, late hours, luxurious tables and slothful inactivity."¹¹ Such dissipation,

The Rise of the Egalitarian Family for discussion of patrilineage, divorce laws, and property rights as they pertained to women.

⁹ Letters of the Late Isabelle Graham of New York discusses the Calvinist's boarding school in Edinburgh, where the Sabbath was kept and girls were told "we have not time given to us to throw away, but to improve for eternity" (117). Hannah Kilham's religious precepts are outlined in Memoirs of the Late Hannah Kilham. Kilham was a Methodist turned Quaker; she established Christian schools in Sierra Leone and later in Sheffield, England.

¹⁰ Alice Browne, The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind 42.

¹¹ Lord Halifax explains that men have a larger share of reason due to a natural inequality of the sexes. Rita Goldberg alludes to Halifax's belief in women's "weak mindedness" in Sex and Enlightenment 46. Priscilla Wakefield attacks female decadence in Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex 15. Doctors of the Edinburgh school, such as William Buchan, author of Domestic Medicine (1769), argued that fashionable ladies led physically

Wakefield felt, led to the production of "puny offspring," who were routinely shunted off to boarding schools. The Ladies Library (1714), written anonymously and published by Richard Steele, attacked "ladies of quality" for not valuing education. The author criticized their mispronunciations and claimed "that to spell well, is, among the fair sex, reckon'd a sort of Pedantry."¹² However, contemporary feminist critics who have examined eighteenth-century satires find them to be pervaded by scathing images of the learned lady as disruptive Amazon and would-be wit.¹³ Periodicals offering "prescriptives for private behavior" urged women to limit their scholarly ambitions (Shevelow 4). A February 1760 issue of the Lady's Magazine told its predominantly female readers: "We can never wish that society should be

debilitating lives which would eventually be destructive to their offspring.

¹² Much material in this derivative three-volume conduct book was culled from unacknowledged seventeenth-century sources, including John Locke, Abbé Fénelon, and Mary Astell (Reynolds 332; Stenton 237).

¹³ Ellen Pollak considers satires of women in works by Pope and Swift. Also see Sylvia H. Myers' The Bluestocking Circle; Felicity Nussbaum, The Brink of All We Hate. Katherine Sobba Green discusses "Bluestockings" and "Amazons" in The Courtship Novel 1740-1820 104-113. Valerie Rumbold cites John Gay's satires in Women's Place in Pope's World 153-59. Katherine Shevelow looks at satiric representations of women in popular periodicals in Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical. In her memoirs, Sarah Trimmer describes reading Edward Young's "Satire on Women" as a way to avoid many "failures"; see The Life and Writings of Mrs. Trimmer 1: 34. This is not to suggest that only men satirized women. In His and Hers, Ann Messenger observes that Frances Burney's play The Witlings (1779) and Susan Ferrier's novel Marriage (1818) "skewered bluestocking hostesses and their coteries mercilessly" (9).

filled with doctors in petticoats to regale us with Latin and Greek."¹⁴ Fear of social disapproval, if not outright ridicule, discouraged many women from even giving the appearance of being learned, and public prejudices helped shape curriculum. Females rarely studied English grammar, let alone the ancient languages associated with a male elite.¹⁵ Pedagogues who recommended teaching girls Greek or Latin justified its usefulness for studying scriptures; Lady Wortley Montagu and Vicesimus Knox were among the few who recommended an end to this prohibition, since translations did not do justice to the original texts.¹⁶ The study of Romance languages was deemed more permissible. Englishwomen admired the writings of Mme de Scudéry, Mme Dacier, Mme de Staël and Mme de Genlis, whose "moral-romantic plays" were often performed at girls' boarding schools (Darton 148). Science and mathematics were denied the general female populace until after the

¹⁴ A segment entitled "Of the Studies Proper for the Sex" was published in The Monthly Magazine, 1760, 401-04. The editor is called "Mrs. Stanhope", whom Shevelow believes to be Oliver Goldsmith. Articles discouraging women from studying Latin and Greek were common in popular periodicals. A January 18, 1712, letter to "Mr. Spectator" criticized the woman who "is wholly taken up with her Tutor in learning by Heart Scraps of Greek, which she vents upon all Occasions" (2: 582).

¹⁵ Walter Ong considers the class and gender implications of studying ancient languages in "Latin and the Social Fabric." Valerie Rumbold describes Latin as "marking their [men's] graduation from the female tutelage of the nursery to the male world of public life in Women's Place in Pope's World 7.

¹⁶ For information on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's classical education and her attitudes toward translations, see The Works of the Right Honorable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Lady Mary complains that translations are "often corrupted" (4: 183). Vicesimus Knox, in Essays Moral and Literary (1785), insisted that original texts were preferable to translations (1: 140). Knox was master of the Tunbridge School for boys. Most others felt women could read classics in translation.

French Revolution, at which time textbooks for home and school use began to circulate for a middle-class market; recommended studies expanded to include astronomy, botany, and zoology, although these, too, were controversial in the eyes of those who feared that knowledge of the natural sciences might compromise female delicacy.¹⁷

The discourse centering on boarding schools reflects the numerous anxieties surrounding the issue of female education. Parents feared losing control over their daughters; they worried about personal rejection once girls were exposed to a governess or peers; these fears are reflected in popular periodicals, memoirs, and adult and juvenile fiction.¹⁸ Tales of the Cottage (1798), a book of stories by Mary Pilkington loosely modeled on Mme de Genlis's Veillées du Château, shows the daughter of a tradesman being educated at a local boarding school, where an "upstart

¹⁷ Margaret Bryan wrote textbooks for the use of schools and families, among them A Comprehensive Astronomical and Geographical Class Book, for the Use of Schools and Private Families. Janet Todd refers to her A Compendious System of Astronomy (1797) in The Sign of Angellica 222. Nicholas Hans discusses Bryan and another teacher and scientific textbook author, Mr. Jolly Florian, in New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century 80-81, 203-04. Florian published Courses of the Sciences and Philosophy (1806), in which his wife inserted an advertisement for her girls' school. In Education and Society 1500-1800, Rosemary O'Day mentions that Mrs. Florian patterned her school's curricula after what was being taught in her husband's school (189). Erasmus Darwin included his own scientific texts as part of the curricula in his Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding School. Darwin showed concern for girls' physical well-being in addition to their academic improvement.

¹⁸ Patricia Meyer Spacks writes about moralists' longing for "ultimate adolescent submission" in A Distant Prospect 15. Spacks comments on the number of idealized reconciliations occurring between parents and children in eighteenth-century English fiction.

miss is taught to laugh at the simplicity of her unlettered parents, because unlike her, they cannot chatter bad French, or produce a few discordant sounds from the guitar or harpsichord."¹⁹ Boarding school education is disparaged both for inferior teaching and for encouraging girls to condescend to adults. Jane West's novel The Advantages of Education: Or, The History of Maria Williams, "A Tale for Misses and Their Mamas" (1793) strikes a similar cautionary note. The narrator, "Prudentia Homespun," describes girls becoming "pert and conceited and too often inclined to despise their parents" (33). West dramatizes the plight of the well-regulated country mother who must reclaim her daughter's affection from the governess who fascinates Maria but does not have her interests at heart.

Another concern was that girls would try to emulate their social betters and develop airs and affectations. The Spectator featured a mock advertisement by Letitia Tattle, who, having taught girls, notifies the public that her Bloomsbury academy is available to teach magpies, starlings, and parrots how to "imitate human voices."²⁰ Curricula for the unmusical birds includes opera study; the pupils' "cages" are to be cleansed by a deaf and dumb servant. This type of satire heaped scorn

¹⁹ Mary Pilkington, "The Fortunate Beggar: Or, Inhumanity Reproved" in Tales of the Cottage 51. Genlis's actual text was translated into English by Thomas Holcroft. Town and Country Magazine (Feb. 1772) contains a story entitled "The Love Letter. A Moral Tale," in which the daughter sent to boarding school "looked down on her plodding father, and her prudent mother" (85). The pros and cons of boarding school were often debated in Town and Country.

²⁰ The Tattle satire appeared on Jan. 18, 1712, in issue 178 of The Spectator. See Shevelov's Women and Print Culture for discussion of Tatler and Spectator articles.

upon female pupil and teacher alike, reinforcing the idea that women teachers were corrupt and girls might not be particularly educable to begin with. West's Advantages of Education shows sycophantic schoolgirls fawning over Maria when they believe she may be an heiress: the vacuous governess fosters a materialism which is quickly adopted as a value by students. Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., observes that in West's The Infidel Father (1802), the farmer who sends his daughter to boarding school is shown allowing her to eschew "the solid virtues of the middle class for unsubstantial refinement."²¹ Boarding schools, to their many critics, represented a microcosm of a society afflicted by greed and the dissolution of class boundaries. A March 1760 issue of the Lady's Magazine contained a letter to the editor warning that tradesmen's daughters were being given unrealistic expectations about their futures insofar as they were returning home from school, "having had an education suitable to a gentleman's daughter of a thousand pounds a year, or more" (253).

Advocates of teachers took aim at parents, and mothers in particular. An anonymous play entitled The Governess: Or, The Boarding School Dissected (1785) uses a student prefect as a spokesperson: Miss Wisely cites "bad maternal education" as Mrs. Teachwell's greatest problem when inheriting students. The deficient mother is epitomized by Mrs. Dullbright, who arrives at Teachwell's academy complaining because her husband, a judge, has brought home "a monstrous little thing called a microscope" (25). The play faults mothers not only for academic ignorance, but also for shunting child rearing onto domestic servants and for paying teachers "a pittance,"

²¹ Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children 1749-1820 76.

so that only inferior ones are drawn to the vocation (61). Boarding School Dissected takes the unusual step of recommending that teachers be certified by a board of authorities. Parents are urged to acknowledge that "riches and fortune, without education, is like religion without morality," and to consider creating a standardized system for female education (75).

Despite this rare type of appeal favoring rational reforms, anxieties over rampant sexual activity at schools emerged as yet another reason for keeping girls close to home. Thomas D'Urfey's 1691 comedy Love for Money or the Boarding School depicts the crude Mrs. Crowstich supervising an unruly flock of girls. They are dirty, gluttonous, and susceptible to advances of lascivious male tutors who work at the academy for one reason alone. Mrs. Crowstich's charges are shown gorging on sweets, but actual girls, according to educational historians, often returned home emaciated (Kamm 135). Daniel Defoe's 1697 essay "An Academy for Women" insisted that rigorous controls were required to prevent male predators from using "fraud or force" to insinuate themselves onto the premises of schools.²² Hannah More expressed a similar concern over elopements from boarding schools; Mrs. More apparently tried to rescue a poor heiress, who at age fourteen was "trepanned" away

²² Defoe 291. Defoe differed from Astell insofar as his proposed seminary was secular and groomed women to become superior wives and companions. Astell envisioned her school as a refuge for women who wanted to remain celibate. For Defoe's views on female education, university education, and Dissenting academies, see D. P. Leinster-Mackay, The Educational World of Daniel Defoe. Like Henry Fielding, Defoe's attitudes toward women have been debated; see Shirlene Mason's Daniel Defoe and the Status of Women.

from her academy and carried abroad.²³ Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) perceived a sexual threat in the coexistence of females: Wollstonecraft hinted that lesbian activities might occur if girls were left together unsupervised.²⁴

The alternative to boarding schools was home teaching, but few mothers had been adequately educated to assume this responsibility, even if they found the time. Hester Thrale exemplifies the extraordinary maternal teacher. Her observations can be found in The Children's Book, a chronicle she wrote to detail her offsprings' development.²⁵ Her oldest daughter, nicknamed "Queeney," was born in 1764. A prodigy, Queeney was examined in 1771 by Mr. Bright, headmaster of the Abingdon Grammar School. Bright determined that "had the Examination passed in Latin, she would have been qualified for a Degree in the University of Oxford." Thrale took tremendous pride in teaching Queeney, disparaged most boarding schools, and did

²³ Gardiner's English Girlhood at School refers to Hannah More's concern that girls were being "trepanned" away from school (235). Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, in Women's Lives and the Eighteenth Century Novel, notes "The actual frequency of elopements is undocumented, but runaway marriages were enough of a threat to prompt the Marriage Act of 1754, which made such unions illegal in England" (67).

²⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft attacks female boarding schools for cultivating immodesty in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman 165-66.

²⁵ Mary Hyde, The Thrales of Streatham Park 42. Hyde includes passages from The Children's Book. Also see Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale 1776-1809 1: 159 for her views on the poor state of female education. For a description of Thrale's intellectual nurturing of others, see Martine Watson Brownley, "Under Some Woman's Dominion: The Friendship of Samuel Johnson and Hester Thrale." William McCarthy writes about Thrale's desire to be "a mother and a writer" in Hester Thrale Piozzi 27.

not send a daughter away until after the birth of her sixth child. Mrs. Thrale, however, was unusual. Having received a rigorous childhood education with the help of Arthur Collier, an advocate and son of an Oxford don, she was equipped to instruct her children in a manner that most mothers were not. Elizabeth Hamilton, in her Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (1801-02), wrote poignantly about the average mother, who was shamed by a lack of training:

She is solicitous for the improvement of the genius in which she glories; every step which the child advances in the path of knowledge, is a degradation to the mother in its esteem. Her admonitions are without weight, her injunctions without authority.²⁶

Hamilton indicates that while a mother might survive a son's condescension by taking pride in his later accomplishments, "if it be a daughter, whom she has thus taught to look down upon her, deep and many will be the wounds of her heart!" (2: 248-49). Although Hamilton insisted that serious education be awarded to females, regardless of age, most parents were squeamish, for they had been given many reasons why their daughters might benefit from fashionable skills and saw less reason to expose these progeny to "masculine" subjects. As a result, throughout the 1700s drawing room skills were offered to girls in lieu of academic subjects. This practice was dictated by parents' economic, social, and emotional concerns; it was reinforced in

²⁶ Hamilton, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (2: 248). Gary Kelly analyzes Hamilton's relationship to "Revolutionary feminism" in Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827 165-305. He aligns Hamilton's Letters with Catherine Macaulay's Letters on Education (1790) rather than with Hannah More's Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799).

conduct books which informed female readers that intellectual aspirations were "selfish" (Armstrong 48).

Female Education and the Question of Nature or Nurture

Perhaps the most debated pedagogical issue of the century was whether women were intellectually inferior to men or had been handicapped by insufficient training. The debate appeared to be a philosophical one; nonetheless, it was in large part economically determined. The natural "tenderness" of body and intellect attributed to women became the rationale for denying them educational rights, along with political and legal power. Female pedagogues of the late 1600s understood this and refused to see themselves as intellectually different from men; rather, they perceived widespread discrimination. Hannah Wolley commented in The Gentlewoman's Companion (1675): "Most in this depraved later Age think a woman learned and wise enough if she can distinguish her husband's bed from another's" (34). Wolley acerbically suggests that women were deliberately being deprived in order to reinforce "the towering conceits of our insulting Lords and Masters" (2). Judith Drake adopts the same tone in An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696), where she explains that men "slavishly depress" women out of "fear that they may at one time become strong or courageous enough to make themselves equal to, if not Superior to their Masters" (38). These texts exhibit the anger that some women felt about their subordination, while also demonstrating that men's low opinions of them had hardly been internalized.

Mrs. Makin's An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues (1673) challenged the view that "To offer to the World the liberal Education of Woman is to deface the Image of God in Man, it will make Women so high, and men so low, like Fire in the House-top, it will set the whole world in a Flame" (3). Makin's language suggests the volatility of her subject matter; implied is the idea that men viewed female education in terms of Armageddon. Mary Astell's A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest (1694) differentiates between "Good Men" who care about female education and those who "deny us the means of improvement" (14). Astell notified readers that educated French women read Descartes and Malebranche, thereby furnishing their minds with philosophy. Ironically, Malebranche, author of La Recherche de la Vérité (1674), suggested that women were intellectually inferior to men due to their more sensitive "brain fibers" which resulted in a diminished capacity to learn (Gardiner 271). Nonetheless, it pleased Astell that French women were at least allowed to initiate literary salons and to study philosophical writings. Lady Chudleigh's anonymous poem The Ladies Defence (1701) is most explicit: "Debarred from knowledge, banished from the schools / And with the utmost industry bred fools," writes Chudleigh, emphatic in her belief that frivolity was "bred" into women.²⁷

²⁷ In Eighteenth Century Women Poets, Roger Lonsdale introduces Chudleigh as an admirer of Mary Astell, with whom she corresponded. Also see Chudleigh's 1710 An Essay on Knowledge for further protests about strictures against women.

Most eighteenth-century men, except for those like Daniel Defoe who had been educated in Dissenting circles and believed that women were "generally Quick and Sharp," regarded women as inherently inferior and designed for some purpose other than learning.²⁸ Roy Porter, in English Society in the Eighteenth Century, offers the prevailing view:

The basic assumption governing relations between the sexes, underpinning attitudes and institutions and backed ultimately by law, was that men and women were naturally different in capacity and so ought to play distinct social roles. (23)

The Abbé Fénelon, a French seventeenth-century cleric whose work was popular in England, articulated the belief that women were defective by nature and needed corrective, moral education. His Traité de l'éducation des filles (1687), translated into English by the Reverend George Hickes as Instructions for the Education of a Daughter (1707), came out in numerous editions throughout the century.²⁹ A chapter entitled "Remarks on Some of the faults of Girls" outlines

²⁸ Defoe praises women's natural abilities in his essay, "An Academy for Women" in An Essay on Projects (293). For analysis of the impact of Dissenting schools, see W. H. G. Armytage, Four Hundred Years of English Education. Roy Porter writes about the role of Nonconformists in English political life in English Society in the Eighteenth Century 180-84; Janet Todd refers to their support of women's writing in The Sign of Angellica 196-97.

²⁹ See Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, Fénelon on Education introd. H. C. Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966). The text contains Traité de l'éducation des filles (1687), translated into English by Reverend George Hickes as Instructions for the Education of a Daughter (London, 1707), and reissued in England in 1708, 1713, 1750 and abridged in 1752. Vivian Jones notes Fénelon's popularity with English readers (99), as does Robert Mayo in The English Novel in the Magazines 1740-1815 182. Reverend Hickes was a patron to Elizabeth Elstob and preached a sermon in 1684 advocating the creation of female colleges (Stenton 188). His personal views seem more progressive than those of Fénelon; H. C. Barnard calls attention to their differing religious

intrinsic female flaws: weakness, inquisitiveness, vanity, and artifice. Fénelon states that girls, left on their own, "take readiness of speech and vivacity of imagination for intelligence." Fénelon identifies women's natural strengths as a talent for "Industry, Neatness and Oeconomy" (4). Male vices are said to proceed from bad maternal education or passions provoked by women. Fathers bear no responsibility for the education of either sex; mothers are condemned for ruining their children.

A Mother who passes her time in Gaming, at the Play-house, or in indecent Conversations, very gravely complains she is not able to find a Governess capable of breeding up her Daughter. But what Education can be good for Daughters in the sight of such a Mother? (282)

Fénelon advocated utilitarian training: "The limits of a woman's learning--like that of a Man--should be determined by her duties" (75). He therefore recommends teaching girls reading, writing, the scriptures, and enough arithmetic to prevent them from mismanaging household finances. Classical languages are deemed superfluous and modern languages discouraged for cultivating a taste in novel reading. Fundamental dangers to a woman's health, the Abbé indicates, arise from a female propensity toward passion and imagination.

Women reformers, from Fielding to Edgeworth, found more of an ally in John Locke, whose Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) directly challenged the concept of inherent human nature. Wrote Locke: "The Difference to be found in the Manners and Abilities of Men, is owing more to their Education than to anything

affiliations by means of partial explanation.

else" (137-38). His treatise went through fifteen editions by 1777 (Lawson and Silver 176). Locke's rationalist, secularized perspective represented each individual, regardless of gender, as a blank slate to be inscribed by education. Written in "clear, simple prose," his Thoughts recommended that learning could occur without the use of rote methods or corporal punishment.³⁰ Locke wrote his treatise for a gentleman friend who was concerned about grooming his son for citizenship and fiscal responsibility, and his plan combines a recommended curriculum with practical suggestions on proper diet and exercise. Modern in his approach to early childhood training, Locke advised that children learn best when they perceive work as play. His concepts were based on the principle that children could be more readily socialized if their natural affection for adults was cultivated.

Although Locke was disinclined to argue about female defects, he does add the caveat that many of his recommendations "will not so perfectly suit the education of Daughters" (117). Mothers, who are instrumental in facilitating a son's education, receive greater attention than girls. Locke encourages mothers to teach their boys Latin two hours a day before they attend public school. Knowing how little education these women have had, he suggests teacher and student can learn simultaneously.

³⁰ The impact of Locke on education is discussed in John Lawson and Harold Silver, A Social History of Education in England. Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., comments on Locke's accessibility to readers in John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England 5. Pickering observes that Locke did not quote Greek or Latin, or make arcane references, as did many of his colleagues.

For she but buy a Latin Testament, and having got somebody to mark the last syllable but one where it is long, in Words above two Syllables (which is long enough to regulate her Pronunciation and Accenting the Words) read daily in the Gospels, and then let her avoid Understanding them in Latin if she can. (288)

Locke identifies appropriate texts for mutual study, including Aesop's Fables, Eutropius, and Justin, and advises mothers to teach their sons arithmetic, history, and geography as well. His paradigm of the maternal teacher inadvertently gave adult females the license to learn. The notion of the mother as a teacher of academic subjects is reiterated in The Ladies Library (1714), where the anonymous author recommends that mothers should learn curricula suited to "the first eight or ten Years of their [children's] lives" (2: 217). It is said that a diligent mother can stay a step ahead of her son in Latin, "by which means she will make her self the best Reparation that she can for her own past neglect in it, or that of her parents" (2: 218). This passage marks the uncommon use of the term "Reparation" in relation to women's educational neglect. Still, a fundamental disequilibrium exists, insofar as daughters are ignored and mothers and sons are made comparable pedagogical subjects. Granted academic prerogatives, mothers are told to educate themselves to the point of male adolescence.

The very concept of an educated female conjured up more than one image for men: Fénelon envisioned skillful household managers; Locke looked at underutilized mothers and saw them as potential educators of sons. At mid-century, other males indicated that erudition and the ability to write could be desirable in a woman; these protofeminist males also tacitly outlined the parameters for a learned lady's

ambitions: she was preferably to be a poet who wrote on innocent or pious subjects, her personal character had to be unimpeachable, and she could not write for money. Samuel Richardson's friend John Duncombe wrote The Femeinead (1751), praising "virtuous" lady poets, among them Katherine Philips, Elizabeth Carter, Lady Anne Winchilsea, and Elizabeth Rowe, all lauded for studiousness, talent, and tangible accomplishments.³¹ As Patrick Thomas observes, Katherine Philips, known as "The Matchless Orinda," was more than a poet to readers: "Orinda's poems were regarded as providing a suitable model for female behavior."³² The Femeinead juxtaposes these writers with Delarivier Manley, Susannah Centlivre, and Aphra Behn, alleged by Duncombe to have produced immodest plays and memoirs. In 1752, George Ballard's Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain; Who Have Been Celebrated for Their Writings and Skill in the Learned Languages, Arts, and Sciences was published by subscription, and he, too, set forth the terms for female erudition and writing.³³ Ballard's subjects were respectable and religious women, generally "martyrs of the Church of England or staunch Anglicans"; among them were Lady Masham, Anne Killigrew, and Mary Astell (Perry 12). Ballard praised Astell for her

³¹ John Richetti writes about Duncombe's virtuous Mrs. Rowe in Popular Fiction before Richardson 1700-1739 240-43. Rowe is the "ornament of her sex" (243). Mary Scott expanded the "worthies" to include a writer such as Sarah Fielding in The Female Advocate, a 1774 poem in praise of literary women that was "occasioned" by The Femeinead.

³² Patrick Thomas, introd. to The Collected Works of Katherine Philips 1: 24.

³³ In her introduction to the reprint of Ballard's Memoires, Ruth Perry notes that his compilation was unique insofar as his subjects were commoners as well as aristocrats. "Like him, they were self-educated and self motivated" (13). Ballard did, however, favor those who wrote devotional literature.

desire to educate women. He also praised her "abstinence" in which "few or none ever surpassed her" (391).

Romanticism provided yet another point of view about women and education. Jean-Jacques Rousseau promoted the model of virtuous but tempting womanhood in his famous educational manifesto Émile (1762), where the ideal wife is envisioned as a wife/mistress whose academic education is left to a better educated husband. Émile remained widely read and quoted throughout the latter half of the century; it became a lightning rod for women writing during the 1780s and 90s, among them Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Clara Reeve.³⁴ In The Progress of Romance (1785), Reeve's reaction to "Emilius" was that the book did "more harm" than "good" (2: 19). Rousseau uses his pedagogical manifesto to remind readers that "a brilliant wife is a plague to her husband, her children, her friends, her valets, everyone" (409). During an era in which the above-mentioned women wanted to institute more rigorous programs of study, Émile demands that "all the reflections of women ought to be directed to the study of men" (386).

³⁴ In A Vindication of the Rights of Woman Wollstonecraft protests Rousseau's depiction of women as "wild chimeras" (39). According to Samuel Pickering, in The Moral Tradition in English Fiction, Hannah More objected to Rousseau's emphasis on "personal feeling above duty." Elizabeth Hamilton's Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education disputes Rousseau's and Lord Kames' shared belief that girls primarily wished "to be agreeable" (1: 381). Elizabeth Carter complained in a letter to Mrs. Montagu (Sept. 11, 1774) that Rousseau had "a bewildered understanding, a singular temper, and a spirit which seems impatient of all social restraints"; see Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Montagu 2: 279.

Structured as five books and devoted to "the art of forming men," Émile isolates phases of a boy's growth. The male protagonist is educated by a tutor; parents are supportive but less significant. Rousseau adapts some of Locke's pragmatic ideas although, as Jacqueline Rose observes, Rousseau deemphasizes early book learning and allows only Robinson Crusoe to the child.³⁵ Émile receives no formal education before age twelve, when his reason has developed. At fifteen, he is taught geography, astronomy, and physics. By age twenty, Émile is ready for society.

Like Locke's Thoughts, Émile marginalizes the girl as pedagogical subject. Book V describes the upbringing of Sophie, Émile's intended bride; she is cast in the image of Fénelon's demure Antiope from The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses. Instructions for the Education of a Daughter offers a description of Antiope as a post-script to the education of Telemachus:

What in her charms me is her Silence, her Modesty, her Reservedness, her assiduous Industry in embroidery and working of wool, her Application in managing her Father's House since her Mother's Death, her contempt of gaudy Apparel, her overlooking her own Beauty.
(7)

Antiope is a quiet creature whose virtue is manifest as service to a patriarch; self-denial insures the heroine's importance. As a successor to Antiope, Sophie possesses

³⁵ Jacqueline Rose, The Case of Peter Pan: Or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction 49-55. Rose compares Émile and Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton in terms of children and the written word; Peter Coveney, The Image of Childhood 43-47, evaluates Émile as a new approach to childhood. Geoffrey Summerfield explains why Rousseau recommended that boys read Daniel Defoe's "handbook for survival" and notes the polarized feelings Émile engendered (118; 119).

more natural gaiety, but her mother teaches her to become deferential and modest. Sophie is pretty but not beautiful, "loves adornment and is an expert at it," and has been raised to know "the labors of her own sex," which include sewing, cooking, and lace making (5: 393-94). Sophie is deliberately kept ignorant and valued for her lack of book learning.

Her mind does not know, but is cultivated for learning; it is a well-prepared soil that only awaits seed in order to bear fruit. She has read no other books than Barreme and Telemachus, which fell into her hands by chance. (5: 410)

Rousseau exalts piecemeal female education, linking it to forms of fertility. Sophie is described as intellectually fecund, with her mind like "well-prepared soil." As a bride, she is ripe for sexual initiation; eventually it is hoped her womb will also prove fecund. The metaphor of the bride as earth and the husband as tiller holds multiple meanings, all intimating a sensual pleasure to be derived from man's intellectual and sexual cultivation of woman.

Émile, which attracted the attention of English pedagogues like Thomas Day and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, demonstrates just how significantly plans for male and female education might diverge. The male student is awarded an insightful tutor who mediates between private and public spheres; he makes the young man worldly while steering him clear of corruption. Fénelon's *Telemachus* also has a wise "Mentor" who introduces him to a world beyond his home. By contrast, Sophie and Antiope are sequestered: regulated exclusively by parents, they are denied books, taught domestic arts, and kept apart from society. Sophie is trained to become the mirror image of her mother; Antiope literally becomes her deceased mother's

substitute. The female paragon is fused with her mother at precisely the moment when Émile and Telemachus are seen becoming more their own persons. Mary Poovey, in The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer, observes that conduct books encouraged females "to think of themselves collectively--not as a political unit, or as beings possessed of individual talents, capacities, or rights" (27). Both Rousseau's voluptuous feminine ideal and the less sensual English conduct-book exemplar are not allowed to differentiate themselves from other women. This equips them to fulfill socially designated roles, with an essential female nature becoming the rationale for the limited types of education these paragons are offered.

Historians have described England, after 1740, as a country in the grip of rapid economic expansion. Social and professional boundaries began yielding to pressure as once landed aristocrats formed alliances with those who had newly acquired wealth and status. Lawrence Stone coins the phrase "affective individualism" to describe the accompanying shift toward nuclear families and companionate marriage, both emblematic of a rising middle class.³⁶ An increased emphasis on the companionate marriage produced some positive changes in late-century female education. Hester Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773), written to a favored niece, captures the essence of the companionate

³⁶ Lawrence Stone, in The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800, relates changing definitions of marriage to shifts in the English economy. This is not to suggest that companionate marriage took shape after 1740; Daniel Defoe wrote about it in 1693. See Nancy Armstrong's chapter "The Rise of the Domestic Woman" in Desire and Domestic Fiction 59-95 for assessment of the middle-class "sexual contract" as an "economic contract."

wife: she is a woman who marries for "real and permanent friendship" and whose knowledge gives pleasure to her husband and insight to her children.³⁷ This woman is well trained academically, but her talents must be used strictly for the benefit of her family. Chapone encourages her niece to study European, English, and ancient history, as well as geography, "Chronology," and Romance languages; Virgil and Homer are to be read in translation. While insisting that girls receive well-rounded educations, Chapone denounces female pedantry. She does so out of a protective impulse, explaining that erudition is likely to incite "envy in one sex and jealousy in the other" (156-57). Mrs. Chapone dedicated her book to her friend, the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu; at the same time, she felt compelled to warn readers that a bluestocking might forfeit female friendship and marriage.

Hester Chapone and a male conduct-book author such as Dr. John Gregory had differing conceptions of female nature. Despite this, both predicated their ideas on the premise that virtually all middle-class girls married. Dr. Gregory, in his A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (1774), posits marriage as a woman's greatest

³⁷ Chauncey Brewster Tinker notes: "The book was put into the hands of every young girl from Princess Royal downwards," The Salon and English Letters 178. Tinker provides a interesting comparison of French salons and English bluestocking salons, the latter representing "the classicism of English literature" (212). Sylvia Harcstark Myers writes on Chapone and female education in The Bluestocking Circle 229-39, alluding to her compromise between domesticity and scholasticism.

source of comfort and delight.³⁸ He instructs his daughters on what to look for in a husband:

There is a different species of men whom you may like as agreeable companions, men of worth, taste and genius, whose conversation, in some respects, may be superior to what you generally meet with among your own sex. (70)

While Chapone maintains the importance of female friendship, Dr. Gregory urges his daughters to disregard the weaker sex and to seek out men whose "genius" would complement their delicacy and refinement. Regardless of motive, neither work addressed the growing reality that many women remained unmarried and had to survive without inheritances. After 1775, the median age of marriage increased, as did the number of men who stayed bachelors (Figs 38). Husbands and suitors were lost in the war between England and France. Furthermore, the French Revolution led to increased concern in England over the fate of the laboring poor as well as their potential for militancy. As result of these circumstances, long suppressed economic issues came to the fore in educational treatises written during the 1790s. Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Priscilla Wakefield, and Mary Ann Radcliffe openly acknowledged that many women were destitute and some were forced into prostitution. Child prostitution was also an issue, given a consent age of twelve (Leslie-Melville 123). While the issue of prostitution is alluded to in plays, novels, and articles published throughout the century, tracts on education offered a solution,

³⁸ Other representative conduct books are James Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women and Thomas Girborne's An Inquiry into the Dutie of the Female Sex. For discussions of conduct books and their cultural significance, see studies by Nancy Armstrong, Linda C. Hunt, Ruth Yeazell, and Rita Goldberg.

claiming that academic proficiency would afford women a chance to obtain more respectable means of self-support. Male Dissenters such as Joseph Johnson and William Godwin, who were sympathetic to the revolutionary cause, and to women's rights, assisted several of these reforming women in getting these ideas published.

The concept of coeducation was raised in some of these more daring manuals. Catharine Macaulay lobbied for coeducation in her Letters on Education (1790), advising mothers not to segregate sons from daughters but to "let their sports and studies be the same." She contended that individuals should be "unshackled to the old rules" and even recommended that boys learn how to sew as an alternative to hunting (61). Town and Country (January 1791) praised her book, and particularly Macaulay's rejection of corporal punishment (7-8). Wollstonecraft promoted coeducation in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman in order to arrest the development of "early debaucheries" in males and "indolence" in females (169). Both of these authors viewed the combination of academic training and physical activity as antidotes to false conceptions of life instilled in girls through a diet of romances taken from boarding school cupboards and circulating libraries.

Women's financial vulnerability and their disenchantment with marriage were expressed more visibly during this period than at any other time during the 1700s. Clara Reeve, in The School for Widows (1791), describes marriage as a precarious state for those who could become widowed, face abandonment, or find their fortunes

dissipated by irresponsible husbands.³⁹ Her Plans of Education (1792) recommended a two-tier work/study program which would have enabled less affluent girls to be taught alongside their more privileged counterparts.⁴⁰ Reeve outlined fourteen practical vocations for students, from millinery work to horticulture. She assured readers that her goal was to institute vocational training for girls lacking inheritances. Practicing a form of "instrumental femininism," Reeve denied any desire to have girls enter law, medicine, or the clergy (Browne 6).

Wakefield's Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex proposed that men, by appropriating teaching positions, were denying subsistence to women, some of whom found themselves on "paths which lead to infamy" (66). Demanding that girls be protected from "the wanton eye of a dancing master," Wakefield actually tried to prevent women from being "reduced to misery through want of employment" (51). Wakefield took preconceived notions about "female delicacy" and tried to shame men into opening up more vocations to women; she reminded readers that women, alone, made suitable undertakers for female bodies. Mary Ann Radcliffe's The Female Advocate: Or, An Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation (1799) reiterated the point that men were usurping women's occupations;

³⁹ Writes the widowed Rachel Strickland, delivered from a bad marriage, "I am restored to liberty by the death of my husband" (12). Her friend, the widowed Mrs. Frances Darnford, whose husband exhausts his fortune and then dies, opens "A School for Female Children." For both women, widowhood is financially precarious, but liberates them.

⁴⁰ Class distinctions are deeply ingrained in all of these texts. Reeve believed, as did Mary Wollstonecraft, Priscilla Wakefield, and many others, that education should be adapted "to the situation of the pupils" (Plans of Education 111).

she dramatized the plight of indigent women by quoting from The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House (1760), a fiction written by Sarah Fielding in support of this charitable institution.⁴¹ Mary Hays, in her Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women (1798), raised the question, "why are not men made ashamed of monopolizing trades . . .?" (201). All these writers related education to women's economic survival and to their self-esteem.

Hays and Wollstonecraft, made vulnerable by their gender and also by their Jacobin sympathies, faced personal attacks for recommending school and curricula reform. Richard Polwhele's poem The Unsex'd Females (1798) denounced Wollstonecraft, boarding schools, and the study of botany as a violation of "female modesty."⁴² Polwhele exalted "the timid blush of virgin fame" while condemning

⁴¹ Radcliffe cites material from a book she calls The Magdalen: Or, A History of the First Penitents Received into that Charitable Asylum; the actual title is The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House as Supposed to be Related by Themselves. The book bore no signature, but in a 1759 letter from Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, the former refers to "the Penitents" as being "chiefly written by your friend Mrs. Fielding" 4: 216. Further discussion of the text can be found in T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography 463-65. On July 14, 1757, Sir John Fielding in the Public Advertiser announced he would publish a pamphlet containing a "Plan for Preserving Girls"; see Leslie-Melville for a description of his philanthropic activities which may have been relevant to Sarah Fielding's authorship of The Histories (123-27).

⁴² Polwhele 13. In Gina Luria's introduction to Radcliffe's The Female Advocate, she refers to Polwhele's poem as an "index to . . . the main feminine offenders against Anglican Orthodoxy and anti-French patriotism during the 1790s." Amelia Opie's Adeline Mowbray (1802) bases its heroine on Mary Wollstonecraft and shows the condemnation she receives for not believing in marriage. Adeline is ruined by an eccentric mother who is overly impressed with "Mr. Locke on the Conduct of Human Understanding" (11).

Wollstonecraft for wanting girls to "speak of the organs of generation as freely as mention our eyes or our hands." The English social order is seen collapsing upon a girl's exposure to zoology and physical education. His theme of female modesty became a scrim for his anti-Jacobinism: Polwhele praised Barbauld's poetry, but condemned her for writing "political tracts" (17). Related attacks can be seen in Elizabeth Hamilton's Memoirs of the Modern Philosophers (1800); Hamilton lampoons Mary Hays through her parody of Bridgetina, a woman who has read "every book in the circulating library" with a concentration on "novels and metaphysics."⁴³ A totally unoriginal thinker, Bridgetina spouts jargon she appropriates from Rousseau and Godwin. Eleanor Ty suggests that, by using satire, Hamilton appropriates "a masculine means of controlling a disruptive female" (26). It must, however, be noted that Hamilton's Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, which derided female "champions of sexual equality" for caring about "employment and avocations," also erupted over "the humiliating picture of female imbecility" put forth by men who believed women were naturally vain and lacked judgment (1: 254; 2: 390). Hamilton challenged Rousseau and Lord Kames, claiming she was "skeptical" about their ideas pertaining to "specific differences between the instincts of the two sexes" (1: 382). Richard Polwhele genuinely did not want to see

⁴³ Hamilton 4. Margaret Anne Doody discusses Bridgetina Botherim in relation to Mary Hays in Frances Burney: The Life in the Works 337-38. Doody compares Bridgetina to the fictive Elinor Joddrel in The Wanderer: Or, Female Difficulties, noting Burney's more nuanced depiction of a woman with radical sympathies. In her dramatic attempts at suicide, Elinor also resembles Mary Wollstonecraft.

a change in the status of women and expressed annoyance that Anna Barbauld had elected to write "political tracts" instead of poetry (17). Hamilton, by contrast, wanted to determine "how women could assume power without losing their moral stature" (Thaddeus 281).

A schoolteacher, widely read author, and member of the Sunday School Movement, Hannah More won Polwhele's praise. The evangelical thinker deplored fashionable education; her Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799) condemns the spate of "superficial wives" and "incompetent and illiterate governesses" produced by boarding schools and neglect. Although More and Wollstonecraft applied many of the same invectives to frivolous ladies, More glorifies England as a country where "our sex enjoys the blessing of liberal instruction, of reasonable laws, of a pure religion" (3). Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, saw nothing remotely "reasonable" about English law as it pertained to women. More's only novel, Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1808), written to dramatize the concepts behind her Strictures, finds Coelebs seeking a virtuous young lady who can "modestly discriminate between the beauties of Virgil and Milton."⁴⁴ Coelebs and Sir John disdain the "technical woman," identified as someone "always dabbling in chemistry and who came to the dinner table with dirty hands from the laboratory" (2: 151-52). At tea, the men discuss which is worse: a learned lady or a "scientific one." More's

⁴⁴ Katharine Rogers notes that Coelebs went through "eleven editions in nine months" (Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England 34). Davidoff and Hall in Family Fortunes also cite the popularity of Coelebs (158). Beth Fowkes Tobin looks at Evangelism and the domestic heroine in "Mansfield Park, Hannah More, and the Evangelical Redefinition of Virtue" in Superintending the Poor 74-97.

paragon, Lucilla Stanley, is a self-effacing teacher who studies classical languages and texts privately with her father. Beth Fowkes Tobin characterizes her as "a product of Christian discipline" who manifests neither "vanity, greed" nor "sexual desire" (*Superintending* 83; 80). Lucilla's knowledge of the classics is a closely guarded secret; it is only gradually revealed to Coelebs when he is acknowledged as her prospective husband.

The preoccupation with female modesty throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England has been analyzed by Ruth Yeazell and Linda C. Hunt, both of whom examine conduct-book rhetoric. Yeazell writes that blushes, viewed as "involuntary" reflexes, proved a heroine was "innocent of pretense or manipulation," while also promising "her ardent surrender" at a future date (72-73; 74). But treatises and novels on education also conveyed messages about female modesty; the blushing Lucilla signifies the sexual aspects of male mentoring. Much as Rousseau preferred to think about the female mind in terms of virgin soil, Mr. Stanley cultivates his daughter, initiating her into academic subjects beyond the purview of the mother, after which Lucilla is passed along to the son-in-law whom Mr. Stanley hand-picks. Lucilla blushes when Coelebs discovers that she knows Latin: in this way, a sexual significance is given to the daughter's faintly illicit knowledge of "masculine" languages and literature.

At the turn of the century, More recasts the romantic feminine ideal as an erudite young woman who guards her knowledge as carefully as her chastity. Literary discourse suggests that not one but two forms of female desire provoked those who

sought to regulate it: female sexuality was one source of discomfort and academic accomplishment, another. During the early 1800s, Mary Russell Mitford resurrects Rousseau's Sophie by presenting the ideal bride as a seductive child of nature. "Cousin Mary," a story in Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery (1824-32), makes female education seem irrelevant. "Cousin Mary" concerns a widow's daughter who is kept at home due to the widow's attachment to her child. The girl, who spends most of her time outdoors, acquires basic skills but is never formally educated. Mitford lauds the child of nature as a product of "the let alone system" (1: 93). Her books consist solely of the Bible and works by Richardson and Shakespeare. Domestic artistry is stressed: "muslin and net were her canvas." Unlike her boarding school counterparts who speak stilted English, the heroine's speech is uncontrived. The country girl's ways are so refreshing that the narrator speculates her example will tempt most parents "to turn masters and governesses out of doors."

Eventually, this delicious "romp" becomes governess to the family of a widowed Welsh baronet (1: 95). She is an abysmal governess, but the older baronet is so taken with her spontaneity that he proposes marriage. A sanguine, tongue-in-cheek narrator concludes, "Her post of tutoress had at least done her no harm, whatever might have been the case with her pupils" (1: 98). Mitford trivializes education and presents what might have been the most dangerous image of all: that of a female who is unschooled, vocationally incompetent, and therefore devastatingly attractive to the baronet who does not make her his mistress, as Mr. Rochester was later to propose of a distressed Jane Eyre in the eponymous novel of 1847. Mitford's

courtly baronet insists upon marrying his employee. This recurrent myth of the sensual woman/child and her adoring suitor flattered women, while keeping them uneducated, financially dependent, and sexually vulnerable. Such visions were even less beneficial to women than paradigms of the efficient household manager, the maternal educator of sons, the companionate wife who lived through her family, and the obedient disciple of an erudite patriarch.

The Vexed Position of the Woman Writer

The situation of the woman writer during the eighteenth century is critical to an appreciation of the texts I will examine. She confronted actual hardships, often having to support others as well as herself in a society which restricted her educational possibilities and limited her vocational prospects. The debate over women's nature versus the effects produced by nurture had an insidious effect upon these writers as well. Discourses aimed at crystallizing definitions of masculinity and femininity affected these writers' self-definitions, making it difficult for them to locate subject positions as authors. Women were ambivalent about writing for publication: some, like Wollstonecraft, expressed anger toward women who had failed to distinguish themselves and to counteract stereotypes. Then there were those like Sarah Fielding and Elizabeth Inchbald who apologized to readers for having the temerity to write: the former pleaded financial distress in her preface to The Adventures of David Simple; the latter expressed contrition in her preface to A Simple Story because she was not an author of the "first rank." J. M. S. Tompkins

states that these types of apologies were pro forma.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, women writers often questioned the authenticity of their talent, worried about how their work would be received, and felt compromised by an autodidacticism which left them open to attack once their writings were published.

Given strictures against female education, actual mother/daughter, father/daughter, and, on some occasions, brother/sister relationships were vexed. It was not uncommon for a literary daughter to find that she was hampered by her mother's lack of book learning or reluctance to violate conduct-book codes. Others were at the mercy of patriarchal mentors who furnished them with knowledge, but regulated its use with the stringency of Mr. Stanley in Coelebs. Some had literary fathers or brothers; while these women may have enjoyed sharing ideas with male relations, their works and abilities were both tacitly and explicitly compared to those of men who had the benefit of university educations. An unfair system engendered unfair practices. The Life and Writings of Mrs. Trimmer (1814) provides one such example. Sarah was sent to boarding school in Ipswich where she perfected her handwriting. Her younger brother attended Westminster; lacking his sister's literary aptitude, he relied on Sarah to write some of his compositions (10). Memoirs give evidence of sibling resentments, and many are tinged with sadness. In The Life of Mrs. Sherwood (1857), Mary Butt recalls feeling bereft when her brother Marten, who was close in age, left for Westminster: "From the time at which my brother went

⁴⁵ Tompkins refers to the many excuses women offered for writing in The Popular Novel in England 117-18, as does Katharine Rogers in Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England 24.

to school," she wrote, "he never could be to me what he was before" (ed. Darton 35). When she visited him at Oxford she experienced acute discomfort and described being anxious to move on.

Educated women commonly learned with assistance from uncles, fathers, or older brothers; therefore, male mentors had the potential to assume a disproportionate significance in their lives. Felicity Nussbaum has identified how, in private diaries and journals, eighteenth-century women "were inevitably caught in mimicking male definitions of themselves."⁴⁶ Attempting to locate coherent subject positions, memoirists employed divergent strategies:

They may assume a position that implies moral or spiritual superiority; they may speak their own denigration and collude in their subjugation; or they may attempt to disrupt the ideology of gender by disguising themselves as males. (155)

Nussbaum focuses on Hester Thrale's journals, where the multi-faceted intellectual is often self-deprecating. The strategies identified hold true for other women's memoirs of the period. Disruptions in "the ideology of gender" can be seen in A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke (1755), where the novelist, playwright, and cross-dressing actress who was Colley Cibber's youngest child boasts of her unconventional upbringing.⁴⁷ Explaining that her experience was more like that of a "son" than a "daughter," Charke points out her love of hunting, horses, and guns. She mocks her use of the needle "which I handle with the same clumsiness

⁴⁶ Nussbaum, The Private Self 154.

⁴⁷ Charke 17. Charke also spent two years at M. Flahaut's boarding school, where she studied Latin and Italian, at the headmaster's request.

Awkwardness a Monkey does a Kitten, and am equally capable of using the one, as Pug is of nursing the other" (17). Domestic activities are not merely to be avoided: they jeopardize Charlotte's assumed masculine identity. Describing her family's belated attempt to domesticate her, Charlotte depicts her stay at the Thorly residence, where "I had the nicest examples of housewifely Perfections daily before me" (33). It is with embarrassment, but mainly with pride, that Charke explains no such "Perfections" wore off on the recalcitrant girl. Exposed to her relative Dr. Hale at Thorly, Charlotte becomes interested in "the study of Physick" (34). According to the memoirs, Dr. Hale allows Charlotte to assist him, and she takes to calling on local invalids, "which gave me a most pleasing opportunity of fancying myself a Physician."

Mrs. Charke's life and narrative were hardly typical. Sidonie Smith characterizes her as "sentimental penitent" and "female rogue"; Clare Brant suggests that "scandal" memoirs were more "vindications" than autobiographies.⁴⁸ Mrs. Charke was estranged from her father and may have been trying to justify her unconventional career by demonstrating Cibber's role in her character formation. But Charke's bold experience suggests what it must have been like for a more timorous female, concerned with social and familial acceptance, worried about self-support, bereft of female role models, and desiring an education she could only

⁴⁸ Smith 104. See Clare Brant's essay, "Speaking of Women: Scandal and the Law in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in Women, Texts and Histories, ed. Brant and Diane Purkiss 258. Brant sees Charke's narrative as a plea to her estranged father.

pursue covertly. Patricia M. Spacks, who has written about Thrale and Charke, suggests that, generally, eighteenth-century memoirs by women reflect "the female apology, heavily tinged with resentment, for the life of the mind."⁴⁹ In Charke's case, the author balks at the physical, academic, and vocational prohibitions imposed upon her during girlhood. All such restrictions were applicable to late eighteenth-century women writers as well, and they made their own types of emotional and intellectual concessions to this external world.

In terms of maternal influence, the paucity of educated mothers, or living mothers for that matter, left many girls without a tradition of female scholarship. Sarah Fielding's mother died when she was seven, and Edgeworth's mother when Maria was five. Mothers faced practical problems: Inchbald's uneducated mother had a large number of children to contend with as well as a husband who died when Elizabeth was seven. Women experienced crippling marital problems. Wollstonecraft's mother suffered at the hands of an abusive husband who appeared to be only concerned with educating his son to become a lawyer. Katharine Rogers, in Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England, speculates that "few" women authors had "strong, beloved mothers" because those who survived tried to impose "a conventional ego ideal" upon their girls (243). Rogers points to numerous inhibiting mothers depicted in novels by Jane Austen, Frances Sheridan, and Fanny Burney, intimating that negative characterizations of mothers in fiction may represent a writing daughter's revenge for past injustices. Marianne Hirsch reaches the same

⁴⁹ Spacks, Imagining a Self 78.

conclusion: in The Mother/Daughter Plot, she adds Mary Shelley, George Sand, the Brontës, George Eliot, and Kate Chopin to the list of novelists who left maternal figures "absent, silent, or devalued" (14).

Memoirs of the lives of "achieving" women confirm the supposition that mothers often imposed traditional values on promising girls, either due to envy or in response to social pressures. The Works of Hester Chapone contains a preface "By Her Own Family." Descendants tell how Hester Chapone showed signs of early genius. At age nine she composed a romance, "The Love of Amoret and Melissa." However, when her beautiful mother realized how clever Hester was, she deliberately withheld instruction. This deprivation did not end until Hester's mother died, at which time Hester took over management of the household and authorized herself to study French, Italian, and Latin. Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773) advises that foreign language study be made available to girls. Chapone even recommends Latin on a limited basis. She defends talented girls by insisting that those with a "genius" for ancient languages should be indulged in their desire to learn.

Other memoirs indicate that even class allegiances could be overlooked in mothers' attempts to suppress academically inclined daughters. Mary Somerville (1780-1872), nominated to the Royal Academy of Astronomers during the 1800s, was forced to acquire most of her education in secret. Her posthumously published Personal Recollections (1873), edited by one of Somerville's daughters, describes how her mother decided to limit her daughter's education to literacy and the keeping of

accounts. When a serving maid found Mary reading by candlelight, the maid informed her mother, who confiscated the candles. Instead of being allowed to read Euclid, a text Mary obtained from her brother's tutor, the girl was forced into a regimen of piano practice and clothes mending. Sent to visit relatives in Jedburgh one summer, Mary confided to her uncle that she had tried studying Latin on her own, but despaired because her brother and his friends appeared "superior to me in talent" (37). The sympathetic uncle began teaching the niece who had been thwarted by her mother, her aunt, and a female servant. Mary Somerville taught her own daughters higher mathematics and classical languages and wrote that she "later, got a master for them, that they might have a more perfect knowledge of these languages than I possessed" (157). Neither Hester Chapone nor Mary Somerville was willing to perpetuate academic neglect.

Sarah Pennington exemplifies a different case: she is a concerned and loving mother whose differences with a husband preclude her from directly transmitting her pedagogy. An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters (1773) alludes to a "long train of events" culminating in Pennington's ostracism from the household. Pennington advises her daughters to study "household oeconomy" in addition to English, French, perhaps Italian, English and European history, and geography (43). Cicero, Pope, and Epictetus are on Pennington's recommended reading list. She encourages her daughters to marry for love and states that, if they are told to marry for other reasons, it is permissible to defy the "absolute command of a father" (80). Unfortunately, the mother's sound advice is undercut by her exclusion from the

family unit as a result of her own defiance of patriarchal authority. This leaves her incapable of implementing either her ethical or her academic recommendations.

Books and manuals charged mothers with the responsibility for educating daughters. Nonetheless, Miriam Lerenbaum, who has studied the upbringings of prominent women writers of the period, concludes that "the role of their mothers was far more peripheral than that prescribed by educators."⁵⁰ Looking at the backgrounds of Maria Edgeworth, Clara Reeve, Frances Burney, and Anna Barbauld, among others, Lerenbaum discovers that it was fathers, often clergymen or teachers who possessed fine, private libraries, who crafted programs for their girls. An example of the pitfalls of patriarchal education can be seen in Jacob More's treatment of Hannah. Jacob More was headmaster of a boy's school; he educated all five of his daughters so that they might become teachers. Mr. More allowed Hannah to study classical languages, but curtailed her study of mathematics when Hannah proved to be adept at math and was enthusiastic about it.⁵¹ Hannah was

⁵⁰ Miriam Lerenbaum questions the values of particular authors in "Mistresses of Orthodoxy: Education in the Lives and Writings of Late Eighteenth-Century Women Writers"; for further analysis of the values held by Barbauld, Burney, and Edgeworth, see Irene Taylor and Gina Luria, "Gender and Genre: Women in British Romantic Literature," in What Manner of Woman, ed. Marlene Springer 98-123.

⁵¹ Jacob More's treatment of Hannah's education is described in Charlotte Yonge's Hannah More. Yonge writes that Jacob "was soon alarmed at the way in which she outstripped the boys" (14-15). Also see Mary Gwladys Jones' Hannah More 13. When the More sisters ran a boarding school, they taught reading, romance languages, and needlework and took girls to the theater for entertainment. This is documented in the Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, where Mary Robinson describes attending the More sisters' school and seeing productions like King Lear; the experience contributed to her interest in acting.

a precocious writer; she composed her first play, The Search after Happiness, "a Pastoral Drama for Young Ladies" (1773), at approximately age seventeen. One of four protagonists, Florissa states: "I scorn'd the Salique laws of pedant Schools, / which chained our genius down by tasteless rules" (84). Florissa craves Pope's "graces," Johnson's erudition, and Swift's wit. "I pin'd for passion, sentiment and style," claims the girl who wants to study Descartes and Euclid (14). Urania, the wise shepherdess, questions: "Wou'd she the priviledge of man invade?" (26). Urania counsels Florissa to become "a useful light" and not a "pompous glare" (26). Florissa apologizes and desists from further study or aspirations so that she might become "a perfect woman" (27). The youthful More argues against a female's desire to achieve academic excellence or demonstrate wit, insofar as it impinges on male territory. More was later to become recognized for her Cheap Repository Tracts (1795-98), which situated her in a political arena she felt was suitable for moral, middle-class women; it was her belief that women were well positioned to teach the poor about self-control and self-regulation.⁵²

Mary Alden Hopkins writes that Mores' school was near the Theatre Royal on King Street in Bristol (24). Although actresses were often viewed as glorified prostitutes, it was permissible for schoolgirls to attend the theater.

⁵² History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Beth Fowkes Tobin, includes two thought-provoking essays on More's relationship to the poor. See Kathryn Kirkpatrick's "Sermons and Strictures: Conduct-Book Propriety and Property Relations in Late Eighteenth-Century England" (198-226) and Mitzi Myers' "A Peculiar Protection: Hannah More and the Cultural Politics of the Blagdon Controversy" (227-57). Kirkpatrick sees More's career as a study in contradictions; Myers suggests it is more paradigmatic than paradoxical. Beth Fowkes Tobin writes about More's involvement in the Sunday School Movement, 106-16. Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., writes about the relationship of More's Cheap

Female students received mixed messages from male mentors who functioned as surrogate fathers. Mary Hamilton was censured by her guardian, William Napier, when she elected to study Latin and Greek. Napier told his ward not to send him any further letters written in either language (S. Myers 236). Mary Hamilton and Hannah More were taught they were talented enough to be cultivated, but their knowledge was carefully controlled, particularly when they took an interest in a "masculine" subject. Another example is that of Anna Barbauld, taught by her father, the Reverend John Aiken, on the fringes of Warrington Academy, a prominent school for Dissenters. Barbauld's activism can be seen in her Epistle to William Wilberforce (1791) protesting anti-abolitionists and her Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts (1790) demanding repeal of prohibitions against Nonconformists. Yet it was limited: when Elizabeth Montagu wrote to her about opening a college for ladies, Barbauld replied (c. 1774) that women learned best from "conversations with a father, brother or a friend."⁵³ Critics hint that Barbauld was hypocritical in not championing women's educational rights. However, rather than labelling Barbauld a conservative, which she was not, I would draw attention to the problem of giving females a classical education when

Repository Tracts to chapbooks in John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England 121-37.

⁵³ Mahl and Koon excerpt this letter (262-64). Barbauld's reservations about starting a college for women are alluded to in Bette Goldstone, Lessons to Be Learned 63. Barbauld actually believed that education should start at an early age and was concerned about waiting to teach girls during adolescence, when their priorities had to involve marriage and their future domesticity.

society rejected the idea. Barbauld had a few female pupils to whom she taught the works of Pope, Gibbon, and Boileau, but she did not teach them classical languages on the premise it was too time consuming (Mahl and Koon 267). During her girlhood, Barbauld had to persuade the Reverend Aiken to teach her Latin and Greek, after which she experienced a painful "intellectual isolation" (Luria and Taylor 103). As a teacher of girls, Barbauld took the middle ground: she put serious reading on her syllabus, but discouraged students from tackling the "masculine" classics. Nor were Barbauld's anxieties about masculine and feminine discourses unfounded: a Monthly Review article (Dec. 1773) on Aiken's Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose praised her as "a genius of the higher order" but complained because her compositions lacked "any peculiar touches of a feminine hand" (472).

Literary discourse corroborates the existence of these problems. Vicesimus Knox, in his Essays Moral and Literary (1785), highlights the plight of a daughter raised by an ideal patriarch, only to be dismissed by polite society. The daughter's daily two hours of Latin leads her to a fondness for the writings of Virgil and Horace. "I was enabled to drink at the fountain-head, while others were obliged to content themselves with the distant and polluted stream," the girl guiltily confesses, proud but disturbed because she has received knowledge denied others (22). Her widowed clergyman father teaches her French and Italian; he demands that she study astronomy and mathematics in addition to needlework and dancing. But he also encourages her neat appearance so that she will not resemble slatternly "literary ladies" (24). The daughter is cautioned against flaunting any of her superior talents.

Despite this seemingly optimal mix of classical, practical, and fashionable skills, the heroine meets opposition. "My own sex stand too much in awe of me to bear me any affect," the daughter complains, echoing Mrs. Chapone's fear that other females will feel estranged from the educated girl. Young men who "cannot reconcile the idea of female attraction and knowledge of the Greek" avoid her (24); this same issue is articulated in The Cry and other works by Sarah Fielding. Companionless and bereft of suitors, the well raised young lady embodies a middle-class parent's worst fears. Knox's essay suggests the educated female's problem of winning social acceptance on any terms.

As Nussbaum indicated, the woman writer of the 1700s sought refuge in several postures, and all were fraught with difficulty. She could disguise herself as male, as did Charlotte Charke, and repudiate domestic values in a manner that many, including her father, found offensive. The author could attempt to establish her "moral or spiritual superiority": Wollstonecraft did this by writing in a "disembodied state" in the hopes of circumventing the many problems associated with gender (Nussbaum 155; Poovey 80). Wollstonecraft came under intense personal attack during her own time as the result of her unconventional behavior, which readers used as an excuse to discredit her writing. Today, her "androgynous" literary voice is greeted with suspicion by feminist scholars. Nussbaum suggests that others were tempted to "speak their own denigration" and "collude in their subjugation." This happened to varying extents with maternal educators like Chapone and Barbauld, who bravely struggled to expand the boundaries of female education. During the

latter 1700s, a new entity--the middle-class female student--was being groomed to become a companionate wife rather than a useless "fine lady." No matter what these girls were allowed to study, someone had to enforce limits to their aspirations.

Sarah Maese's The School (1766-72) and Ann Murry's Mentoria: Or, The Young Ladies Instructor (1778) provide examples of how the academic suppression of girls was accomplished in real life and through literature. Maese and Murry were schoolteachers who used a blend of fiction and non-fiction to advertise their respective schools: in these texts, invented characters learn academic and moral lessons from a governess who is a projection of the author. Such vehicles allow contemporary readers to see how girls were encouraged to learn new kinds of information at the same time they were being taught to become helpmeets. Neither Maese nor Murry can be mistaken for male philosophes like Rousseau, Locke, or Fénelon. These women were not theoreticians but, rather, workers in the field: The School consists of nine-hundred-thirty-three pages devoted to the mechanics of daily teaching; Mentoria features a question and answer format designed for implementation in a classroom. For these reasons, The School and Mentoria make an interesting prelude to works by Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Inchbald. Although the schoolteachers do not display literary gifts comparable to those authors who were drawn to fiction as a medium, Maese and Murry also had reforming impulses and educational programs they wanted to promote. They had a strong stake in affirming the importance of the female teacher, and yet despite this, their works can be used to demonstrate the ways in which female intelligence was regulated.

Fictive girls, seen being taught new and exciting subjects, are only taught so much: they come to question whether they are worthy of receiving in-depth academic training. Vocational skills are reserved for males. The positive reinforcement female students receive is in direct proportion to their identification with women seen as caretakers and arbiters of social behavior; mothers and governesses are conflated as domestic exemplars who subordinate personal needs to a greater social order.

The central figure of The School is Mrs. Wheatley, the benevolent headmistress of a boarding school. Wheatley pressures the girls into conformity by parsing out academic knowledge and monitoring students' personal activities. Her finest student is Maria Milton, whose letters to her mother reflect what is being taught at Mrs. Wheatley's academy. Maria's daily missives recapitulate Wheatley's "catechisms" on history and geography, interspersed with moral tales concerning her classmates. Academics and ethics are dichotomized by gender. Factual lessons are determined by Mrs. Wheatley's uncle, "a very learned, sensible, and good man" (1: 6). A governess conveys the uncle's choice of material. Moral lessons are presented by Wheatley; the headmistress is on hand to "correct faults and cultivate virtues." Engulfed within this matriarchal society, the schoolgirls keep a journal of their hourly employment, which is evaluated by the governess at the end of each day, at which time she adds "a Testimony to their good or bad behavior." Parents receive these chronicles. Much as the governess monitors the girls through their writing, Mrs. Milton uses Maria's letters to ascertain that Mrs. Wheatley meets the mother's standards. No female, regardless of age or status, functions independently. It is

assumed that eventually this method of checks and balances will become an internal monitor through which Maria will develop into a model of sense and decorum.

The School represents traditional thinking, for toward the end of the century, many female pedagogues were protesting academic dilettantism as destructive, particularly for girls. Hannah More, in Strictures on Education, denounced "the swarms of Abridgments, Beauties, and Compendiums, which form too considerable a part of a young lady's library" (1: 160). Maria Edgeworth advocated thorough learning based on a child's accumulation of facts in stages appropriate to the pupil's intellectual development. Elizabeth Hamilton condemned "desultory reading" when systems of knowledge were in order (2: 406). The School articulates the more widely held point of view: a modified question and answer format prevails, the knowledge offered students is cursory, and the lines between academic and social lessons are repeatedly blurred. During a lesson on Greek mythology, a schoolgirl delivers a report about the Amazons, a matriarchal tribe excelling in government and the martial arts. Mrs. Wheatley confesses a personal belief in the truth of the legend, but says that men most likely do not, inasmuch as "the other sex would feel their vanity piqued by this portion of history, and therefore invalidate the evidence of its truth" (2: 98). Wheatley tells her pupils that while Amazons may have existed, females should defer to men and "distinguish themselves in the gentle arts of peace, in the retired success of domestic life and by mild persuasions" (2: 98). In this lesson, the factual information the girls receive is questionable, and the governess communicates a thinly veiled social agenda.

As in many eighteenth-century didactic texts, contrasting characters are used to provide models of right and wrong. The virtuous Mrs. Milton and Maria are offset by Miss LeMaine and the urban, society mother responsible for the daughter's debauchery. Miss LeMaine's cardinal sin is novel reading; she devours Jenny and Jemmy Jessamay, Betsy Thoughtless, and Peregrine Pickle. Unacquainted with actual history, she merely knows the "histories of" fictitious characters. When her parents die, Miss LeMaine lacks the character to assimilate into her uncle's household and requires the firmer hand of a governess. During an initial interview with Mrs. Wheatley, Miss LeMaine reveals her shortcomings through a flawed interpretation of Clarissa. She informs Wheatley that the novel's true heroine is Anna Howe; the girl is dismissive of Clarissa's letters: "her's are dull and stupid, there is no honour is (sic) excelling her" (1: 209). This represents a serious error in judgment: in Hugh Kelly's novel Memoirs of a Magdalen (1767), the fallen heroine Louisa Mildmay reads "Clarissa Harlowe" when she cannot sleep, and this activity leads to her moral regeneration and helps to keep her from further harm. Miss LeMaine's indiscretion makes her a prime candidate for a well-run boarding school. Mrs. Wheatley's first act is to monitor LeMaine's correspondence to friends: all letters, she contends, "must be read by me, or one of my daughters, and none can be sent away without our approbation" (1: 209).

Rebellious girls are anathema to the headmistress; so is the girl who wants to be seen as erudite. Maria writes to Mrs. Milton about Mr. and Mrs. Wilkin's granddaughter; the girl, having been taught by her grandfather, becomes a "prodigy"

by age ten (3: 106). When her grandparents die, she is returned to her parents, who are appalled by her "conceit." Mrs. Wheatley is hired to cure the girl of "pedantry" and does so by teaching her to regard her mind like her "toilette," aiming for a natural, uncultivated appearance (3: 139). Miss Wilkin pleads: "Must a woman then, never converse on learned subjects?" (3: 140). Wheatley tells her only to do so "with a very intimate friend" if she wants to avoid becoming "an object of contempt." As in Coelebs in Search of a Wife, knowledge is permissible only if kept secret. Wheatley does not want her charges ridiculed in public, nor does she wish to lose her job.

Mentoria: Or, The Young Ladies Instructor (1778), by Ann Murry, suggests that The School was not an isolated instance of knowledge sparingly conferred, but represented the way girls were being taught. Mentoria is composed of ten dialogues occurring between the governess, two female pupils named Louisa and Mary, and their brother on a visit home from school. As in The School, Mentoria's girls are given a smattering of information on various subjects. They study geography: for instance, they learn the difference between a peninsula and an island. Mentoria explains verb tenses and the four basic arithmetical functions. But once the girls' appetites are whetted, the female mentor declines to offer more information. Lady Louisa requests detail about math: "You say we are taught Simple Arithmetic, what other sort is there, my good Mentoria?" (172). Mentoria mentions algebra, but advises the girls it is for "Mathematicians." The girls are introduced to geometric shapes, forms, and angles; these shapes are reproduced on a separate page for

readers. "I should like to learn Geometry, it seems very interesting," ventures Lady Louisa. Mentoria replies: "It is not part of a Female education; neither can you form a proper judgment from the sketch I have given, any more than you would be enabled to understand a language by only seeing the alphabet" (174).

Much as Wheatley monitors letters to "improve" her pupils, Mentoria helps hers to distinguish between the needs of the literate female and those of males seen as being entitled to vocations. Lady Louisa asks who uses astronomy. "Mariners, philosophers and mathematicians," she is told (181). When the students exhibit intellectual curiosity--for example, Louisa articulates a desire to better understand the "sciences"--Mentoria warns her: "My dear Lady, knowledge, like power, beyond a certain degree, subjects those who possess it to many temptations and inconveniences" (184; 227). Some of the information the girls receive is virtually useless to them, through no fault of their own. Mentoria conducts a music lesson in which sharps and flats are described without ever being connected to actual sounds. Lady Mary experiences a sense of personal failure, concluding: "I love music very much, yet I fear I shall never excell."

Mentoria's reason for offering cursory knowledge is that girls lack the temperaments to handle too much learning. Accomplishments can result in praise, making girls either "giddy" or contemptuous of "inferiors" (184). Susan Fraiman's study, Unbecoming Women, describes Mentoria in an almost heroic light, emphasizing the teacher's discussions of Demosthenes and the Spartans. "Both models urge that excellence be pursued against all odds, in spite of apparent

disability, fear and even public humiliation," Fraiman writes, taking the heroes as a message to female students that they too can overcome hardships (24). Yet Mentoria uses the Spartans to reinforce traditional values; they are shown teaching their children obedience, moderation, and reverence for age and wisdom (152). Mentoria emphasizes the need for "subordination in different classes of mankind" (204). The teacher justifies oppression when recounting the story of Romulus, who seizes the Sabine daughters. Louisa is appalled by Romulus's cruelty in abducting females from their families; Mentoria equivocates:

Nothing can be urged in his defence, except the exigence of his situation. There are some instances, in which acts of oppression are sheltered under the term of state policy, and stand exempt from reproach, on account of the good effects they produce. (113)

This sort of "Dialogue on History," like Maese's discourse on the Amazonians, teaches girls not only a dubious form of "History" indistinguishable from myth and legend, but also that ethical principles must vary according to the needs of men.

Murry and Maese dutifully emphasize social assimilation, as they were paid to do, while downplaying academic curriculum. Such figures do not function like the independent male tutors recommended for boys by Rousseau or Locke; rather, they are extensions of the exemplary domesticated mother. Together, mother and governess suppress girls who wish to achieve personal distinction, much like the "wise" shepherdess Urania in Hannah More's The Search after Happiness. After a year with Mrs. Wheatley, Maria knows little history but she does, however, qualify as a judge of female character: Maria can rapidly distinguish between a modest girl, a pedant, a potential slattern, and a glutton.

This pattern of educating females while inhibiting their progress so as to domesticate them will be encountered again in the works of Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Inchbald, each of whom handles the problem differently. The tension between expanding girls' horizons and offering them realistic options was a problem faced by any woman writing commercially during the latter 1700s. While there are complex psychological aspects to identity formation, as Carol Gilligan has clarified in several important works there are also profound social aspects.⁵⁴ Female teachers and writers were instructed to produce helpmeets, whether or not they approved of this goal. Maese's and Murry's works demonstrate how this mandate was executed by actual teachers. How Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Inchbald approached this social requirement will provide the focus of the material to follow.

⁵⁴ For studies on the psychological development of girls, see Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice and Making Connections.

Chapter 2

Sarah Fielding's Familiar Letters and The Governess; Or, Little Female Academy:
Fictive Conduct Books or Critiques of Education?

Sarah Fielding (1710-68) is a rather misunderstood author whose meliorist strategy, exemplified by both her narrative style and her themes, has received little recognition. In a chapter from The Rise of the Woman Novelist entitled "The Terms of Acceptance," Jane Spencer describes Fielding as a writer lacking the courage of her convictions. Spencer claims that after sounding a "rebellious note" with the character of Cynthia in The Adventures of David Simple (1744), Sarah Fielding, in succeeding works, "consistently defends women's right to learning on the one hand, and endorses female subordination on the other."¹ However, this point of view is belied by the "missing middle" of the David Simple trilogy--a two-volume, 744-page "continuation," known as Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple and Some Others, to Which Is Added, A Vision (1747).² In this intricately

¹ Spencer 94. Janet Todd refers to Fielding's "lack of open protest" in The Sign of Angellica 164.

² A second edition was published by A. Millar as part of a five-volume David Simple trilogy dated 1744-53. In a flyleaf to Volume 5, Millar advertises that the books are available as a unit, and Familiar Letters "may be had alone for 6 shillings." I am indebted to my colleague Vincent Carretta for the phrase "missing middle," which he used to describe the excision of the Letters from the trilogy. Myra Reynolds refers to Fielding's book as a "continuation" in The Learned Lady in England 1650-1760 236. R. Brimley Johnson, in his introduction to a reprint of Fielding's The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, identifies the Letters as a "continuation" intended to keep her characters "before the public eye" (xviii).

structured letter manual, Fielding foregrounds Cynthia as the text's primary correspondent. Along with David Simple's wife Camilla and their female friends such as Lavinia, Sophronia, and Delia, she uses letters to anatomize the workings of English society. These women function as social philosophers, each displaying what Ruth Perry refers to, with respect to letter-writing manuals in general, as "an exemplary consciousness for the reader to emulate."³ Women interrogate the values underlying prevailing modes of fashionable education; among their grievances are the academic and authorial strictures imposed upon women, types of male pedantry, and forms of physical and emotional abuse directed at women and children.

Sarah Fielding's willingness to deal with what were, at that time, controversial themes, is rivalled by her readiness to create unusual narrative structures.⁴ The Letters weave together apologues, essays, a eulogy for an actual friend of the author, and nested narratives, or inset stories presented within the framework of ongoing personal histories. Rather than maintaining one hegemonic narrator, Fielding allows many authorial voices to be heard, creating a sense of polyphony and lending weight

³ Ruth Perry, Women, Letters, and the Novel 81. Perry describes letter manuals as foreshadowing fiction. Robert Adams Day expresses a similar perspective in Told in Letters, noting that familiar letters became popular before "the essay, the article, and the short story" had taken form (50).

⁴ Discussions of Fielding's experiments with narrative in texts other than Familiar Letters can be found in Deborah Downs-Miers's essay "Springing the Trap." Other useful narrative studies include Downs-Miers's "Labyrinths of the Mind"; Carolyn Jane Woodward, "Sarah Fielding and Narrative Power for Women"; Mary Anne Schofield, Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind; and Lissette Ferlet Carpenter, "Sarah Fielding: A Mid-Century Link in Eighteenth Century Feminist Views."

to female experience. Male correspondents are heard from sporadically, but their letters are briefer than those provided by the women, and they allude to Theophrastan characters, such as the glutton, "Pamphilus" who "never read LaBruyere," and the gentleman in "lace and Finery" (1: 213) who refuses to be charitable.⁵ By contrast, women correspondents share lengthy stories of female development, and these are packed with detail and abound in psychological observations. The Letters culminate in a fifty-page fairy tale "Fragment" which portends techniques used by Fielding in The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy (1749) and reinforces the morals conveyed in letters designed to represent "true" experience.⁶

A number of factors contributed to the evolution of Sarah Fielding's style and themes. Left with a paltry inheritance, she depended on assistance from benefactors as well as on the proceeds from sales of her books.⁷ Therefore, it was incumbent

⁵ Familiar Letters is mainly composed of letters from female correspondents. In Vol. 1, consisting of 19 letters, 7 are between Cynthia and Camilla, 2 between Cynthia and David, and 4 between Leonora and Delia. The remaining 6 are written by 3 pairs of male correspondents and are sometimes as brief as 4 pages. Vol. 2 consists of 18 letters: 9 are between Sophronia and Celia, 2 between Cynthia and Lavinia, 1 between Sophronia and Celia, and 2 between Aurelia and Silvia. The remaining 4 letters are between 2 pairs of male correspondents.

⁶ All citations will be from the first edition. Jill Grey provides a good background sketch of Fielding's life and career in the 1968 reprint.

⁷ See the general introduction to Battestin and Probyn (eds.), The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding xxv-xxxvii, for discussion of Sarah Fielding's patrons and her poverty. Ralph Allen is described as one of her lesser patrons; Elizabeth Montagu and Sarah Scott are seen as Sarah's "financial and social guardians." Sylvia Harcstark Myers in The Bluestocking Circle indicates that Elizabeth Montagu assisted her in raising subscriptions in addition to providing money (135).

upon her to satisfy her readers. Familiar Letters, in its first printing, had a "resplendent" subscription list of close to five hundred male and female patrons; among them were lords and ladies, fellow writers, and bluestockings.⁸ Fielding's evenhanded approach to female as well as male foibles in the Letters reflects not only her basic fair-mindedness, but also her concern that the needs of these diverse and discriminating readers might be met. A similar rationale dictated the contents of The Governess, which, although intended for children, was meant to be purchased by parents and educators; the novel was advertised as "A Book entirely adapted and exceeding proper, for the Use of Schools."⁹ Writing for different and sometimes polarized audiences required a degree of compromise and ambiguity on Fielding's

⁸ Pat Rogers refers to Sarah's "resplendent" subscription list for Familiar Letters in Henry Fielding: A Biography 148. Hugh Amory of the Houghton Library discussed Henry and Sarah's respective lists in his presentation, "Virtual Readers: The Subscribers to Fielding's Miscellanies (1743)." The following of Henry's biographers briefly mention Sarah Fielding's career: Martin Battestin and Ruth Battestin, Donald Thomas, and Wilbur Cross. William M. Sale in Samuel Richardson, Master Printer notes that Richardson, who was supportive of Sarah Fielding's career, printed The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy, The History of the Countess of Dellwyn, and The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia 113-14).

⁹ An advertisement for The Governess appeared in a flyleaf of The History of the Countess of Dellwyn "By the Author of David Simple" (London: A. Millar, 1759).

part.¹⁰ The complexity of her narrative style provides evidence of the problems she faced in accommodating heterogeneous groups of readers.

Sarah Fielding believed in the aesthetic value of narrative diversity, and this, too, affected the shape of her fiction. According to the preface to Volume the Last, believed to have been written by Jane Collier, Fielding felt that a finite number of themes existed.¹¹ Her desire was therefore to create "a melodious variation on the same Notes" (310). She was able to achieve this by mixing genres and by combining forms of oral and written literature. While Shakespeare and Milton were considered well worth citing, Familiar Letters confronts the public prejudices which existed toward oral literature, commonly associated with "superstitious" domestic servants.¹² Cynthia meets resistance when she tries to discuss the value of fairy tales at a social

¹⁰ Christopher D. Johnson's introduction to The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia discusses Fielding's audience for this quasi-historical text (15-22). The Lives was dedicated to the Countess of Pomfret and had many aristocratic subscribers upon whom she depended. However, the bluestocking Catherine Talbot criticized The Lives "for not being didactic enough" (19). This suggests the difficulty Fielding had in pleasing diverse audiences.

¹¹ The Preface to Volume the Last is signed "By a Female Friend of the Author"; a footnote to the Oxford edition states that Collier was most likely to have been that "Friend." Collier collaborated with Sarah Fielding on The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable. Joseph Bun Heidler alludes to Fielding's concern with morality and characterization in The History, from 1700 to 1800, of English Criticism of Prose Fiction 62-63.

¹² J. Paul Hunter, in Before Novels, analyzes fairy tales as a suppressed oral genre (142-51). Writing about the cultural status of fairy tales in France, Philippe Ariès indicates that during the eighteenth century well-bred adults regarded them as objects "of curiosity" (95). John Locke, in Some Thoughts Concerning Education, recommends keeping children away from servants who recount stories of "Raw-Head" and "Bloody Bones," filling children's heads with "Notions of Spirits and Goblins" (242). Thomas Noel discusses fables as a debated literary genre in Theories of the Fable in the Eighteenth Century.

gathering. She writes to Lavinia: "You can hardly imagine the sneers, witticisms, Jokes that immediately flew around the Room" (2: 222). Fielding challenged these class-based reactions. Portia, one of the heroines of The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable (1754), states in defense of fables for adults: "Tis the application alone which gives value to any sort of knowledge, and renders it either useful or agreeable" (181). Validating fairy tales and fables, along with asserting women's right to study classical and canonical texts, were complementary objectives that she pursued in her writing, although many persisted in excluding women from the study of literature and insisted that oral and written traditions were oppositional.

Another influential factor was Sarah Fielding's educational background. After their mother's death, she and her sisters were sent off to Mary Rookes's country boarding school so they might learn "to read and write and to talk French and dance and to be brought up as Gentlewomen" (qtd. in Thomas 18). Her brother Henry was later to remark in the Covent-Garden Journal (July 1752): "There is very little Difference between the Education of many a Squire's daughter, and that of his Dairy Maid, who is most likely her principal Companion" (305). Dissatisfied with the limits of female education, as an adult Sarah Fielding studied Latin with Arthur Collier, who also tutored Hester Thrale. Thrale noticed that of all the Fielding sisters, "Sally was the Scholar" (Thraliana 1: 79). Assisted by James Harris, who was expert in Greek, Sarah Fielding published a translation of Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates

(1762).¹³ These Memoirs were the only text she ever signed on the title page, which suggests her pride in having mastered a classical language as well her qualms about writing fiction.¹⁴ In a letter to Harris on September 21, 1758, Sarah thanked him for sending her Xenophon and admitted to worrying about "whether it is possible at my Time of Life, to make any thing of the Greek language." Yet, she persisted, telling Harris, "it has always been my Maxim to have the least fear of Ridicule wherever real Knowledge dwells."¹⁵

According to Mrs. Thrale, Henry was none too pleased about his sister's venturing into a masculine literary province.

While she [Sarah] only read English Books, and made English Verses it seems, he fondled her Fancy, & encourag'd her Genius, but as soon [as] he perceived She once read Virgil, Farewell to Fondness, the Author's Jealousy was to become stronger than the Brother's Affections. (Thraliana 1: 79)

¹³ Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates was published by subscription, and Fielding informs her readers "that no Pains hath been spared" to execute the translation "as well as possible" (v). Clara Reeve in The Progress of Romance calls Memoirs "her capital work" (143).

¹⁴ There is an exception to Fielding's habit of not signing fiction. Her "Dedication to the Countess of Pomfret" in The Lives of Octavia and Cleopatra is signed "S. Fielding," although the author's name does not appear on the title page.

¹⁵ Quotation taken from Battestin and Probyn (eds.), The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding 141. Clive Probyn refers to Fielding's literary debt to Harris in The Sociable Humanist, observing that she came to him with ideas for this project (134). Harris also contributed two dialogues, "Much Ado" (1744) and "Fashion" (1746), to add bulk to the second volume of Familiar Letters. Henry Fielding contributed letters XL-XLIV, and they are separated from Sarah's letters by Harris's dialogues.

Despite this alleged sibling disapproval, Sarah continued her classical studies. Part of her literary project involved having heroines define their interests rather than allowing society to make those determinations for them.

Cynthia is formed by her struggle to become educated, as outlined in The Adventures. Denied books by parents, ridiculed for her wit by siblings, and kept apart from another girl, "as she too was fond of Reading" (107), Cynthia incites her mother's fear when she shows interest in books and like-minded females. "I verily believe, she thought we should draw Circles and turn Conjurers," Cynthia complains to David (107). Witchcraft is associated with learned females, intellectual girls are kept apart, and an educated wife is deemed a liability to all but David and his friend Valentine; the latter marries Cynthia, for he is the rare man who can appreciate insight in a woman. Furthermore, Valentine admires her talent as a storyteller.

In Familiar Letters, Cynthia engages in a broader critique of education. She and the gentler Camilla, who embodies a more conventional model of womanhood, share their concern over habits encouraged in public schools, boarding schools, and universities. The heroines disdain educated men who, having been taught by rote and trained to be arrogant, feign a knowledge of subjects they have either never learned or long since forgotten. "Polite" education is disparaged; a friend of Camilla's describes being raised by parents who married by "chance". The only skills the young lady is offered are reading, writing, and playing upon the harpsichord (2: 125). At twelve, she and her sister are sent off to boarding school, "for we were only thought troublesome at home" (2: 126). The women chronicle a cycle in which

people marry for specious reasons, have children toward whom they are indifferent, provide their daughters with ornamental skills and their sons with the veneer of erudition. Schools are utilized for custodial purposes. What results are the belles and fops who frequent the salons of Bath and London. Fielding's analysis resembles that of William Law, whose A Serious Call to the Devout and Holy Life (1728), a book with wide appeal to the emerging middle class, laments of women: "we turn them over to the study of beauty and dress, and the whole world conspires to make them think of nothing else."¹⁶ Like Law, Sarah Fielding sketches characters embroiled in a failed social experiment. Law, being quite devout, offers religion as an outlet for women whose natural intelligence is suppressed; Sarah Fielding, being more philosophically inclined, emphasizes learning and female friendship.

Janet Altman's Epistolarity: Approaches to Form considers ways in which novels of letters "make meaning" by enlisting the participation of readers. Altman notes: "We are often called upon to act as detective collators, to perceive continuity from one letter to the next because the image of the first persists in our mind."¹⁷

¹⁶ Law's popularity is described by Martin Day in History of English Literature 1660-1837 141-44. Day mentions how Dr. Johnson and William Blake were both influenced by Law's text. John Richetti refers to various authors' usage of "stock situations" and characters as an expedient which directs attention toward moral issues; see Popular Fiction before Richardson. Richetti uses the term "shorthand" to describe Elizabeth Singer Rowe's technique of sketching common situations (251). Fielding, Rowe, and Law adopt similar styles. However, the latter two emphasize Christian morality; Fielding is secular and also philosophical in her approach.

¹⁷ Altman 173. Altman provides a thorough analysis of the reader's role in interpreting epistolary fiction, although not Fielding's.

"Continuity" is discernible in the way Fielding integrates and links her ideas. In Letter III, the theme of the vacuity of Bath society, a popular motif in eighteenth-century fiction, is connected to prohibitions against female authorship.¹⁸ Cynthia details a morning spent at the Pump-Room, where she becomes disgruntled with the fine ladies and gentlemen who play cards and "Roly-Poly," a form of billiards. The chattering clique is said to want distraction from "the Pain of thinking, which was not good with the Waters" (1: 90). Taking leave of the Coffee-Room, Cynthia visits the home of a newly-wed, where an "agreeable, sensible woman" she meets solicits her opinion on a verse letter she has received from a female friend (1: 92). Cynthia enjoys the poetry, finding it to be "pure and elegant." A fop named Corydon and the hostess's sister Elmira listen and demand attention. "I daresay this Lady has some Husband, Father, or Brother, who gave them to her, though they pass in her Name; for without Learning it is impossible for anyone to write so well," insists Corydon (1: 93). Elmira does not deny the possibility of a woman's writing well, but questions its appropriateness. She says: "Some might be capable of writing, if they had not judgment enough to know it was not proper for them" (1: 94). Elmira calls the poetic activity "masculine." Angered, Cynthia rebukes Corydon. "I asked the Gentleman, if he imagined none could express their Thoughts in any Language who did not Understand several?" The fop reacts by rubbing his beard and misquoting Latin, or so Cynthia surmises by questioning a man who translates for her.

¹⁸ Mary K. Hill, Bath and the Eighteenth Century Novel, writes about literary figures who visited Bath, among them Austen, Burney, Lennox, the Fieldings, Goldsmith, and Thrale. Many satirized spa society, and the nouveau riche.

Employing irony and wit, inimical to the conduct-book literature with which Sarah Fielding's works have been compared, the female author defines an absurd situation. Knowing the woman poet is barred from formal education, Corydon assumes she cannot write. Elmira sees women's writing as plausible, but assumes it must be socially self-defeating. Provoked by Corydon's use of Latin, Cynthia, for all her erudition, must consult another man to ascertain if Corydon is genuinely learned. An awkward compromise is effected when Cynthia seeks help. The Cry offers a related example: "Miss C" is referred to as a "slattern" because she knows Latin. Conversely, a male character repeats "several scraps of Latin" and reveals "his ignorance by not speaking three syllables right" (1: 157-59). The paradox of the knowledgeable woman being condemned, at the same time the ignorant man is encouraged to preen, pervades both documents. In The Letters, however, Fielding uses male correspondents to confirm women's perception of male intellectual vanity. Lysimachus describes a congregation of scholars examining different editions of Shakespeare in "Minutius's Library" (2: 7). Lysimachus despairs because each man was more eager to "prove his own conjectures right" than to listen to another's interpretation. The writer presents true scholarship as a sharing of ideas and not an exercise in self-aggrandizement. Women could be pompous, too, as Fielding reveals in her portrait of Lady Rochester in The History of Ophelia (1760), where her ladyship speaks of "the Nonexistence of a Pigeon Pye and the heterogenous Particles

in Salmigondi," but the Letters indicate that male education was particularly conducive to the formation of bad habits.¹⁹

Women's circumscribed options resonate in other early letters. Letters II and IV find Camilla sharing the story of Isabinda, a young woman seen stranded between a callow, aggressive suitor and an intellectual man who disdains her. Awed by the stature of the aloof Philocles, Isabinda writes him one hundred letters, then burns them. Her alternative is the passionate Florio, but he is known to beat his dog. "He employed himself half the morning in alternately whipping and wheedling his poor little Animal," Isabinda is warned by another woman (1: 124). Cynthia responds to this cue, writing back to Camilla that if Florio could whip his dog, he could just as easily abuse Isabinda. Fearful of Florio's temper, Isabinda gives him up, only to be labelled a "jilt" by the spurned suitor. Eventually she finds a suitable partner, as the result of extreme caution.

Conduct books traditionally advised females on what they needed to do in order to make themselves appealing to prospective husbands. Sarah Fielding, by comparison, advises women on whom to ignore or refuse. The issue of violence against women, children, and animals represents an undercurrent in her work and is correlated with insufficient forms of education. In The Governess, the girls become distraught when they see a local girl being beaten by a well meaning but ignorant mother, and callous "schoolboys" stalk a helpless cat belonging to Jenny Peace.

¹⁹ Lady Rochester reads in order "to appear wise, not to be so" (1: 212). This silly lady is offset by the more judicious Ophelia, so that a balance is achieved in her depictions of women.

Lydia's narrative in Familiar Letters shows the deformed girl being tied to a tree by boys "going to school"; they beat Lydia "for the Diversion" (1: 242). Although throughout the latter part of the century many children's writers decried cruelty to animals, abuse of females was less discussed. The idea that "schoolboys" are responsible for abusive behavior is not arbitrary, for Sarah Fielding saw boys learning academic lessons devoid of any moral content.

Katherine Anne Ackley's essay "Violence against Women in the Novels of Early British Women Writers" cites "sexual harassment" scenes in Eliza Haywood's The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless (1751) and Frances Burney's Evelina (1778) as evidence of male aggression. Familiar Letters depicts even more explicit forms of male aggression, insofar as they cannot be mistaken for sexual passion run amok. There is no suggestion of romance to cloud the issue; rather, Fielding's vignettes represent blatant physical cruelty along with acts of calculated intellectual intimidation. In Companions without Vows, Betty Rizzo contends that Fielding and Collier saw tyranny as "a problem endemic to the human condition" and featured this subject in their writings.²⁰ Sophronia's letter is a case in point: she compares a husband she knows to "the Tamer of the Shrew," and bemoans the transformation of Filius from "the tender lover into the imperious Husband" (2: 33). Given the existence of domestic tyranny, Fielding did not believe that women should marry at

²⁰ Rizzo, "Satires of Tyrants and Toadeaters" in Companions without Vows 41-60. Rizzo alludes to the mutual influence these women exerted on each other's writing; they may have collaborated on Collier's book An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting (1753). See my chapter on Maria Edgeworth for a discussion of this satire.

any cost, nor did she condone passivity in the face of abuse. Her allegorical piece, A Vision, appended to the Letters, articulates women's need for choice: those desirous of marriage are provided with "an honest good husband"; women preferring to remain single are offered "a good collection of Books, agreeable companions and tranquility" (2: 370). This option of a celibate, intellectual life for women echoes Mary Astell's notion of a gentlewomen's seminary in A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interests (1694). It also has parallels with Sarah Scott's A Description of Millenium Hall (1762), a novel about a bucolic residence where women could sew, read, practice philanthropy, and escape the tyranny of repressive upbringings and unpleasant marriages.²¹

Close friends with Sarah Scott, Fielding likewise refuses to idealize marriage, and to an even greater extent, connects it with forms of intellectual oppression. Cynthia describes Hortensius, "a man of sense" who has a conventionally pretty wife lacking "a Capacity to reflect deeply" (2: 94). When Hortensius reads passages from Paradise Lost to the women, Cynthia, who is well acquainted with the poem, immediately appreciates Hortensius's reading. His wife, however, is unsure, but

²¹ Scott's heroines engaged more in projects designed to help the laboring poor than in scholarship. Another utopian retreat is detailed in Lady Mary Hamilton's Munster Village (1778). Ruth Perry draws comparisons between Millenium Hall and Munster Village in her essay "Bluestockings in Utopia" in History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Tobin 159-78. Munster Village admits 180 male scholars and 20 gentlewomen; preference is shown to those females with "any imperfection of the body" (25). Knowledge is intended as a form of compensation; this can also be seen in Frances Burney's Camilla (1796) where Eugenia, ravaged by smallpox, is allowed to study the classics as a compensatory measure.

instead of listening, she interrupts her husband, turning "every thing topsy-turvey" (2: 96). The woman praises the "superior Tenderness" of Eve in a passage where none is evident and exclusively blames "Adam's Folly" for their "Fall" (2: 97, 98). Amazed by this misinterpretation, Cynthia waits for Hortensius to respond. Much to her confusion, Hortensius "seemed vastly pleased" and devotes the afternoon to buying his wife a present "he could not afford" (2: 98, 100). Cynthia and Camilla agree that both partners are ridiculous. Having watched Hortensius's condescension toward his wife, Cynthia wishes him "in Gulliver's stead on the Brobdingnag's table." Her allusion to Swift establishes that Cynthia and Camilla share the learned man's vocabulary. Cynthia's desire to see Hortensius satirized reveals the depth of her frustration: she knows he would sooner have a dimwitted wife than to take it upon himself to teach her.

Cynthia reinforces this story with another: the grave, sensible Leontine is seen married to a female exemplar. "Leontia, his wife, is one of those Women I really love and esteem," Cynthia writes, intimating that theirs is a true union of minds (2: 112). Yet when books are discussed, Leontia, who consciously defers to her husband, incurs the wrath of Leontine, for he resents her interest in literary discourse. A surprised Cynthia muses, "I expected him to be as much pleased with her, as I at first expected the Day before, Hortensius to be displeased with his wife" (2: 110). Leontine invites over a fellow scholar, with whom he exchanges lines in Greek. This exclusionary dialogue puts Leontine "into a tolerable Good-humor." Writes Cynthia, "I could plainly read in his Looks what passed in his Mind, and that he said to

himself with Joy and Rapture: Now I am sure we talk something my Wife doth not understand" (2: 118). As a learned woman, Cynthia does not discuss her own sense of injury. Rather, she focuses on the unfolding scene. Leontine refuses to translate the men's conversation; he tells the women that wives are meant to manage the household and to remain obedient.

It is ironic, considering that its heroines protest their subordination, that Familiar Letters has been equated with conduct books which preach submission. But the label is longstanding. The earliest suggestion that Sarah was writing a conduct book came from Henry, whose preface to the Letters defends his anonymous female relative's right to authorship.²² Initially, Henry alludes to Sarah's "natural genius" and compares her to Cervantes and Hogarth: all offer "delicate Touches of Nature" (xiii). This insight into her Letters is betrayed, however, as Henry proceeds to classify the text as a corrective for "Female Foibles" (xix). "I will venture to say, no book extant is so well calculated for their [women's] Instruction and Improvement," Henry writes, indicating that many may resent his relative when they find she has divulged the "Secrets of the Society" in print (xx). By modifying his claims for her talent and universality, Henry Fielding may have been trying to protect Sarah, or perhaps he only attended to her observations on women. In either case, his preface, which begins in a laudatory manner, ends by restricting his sister's literary terrain: no

²² Henry prefaced the first edition of Familiar Letters, and also, the second edition of The Adventures of David Simple (1744). His preface to The Adventures advises readers that he corrected his female relative's spelling and grammar. Both prefaces suggest a mixture of pride and condescension.

longer can she write on the human condition; she can only apply her talents to correcting women who lack her "understanding."

In more recent times, Brian Downs, who introduces Samuel Richardson's Letters Written to and for Particular Friends, on the Most Important Occasions (1741), refers to Sarah as Richardson's "first English disciple," explaining that the format for and content of her text sprang from Richardson's compendium of useful advice (xxv). Again, this classification is misleading. Richardson wrote brief missives, and various of his Letters discouraged female self-assertion, instead espousing "submission and subjection."²³ In one letter, a mother tells a daughter to endure a husband's philandering, since it will not jeopardize financial claims made by "lawful children" (62). In contrast, Fielding's correspondents insist that marriage must be based on mutual respect, and those who cannot find suitable companions are advised against compromising their standards.

Shared anecdotes demonstrate that while wives may vary in temperament, overbearing husbands remain a constant. The frivolous wife is seen being further patronized, and the sensible wife is denied participation in intellectual discourse. The well-read Cynthia must suppress her knowledge in mixed company, contain her sense of insult, and reserve her ideas for letters, where she can attempt to evade the problem of what Janet Todd calls "patriarchal definition" (Angellica 319). Sarah

²³ Katharine Hornbeak relates Richardson to Richard Allestree, author of The Whole Duty of Man, a seventeenth-century conduct book mentioned several times in Pamela. For more on Sarah Fielding's literary relationship to Richardson, see T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson.

Fielding admired male authors such as Richard Steele, whose play The Funeral: Or, Grief a-la-Mode is read aloud by schoolgirls in The Governess.²⁴ But as Katherine Shevelow observes, Steele's periodical, the Tatler, reified an "image of the desirable domestic woman."²⁵ This prototype would have been unacceptable to Fielding. Shevelow comments upon Steele's propensity for branding women as gossips, clothes horses, and coquettes; Jenny Distaff, Isaac Bickerstaff's half-sister and Steele's foremost "female writing subject," is shown on one occasion "to misquote and misunderstand a Latin tag from Horace" (119). Sarah Fielding's pleasure in Steele's work did not extend to his sly mockery of women; and when she quoted from Latin sources, she always provided her readers with a translation, unlike either Steele or her brother Henry. Acknowledging the existence of silly fine ladies, Sarah Fielding offsets them with heroines who read Swift, Dryden, and Shakespeare. Moreover, female correspondents often exhibit a deeper understanding of literature than do the "Men of Sense" with whom they come into contact.

This belief in women's superior capacity for insight is reiterated in Remarks on Clarissa (1749), Fielding's anonymous vindication of Richardson's novel; the treatise appeared a week before The Governess was published. A fictive character

²⁴ This comedy finds Lord Brumpton, believed to be dead, secretly observing how the "widowed" Lady Brumpton tries to disinherit his son. The faithful servant Mr. Trusty sees through her "Art" (16). The Funeral was a rather cynical production to share with young girls.

²⁵ Shevelow 94. Shevelow conducts an in-depth analysis of articles from the Spectator and the Tatler.

named Miss Gibson takes on the task of explaining Richardson's strategy to those who accuse Clarissa of having "contradictory faults" (13). Ruth Perry observes:

Fielding's fictional readers react to Richardson's characters as if they were alive, and dispute their choices and their behaviours as they would those of mutual acquaintances. In making Miss Gibson the primary expositor and defender of Richardson's art, Sarah Fielding's pamphlet simultaneously establishes the power of his novel and women's privileged understanding of it. ("Clarissa's Daughters" 8-9)

Fielding's purpose in her Remarks is two-fold: she wants to see Clarissa appreciated, and she wants to demonstrate Gibson's literary acumen. Tom Keymer, in Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader, notes that Fielding's analysis of Lovelace's character, which she compares with Satan's in Paradise Lost, highlights stylistic similarities between Richardson and Milton. Having followed Miss Gibson's defense, Keymer concludes:

Perhaps, in short, Richardson was closer to Milton than his detractors have recognized both in his ambition to let us more fully "know ourselves" and in his ways of doing so. (195)

In her Remarks, Fielding valorizes the eighteenth-century novelist, whose craft was held in suspicion by many readers, by associating him with a poet whose work was acclaimed by audiences of the period. As Perry indicates, the guide in this process is female. Familiar Letters uses the character of Delia in a similar capacity; having recounted the story of Lydia's abuse, Delia writes to Leonora on another occasion to share a dialogue between two gentleman who question the existence of "Pity or Compassion" (1: 260). Quoting a passage from Book Four of Paradise Lost, where Satan beholds Adam and Eve, Delia explains:

It is very visible, that Milton not only makes the Devil have some Compassion, but also thinks it necessary to make him reflect on Honour and Empire, before even he, though damned, can unprovoked, resolve on the Cruelty of destroying others Happiness. (1: 262)

Her observation about Milton's devil parallels Miss Gibson's perception of Lovelace: these are not fully unredeemed villains. Rather, they possess enough good qualities to generate confusion about the nature of morality. Delia repudiates alleged "Men of Sense" through her interpretation of Paradise Lost.²⁶ She also refutes a "Lady" she knows "who doated on Milton and had read him twenty times" but whose rigidity makes her insist that Satan was no more than "deceitful" (2: 262). Delia sees the world in shades of grey and, in doing so, disputes the men's narrow moral view of people and the "Lady's" equally constricted approach to literary interpretation. But society is not necessarily receptive to Delia's opinions, no matter how well reasoned. It is only by writing to a female friend that Delia can satisfy her desire to explicate Milton's poem, through which she reveals her intellect and wisdom. Her a priori knowledge that she will receive Leonora's affirmation helps the woman writer to feel understood.

Women's right to literary interpretation and authorship, treated so ambiguously by Henry in his preface, is validated within the Letters. Telling Camilla about all the peculiar marriages she has witnessed, Cynthia observes, "Ovid's imagination in his Metamorphosis never made more unaccountable changes than would appear through such a Tell-Truth Mirror" (2: 149). Henry Fielding's preface

²⁶ Joseph Wittreich, Feminist Milton, discusses the attitudes of some of Fielding's friends, such as Elizabeth Montagu, toward Milton's writing.

praises Ovid as "the ablest Writer of les Lettres Galantes" and indicates that Sarah follows an Ovidian model rather than the contemporary French style favored by "fine ladies and gentleman" (iv; vii). Recounting stories of Bath society, Cynthia casts herself as part of this distinguished literary tradition. Susan Sniader Lanser observes that in The History of the Countess of Dellwyn (1759), Fielding's narrator, "an accomplished scholar of classical and Renaissance letters," is never identified as female and could easily be taken for male (Fictions 49-50). Yet Fielding's authorship could have been easily inferred by the majority of her readers, for she routinely signed herself as "The Author of David Simple," Simple having been written "By a Lady." Henry's preface to The Adventures acknowledged her as a dear relation, and her text was advertised in The True Patriot alongside Joseph Andrews and his Miscellanies.²⁷ Indirect forms of self-identification were not uncommon at that time, and it was as a woman that Fielding presumed to discuss classical texts in her preface to Dellwyn, much as she set about rewriting Ovid in her Familiar Letters. The Heroides offers letters from spurned, lovelorn heroines; Fielding, on the other hand, provides letters from heroines who are skeptical rather than besotted. In this sense, she follows the revisionism of Jane Barker, who rewrote Ovid's portraits of bereft women so that "the thwarted heroine of romance becomes a poet" (Spencer

²⁷ The True Patriot and the History of Our Own Times, ed. Miriam Austin Locke, reprints The True Patriot (Nov. 26, 1745) which advertises a second, corrected edition of The Adventures of David Simple alongside advertisements for Henry Fielding's novels (64). In The True Patriot (Feb. 18, 1746), prospective subscribers and readers are notified that Familiar Letters will be available in January of 1747; the author is referred to as "she."

65). Lawrence Lipking sees the poetics of these lamenting heroines as "highly subversive" insofar as their presence raises questions about "the status of the canon" (3). Camilla, acting as comrade and counterpoint, asserts Cynthia's literary authority. Sharing Cynthia's portrait of a "Lothario" with David, Camilla fondly informs her friend that she had to remind David of Lothario's inventedness, "to keep him from being melancholy" (2: 126). Fielding inverts the conceit of the romantic heroine, such as Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote (1752), who is seduced by fiction and requires men to bring her back to earth. In Familiar Letters, women control the discourse and David Simple proves most impressionable.

The function of male correspondents warrants attention, since most of the letters flow between women. David Simple takes up the pen once in Familiar Letters, writing to Cynthia when Camilla is too ill to write. David acts on behalf of his wife and echoes her sensibility. He writes on another occasion to a "Gentleman in Yorkshire" about the nature of friendship and the function of literature, a discourse which reiterates ideas articulated by female correspondents. The impression produced by David's participation is that the superior husband is one whose wife speaks for him. Only one letter is written by Valentine to his wife Cynthia; its author was Henry Fielding, who added five final letters to the manual. Henry's style and tone deviates from Sarah's insofar as Valentine makes sexual puns about being "in possession" of his wife and signs himself: "I am, My Sweet, With a Tenderness inexpressible, Your fond and faithful Husband" (2: 350). His parody violates the spirit of Sarah's Letters and underscores her need to present voices

raised in a female community. Her brother's approach may also explain why female sexuality is suppressed in Familiar Letters: Valentine reduces their relationship to that of a romance-craving wife and a sexually avid husband.

Other male correspondents are represented briefly, in pairs: Spatter and Varnish, first seen in The Adventures, Ferdinand and Theodosius, Lysimachus and Cratander, and Pharamond and Cleomenes. These philosophes do not interact with female correspondents or, to any great extent, with each other. Rather, their letters act as camouflage insofar as feminist ideas are concealed within a morass of neutral material about the evil of greed and the value of charity. Furthermore, Sarah Fielding derives additional benefits from practicing what Madeline Kahn refers to as "narrative transvestism" and James Carson calls "narrative cross-dressing."²⁸ Whereas authors like Samuel Richardson who adopted female personae in novels gave themselves "access to a culturally defined female voice and sensibility" without becoming "trapped in the devalued female realm," Fielding experiences the reverse benefits by utilizing male personae (Kahn 6). Temporarily divested of a female self, she enters a privileged male realm where male correspondents discuss literature without apology, anger, or defensiveness. They dissect each other's behavior with impunity and from an insider's vantage point. As Pharamond writes to Cleomenes:

²⁸ Kahn raises the question, "what does a woman author have to gain from using a man's voice?" but deals primarily with male uses of a female persona in Defoe's Roxanna and in Clarissa (2). Carson discusses appropriation of the female voice and alludes to Richardson's identification with women as socializers of "the more brutal sex" (102). Rachel Mayer Brownstein comments that "Richardson must have loved masquerading in letters, pretending to be now a lady and now a rake, both of them glamorous parts denied him by workaday life" (34).

"It appeared odd to me, how Men of Parts could bring themselves to say so many silly things" (2: 49).

Volume II reveals an incipient correspondence between Lavinia and Cynthia, who offer each other an "ease and Freedom" unavailable in mixed company (2: 207). Lavinia tells Cynthia of her dispute with a male suitor who insisted that women excel in beauty and men in understanding. Lavinia exacts her revenge by inviting Mr. Newman to dinner along with several other acquaintances. The men make fools of themselves, each typically competing to convey his knowledge of "The Nature of Things" (2: 214). Women, who are not exempt from the author's criticism, behave poorly. Female guests become jealous of the attention paid Lavinia; they spread gossip that she deliberately set up the men so she could laugh at their expense.

Cynthia sympathizes with Lavinia's position and her isolation. As a token of friendship, she forwards an elaborate fairy tale "Fragment" which others have greeted with disdain, for such tales are equated with a lower strata of society. When the fashionable crowd attacks Cynthia for her poor taste, only one person defends her: an old gentleman reminds the group of magical occurrences in "The Odyssey" [sic] and the "Fairy Queen," placing Cynthia's suspect literary selection within a classical, male tradition so that her story might be legitimized (2: 223). The tale of "Infant Beauty" that Cynthia relates concerns a cluster of females whose interlocking histories are offered to a princess en route to the Castle of Wishes. The adult "Infant Beauty" attempts to deter the princess by relating a poignant story stressing the futility of wish fulfillment.

Fielding begins, as she often does, by describing a mother's unhappiness within a loveless marriage. After Infant Beauty's father dies, her mother transfers her affections to her only child. A strongly maternal figure, the mother is seen rescuing a hare being chased by hounds. The hare, in turn, rescues the mother when her horse rears. While seeming to be crushed under the horse's hooves, the hare is transformed into a beautiful fairy who, in gratitude to the mother, grants all of Infant Beauty's wishes. The coddled child requests "Dolls so big, that I could not manage them, but used to beat my Face with them" (2: 239). When she asks to attend boarding school, Beauty is loathed by classmates who resent her privileges. Later in life, women envy her and suitors treat her like an "Idol" (2: 243). Her mother blames herself for her daughter's misery and dies in a fit of self-recrimination.

After her mother's death, Beauty becomes weary of being taken for "a Silly woman" and longs to be taught by men of sense (256). Several learned men develop a passing interest, but start ignoring Beauty once "the Novelty of Conversing with a woman in this manner was over" (2: 256). Betrayed by learned men, Beauty marries a self-absorbed dandy. After Bernardo's death, she marries again, selecting a calm, reasonable man, with whom she has three children. Beauty's second husband rules gently, avoiding "the Tyranny of an arbitrary Master" (2: 273). The entire family becomes engaged in discouraging visitors from entering the Castle of Wishes.

Jack Zipes, in Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion, suggests that the best tales are ageless, universal, and therapeutic (1-3). Fielding's tale is most notable for its cathartic properties, given that each female in the narrative describes some form

of neglect or abuse. The fairy godmother figure, so often the savior in children's stories, is herself vulnerable, having been turned into a hare by a sadistic magician uncle. Mothers are shown as clearly ineffectual, and daughters are sensitive to maternal impotence. Infant Beauty informs the Princess that her mother never experienced "a happy Hour in this World" (2: 249). Her complaint echoes that of the correspondent Isabinda, whose mother experiences an equally disastrous marriage to "A fat, gross Man" devoid of tenderness (1: 69). Beauty and Isabinda only narrowly avoid following in their mothers' footsteps. Forsaking scornful intellectuals and narcissistic dandies, these daughters turn to sensible men and consequently make wish denial the focus of their adult lives. Romantic love, the need for erudition, a desire to be treated as a man's equal--all such desires are expressed and repudiated, first in letters and then in a fairy tale about the impossibility of female self-fulfillment.

By the end of Familiar Letters, Fielding has shown how female development occurs within a society where men have a low regard for wives and female children, and mothers are either absent, male-identified, or helpless. An earlier narrative finds Cleora and her mother receiving a meager settlement when Cleora's father dies, leaving his estate to an only son. The two women move to Oxford to economize, and fearing for their future, the anxious widow coaches her daughter on the art of seduction. Cleora becomes "such a Proficient in Cunning, that my Mother's Instructions were no longer necessary" (2: 79). The result of this miseducation is that Cleora marries badly and like Infant Beauty's mother, Cleora's mother dies of

remorse. Mothers are seen functioning as reluctant agents of society, cultivating female wiles and compliance in daughters. Still, their behavior is not presented as a sign of inherent female weakness, as it is in Henry's Miscellanies, where his poem "To A Friend on the Choice of a Wife" accuses mothers of teaching daughters "to cheat, deceive, conceal each genuine Thought." Rather, Sarah Fielding suggests that acquiescence to social and economic pressures requires women to yield, against their better judgment. This theme reappears in Remarks on Clarissa, where Miss Gibson speculates that Clarissa's mother capitulated to an angry husband and a violent son in the mistaken belief "that she might gain more Influence by seeming to comply, than if she had attempted absolutely to resist the storm gathering in the Family" (9). Miss Gibson indicates that Mrs. Harlowe's strategy of appeasement is both ineffective and amounts to an inadvertent betrayal of her daughter.²⁹

Familiar Letters ultimately suggests women's yearning for protective, genuinely instructive maternal surrogates, who encourage girls to learn about themselves and to develop a sense of self-esteem and independent judgment. Neither the controlling

²⁹ Remarks on Clarissa finds Gibson contrasting Mrs. Harlowe's lack of will to Clarissa's unwavering principles. Overhearing Gibson's opinions, a furious father browbeats his daughter and drags her away from the discussion. Lissette Ferlet Carpenter analyzes how Fielding incorporates scenes in her Remarks which correspond to "three installments of Clarissa" (95). Ophelia condemns women's capitulation to men in The History of Ophelia; she tells of a young woman without "certain Provision" who is forced to change her views each time she meets an unmarried man (2: 35). Gerald Newman, in The Rise of English Nationalism, writes about the History of Leonora in Joseph Andrews (1742), describing the seductiveness and expedience practiced by "Leonora's worldly aunt" (66). Ironically, Newman attributes these "generalized hints on French versus English morality" to Henry Fielding, although the letter was written by Sarah Fielding (Battestin and Probyn xxvi).

father nor the compliant mother is seen as a worthy exemplar, or is deemed suitable for providing children with guidance because they are too susceptible to social influences and financial anxieties. This yearning for a nurturing, wise, and unmaterialistic female teacher was one Fielding comes to address in The Governess (1749). Mrs. Teachum, her student prefect Jenny Peace, and a female narrator collaborate to nurture girls at school, away from society and family.

The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy: A Corrective Text

If Familiar Letters (1747) can be said to diagnose the problem of flawed educations as received by both sexes, then The Governess (1749) may be seen as a partial corrective. By showing female mentors interacting with nine girls who attend a country boarding school, Fielding creates a matriarchal world at once reassuring and compensatory. Jane Collier, writing to Samuel Richardson on October 4, 1748, suggested that her friend's goal was to teach girls "how to behave toward each other" (2: 61-64). Nonetheless, The Governess simultaneously instructs adults, illustrating the benefits of allowing girls physical and verbal spontaneity and cultivating personal judgment. The narrative criticizes acquisitiveness, social climbing and class prejudice, sins attributed first to adults. Much as Familiar Letters purports to correct "Female Foibles" while its most pointed criticisms apply to men and parents, The Governess purports to correct children while identifying adult shortcomings. In the former text, women act as the conscience of society, and in the latter, children are instrumental in bringing about the reformation of their elders.

The Governess is not without its feminist admirers. Deborah Downs-Miers, Mary Anne Schofield, and Lissette Ferle Carpenter have begun revealing new dimensions of Fielding's work through the application of a sophisticated hermeneutics of reading. Downs-Miers uncovers a deliberate strategy. She categorizes Fielding's digressions as "parallel texts--fairy tales, dream visions, fables, which actually function as subtexts because their intent is subversive" ("Labyrinth" 310). By attributing motive and conscious method to Fielding, Downs-Miers highlights feminist aspects of the author's seeming artlessness. Carpenter positions Fielding as a successor to Mary Astell and views The Governess as an exhortation to females that they might "develop their powers of thought" (80). Schofield, in Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind, suggests that The Governess teaches readers how to read and offers principles for self-examination (112).

I agree with these perspectives, but am concerned to treat Fielding's work in context. Having deconstructed "polite" education in Familiar Letters (1747) where she shows the extent of maternal helplessness in facilitating change, Fielding offers a matriarchal world in The Governess in which mentors are empowered and work constructively with girls. Mrs. Teachum's academy is a successful vision of cooperation and interdependence. By reaching out directly to children, Fielding acknowledges a potential for change which she seems to question in adults. Still, Fielding had adults to consider and is careful to reassure them that they can control the individualists produced by a more liberal education.

The title page of the first edition sets the tone for amicable female community. Fielding quotes from A Midsummer Night's Dream: "Shall we forget the Counsel we have shar'd, / The Sisters Vows, the Hours that we have Spent, / When we have chid the hasty-footed Time / For parting Us?" The allusion to "Sisters Vows" suggests the same emphasis on friendship which infused Familiar Letters. Furthermore, A Midsummer Night's Dream contains fantasy, portending her own melding of imaginative elements with realism. As Fielding explains in her preface to The History of the Countess of Dellwyn (1759), she took inspiration from Virgil, who in Book Seven of the Aeneid combined "luxuriant flights of Imagination" with useful moral lessons (xxvi). Mitzi Myers observes in her essay "Romancing the Moral Tale" that contemporary critics often falsely assume a "binary opposition" must have existed between "the moral tale" and "the fairy tale" in early juvenile literature (98). Fielding did not see the necessity of this schism, for epic and romance traditions made instruction and entertainment comparably important virtues.

From the point of view of actual reform, Mrs. Teachum's academy offers a happy alternative to the fashionable academies disdained in Familiar Letters. Idle drawing room skills are eschewed, and the girls do not learn by rote. Instead, they accrue knowledge through a combination of introspection and experience in a manner recommended by John Locke and implemented by Mrs. Teachum (Grey 51). In Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693), Locke appropriates Juvenal's teaching: "A Sound Mind in a sound Body, is a short, but full Description of a Happy State in this World" (117). On a similar note, the narrator confirms of Mrs.

Teachum: "this wise Woman knew, that the Faculties of the Mind grow languid and useless, when the Health of the Body is lost" (144). Actual accounts of London boarding schools tell of cramped, confined quarters, where girls lived without the benefit of adequate food, sleep, or physical activity. Stocks and stays were standard equipment. By contrast, Mrs. Teachum's girls walk two and three miles to a Dairy House to eat "curds and Cream"; their activities are punctuated by "Laughing, Talking, and Singing." Often, Mrs. Teachum adjourns lessons so the girls can play outdoors.

Like John Locke and her brother Henry, Sarah Fielding objected to corporal punishment. Jane Collier's October 1748 letter to Richardson suggests the topic remained provocative, even at mid-century.

You know that people are very much divided in their opinions concerning the punishment of children, and in this, as in most other things, they are pretty positive; so that, as soon as it is seen, by this small hint, that Miss Fielding is against corporeal severities all the party of the Thwackums' (as Mr. Fielding calls them) will say at once, that they are sure her notions of education cannot be worth reading . . . (Correspondence of Samuel Richardson 2: 61-64)

Collier added that Sarah was planning a "Book on Education," and feared her liberalism could alienate prospective readers. Given this pressure not to offend "the Thwackums," an allusion to the punitive "divine" in Tom Jones (1749), who believed in the birch rod, The Governess might best be read as a series of careful negotiations between children's needs and wishes, adult demands for control and respect, and the

author's desire to change repressive educational practices.³⁰ Her narrative strategy is duly cautious. Much as Familiar Letters is marked by diffuse narration which creates the sense of group opinion and eliminates a lone female target, The Governess also apportions pedagogical and narrative responsibility among several figures so that readers can decide whose opinions most suit them.

Fielding basically creates a teaching triumvirate. Mrs. Teachum socializes the girls; Jenny Peace, the fourteen-year-old exemplar, rouses the girls to action and thought; a narrator alters her tone over time to fit with the author's desire to seduce her readers into a degree of permissiveness. Mrs. Teachum, described initially as pious, proper, and forbidding, is gently reconfigured as the first days of school pass. The narrator, too, is revised, her harshness replaced by a deepening sympathy for the girls. Jenny remains constant, but has a dichotomized role: she is both "angel in the school" and purveyor of the novel's more flamboyant material in form of plays and fairy tales. After the first week of school, Jenny transfers some of her authority to the young girls, who are encouraged by Mrs. Teachum to "furnish out the entertainment of the Day" (55). The ruse is that each girl's contribution must be morally improving. As adult fallibility is illustrated, the issue becomes who is being improved and toward what end.

³⁰ Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, refers to Thwackum's belief in physical punishment (III: v: 83). In an oblique reference to his sister, Henry Fielding shows the exemplary Sophia Western reading a novel likely to have been David Simple and said to have been written by a woman of "good understanding" (VI: v: 217).

The Governess is dedicated to Mrs. Poyntz, the wife of a Privy Councillor and former maid of honour to Queen Caroline. The dedication traces safe terrain:

The Design of the following Sheets is to endeavour to cultivate an early Inclination to Benevolence, and a Love of Virtue, in the Minds of young Women, by trying to shew them, their True interest is concerned in cherishing and improving those amiable Dispositions into Habits; and in keeping down all rough and boistrous Passions; and that from this alone they can propose to themselves to arrive at true Happiness, in any of the Stations of Life allotted to the Female Character. (A2-vi)

At the outset, the author stresses adaptive virtues. Although the author/narrator is never labelled "she," a gender is intimated. Affectionately, she refers to "our little society" and "our little company," suggesting an insider's presence (186; 85). She shows the girls dressing and going about personal routines. Following the dedication, the narrator shares the fable of the "Mag-pye" with her "little Readers," advising them that if they do not choose their friends wisely, "you will nourish in your Bosoms Serpents, that in the End will sting you to death" (xiv). This severity suggests a harshly didactic text in the making. The fable, which was an approved form of literature for children, promotes a pessimistic view of human nature, and fallibility is swiftly followed by punishment. Here one can see Fielding's difficulty in speaking freely to children while catering to adult demands for the girls' exact obedience.

Taken together, the dedication, preface, and introductory "History of Mistress Teachum" suggest that Fielding is writing not for children but for adults. Ellen Moers comments on how women writers such as Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft,

and Mme Genlis often appeared harsher in print than did male conduct-book writers.³¹ This need to "outdiscipline" male authors is deceptive in Fielding's work. The punitive narrator, once legitimized for a conservative adult audience, is transformed into a kindly observer. By the same token, Mrs. Teachum, who is configured as a traditional mother/teacher, seems less rigid once her credentials are established. As the wife of a clergyman and mother of two girls, Mrs. Teachum is described as having devoted herself to domestic duties until the demise of her entire family. Then Fielding offers the first glimmer that her novel will exceed the boundaries of conduct-book literature. The narrator observes that the Teachums lived in "Harmony and Concord which forms the only satisfactory Happiness in the married State." Her allusion to "Harmony and Concord" is a warning to girls not to marry regardless of the terms. It is further said that Mrs. Teachum resorts to governess work because her inheritance is appropriated by a cunning banker. This element of social commentary was stricken from Mary Sherwood's 1820 adaptation of The Governess; Sherwood indicates that Mrs. Teachum's inheritance dwindles due to her family's extensive illnesses.³²

³¹ Moers speculates that women's greater exposure to children made them stronger disciplinarians than male pedagogical theorists, who had less direct experience with teaching (228).

³² Mary Sherwood's version of The Governess (1820) appears in vol. 6 of The Works of Mary Sherwood. An Evangelical author, Sherwood excised Fielding's fairy tales and emphasized the doctrine of human depravity. She did, however, stress female competence and the need for women to take leadership responsibility; this is evident in Sherwood's fairy tale about a princess who becomes a wise and capable queen under the tutelage of several female mentors.

Fielding makes no radical claims for improved curricula: girls read, write, and sew. There are no allusions to mathematics, science and philosophy such as found in works written during the 1790s. Still, The Governess was ahead of its time inasmuch as female pupils and teachers, both frequently satirized in plays and periodicals, were valorized as Fielding showed readers that women had the potential to teach and girls, to learn. Mrs. Teachum's schoolgirls have pleasing personalities and distinctive physical identities. Jenny Peace has hazel eyes and light brown hair, curled "as never to want any Assistance from Art" (24). Sukey Jennet, twelve years old and genteel, has dark eyes with "a Life and Fire in them"; they periodically flash with impatience (75). Lucy Sly has a high forehead, "a sharp high Nose, and a very small Mouth" (103). The description of Lucy deliberately evokes the proverbial fox of Aesop's fables and provides a vestige of allegory. However, the emphasis on faces also conveys the sense of each girl's intelligence and vitality.

Fielding hedges on matters of discipline and dispels preconceived notions of "feminine" behavior. Mrs. Teachum, who "delighted in pleasing" her students, rewards them with a basket of apples (5). Called away from the garden, she leaves Jenny in charge. The girls begin fighting over the largest apple; they scratch, pull, and bite. As Jenny frets over their wildness, the narrator gleefully depicts a mock comic battle.

Miss Dolly Friendly as yet was not engaged in the Battle; But on hearing her Friend Miss Nanny Spruce scream out, that she was hurt by a sly Pinch from one of the Girls, she flew of this sly Pincher, as she called her, like an enraged Lion on its Prey; and not content only to return the Harm her Friend had received, she struck with such Force, as felled her Enemy to the Ground. (4)

In this episode, the author reveals the ribald sense of humor absent from her adult fiction. The girls' fight resembles Molly Seagrim's churchyard altercation in Tom Jones, where the site becomes "a field of battle" for a group of women who engage in a mock-epic conflagration (4: 8: 124); Molly can be seen hurling skulls and a thigh-bone to combat the "enemy." Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., in Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children 1749-1820 notes that in school stories of the period, fights between girls implied a perilous "general breakdown of the social order" and he indicates that Fielding used the apple fight to discourage unladylike aggression (41). Yet this battle was obviously meant to delight readers, and Fielding's way of circumventing problems with the "Thwackums" is to allow her narrator to revel in a fracas such as Mrs. Teachum would be forced to condemn, were she present. Ruth Yeazell writes that conduct books describe "women's modesty [as] instinctive," but Fielding challenges this point by repudiating standards of feminine delicacy and enabling readers to enjoy their fictive counterparts' lapses of behavior (5).

As Jane Collier commented, Fielding was uneasy about whether or not to reveal her attitudes about corporal punishment. Therefore, the narrator attests to Teachum's anger that her students fight, but equivocates as to the consequences: "Mrs. Teachum's Method of punishing I never could find out," she states (10). However, in a subsequent episode, the girls are shown playing when they hear cries from next door. Peering over the garden wall, they see a woman beating a girl. Jenny begs the woman to stop. The youngest child, Polly Suckling, cries at the sight of the abuse. The woman releases her daughter but explains that the child lies.

Despairingly, she confides to the children, "For tho I am but Poor, yet I will breed up my Child to be honest, both in Word and Deed" (80). Jenny sympathizes but begs forgiveness on the child's behalf. This sets off a spark of remorse in Dolly Friendly, who admits that she has, at times, behaved like the culprit. And so Fielding enacts a dual strategy. On an overt level, Dolly is being rehabilitated. Covertly, children are shown correcting both the working-class woman and adults who favor physical punishment. Authorial beliefs are communicated through the children, who develop the readers' sensibilities. In Familiar Letters, Cynthia condemns the mother who "whips her child till it smarts and then whips it again" (1: 179). Lawrence Stone alludes to Fielding's desire in David Simple to disprove the belief that violence against children was useful or necessary.³³ The Governess reaffirms Fielding's commitment to correcting adult abuses of power.

Although Fielding has never been connected with the romanticism of the early 1800s, The Governess portends attitudes about children as expressed by William and Dorothy Wordsworth, William Blake, and Samuel Coleridge; all see children as possessing natural virtues. They make better teachers than adults, who have been adversely affected by their worldliness. Volume the Last finds Fielding restating her sense of children as positive social and familial influences: David Simple's family, consisting of little Camilla, Fanny, little Cynthia, and little David, whose "Sprightliness and engaging childish, Play gave them continual Entertainment," are

³³ Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 434-35. Stone notes that in David Simple, Camilla's father does not whip his children.

said to possess "A Treasure in their own clear Breasts" (333). Fielding contrasts them with adults: "As they knew not Guilt, they knew not gloomy Anguish of Mind." Similar thoughts are expressed in The Cry where it is said: "Children who have not yet corrupted their minds, with a strong desire of proving one thing more than another, often talk the truest logic" (1: 121). Grown-ups suffer from "imagination" which, unfortunately, have been "pampered and indulged." Rather than seeing children as embodiments of original sin, Fielding depicts them as untainted by artifice. Peter Coveney, writing about romanticism in English poetry, notes that Coleridge conceived of the child as having an "intuitive, imaginative quality of the soul" the poet wished to see preserved into adulthood.³⁴ "Man's moral nature," in Coleridge's world view, emanated from the child (89). Sarah Fielding shows David Simple's children and Mrs. Teachum's schoolgirls embodying these same virtues: they exhibit comparable "feelings of freshness, wonder, and spontaneous joy in existence" (Coveney 86-87).

Despite her generous perceptions of children, Fielding always kept in mind those readers who advocated stringent forms of female socialization. Jenny Peace is meant to be the perfect exemplar, and, being neither a child nor fully an adult, she is in the unique position of understanding both youthful and mature points of view. An orphan placed in Teachum's school by her Aunt Newman, Jenny assists Mrs.

³⁴ See Peter Coveney's chapter on "The 'Cult of Sensibility' and the 'Romantic Child'" in The Image of Childhood 37-51. Dorothy Wordsworth wrote poetry for children from a sympathetic perspective; Susan Levin looks at Wordsworth's efforts "to demystify words, to bring them into a child's context" (119). Sarah Fielding exhibits many of the same virtues in her juvenile writing.

Teachum, taking care not to usurp adult authority. As her name implies, she is expected to help the girls to "live at peace" (12). Acting under the auspices of her teacher, this same docile girl reads aloud the novel's most empowering fairy tale, entitled the "Story of the cruel Giant Barbarico, the good Giant Benefico, and the pretty little Dwarf Mignon." This "subversive" saga, first told to Jenny by her mother, involves the bad giant Barbarico, who torments the pretty Mignon, captive since he was stolen from his parents at age five (Downs-Miers, "Springing the Trap" 314). Although referred to as a dwarf, Mignon is described as childlike--soft, pretty, perfectly formed, and innocent. Lucy Sly identifies Polly with Mignon, as does the narrator, who notes that Polly was "just turned of Eight Years old, but so short of her age, that Few People took her to above Five" (213). Polly has "exact proportion'd Limbs" like her fairy-tale counterpart (214). Clearly, Fielding conjoins the female pupil and the male fairy-tale hero.

One day, the "gloomy Tyrant" spies a shepherd wooing his love (42). Incensed by their "reciprocal affection," he kidnaps Fidus and flings Amata into the stream (43). The good giant Benefico rescues Amata, holding her to "his warm Bosom" until she revives (45). Mignon, hitherto practicing "patience and resignation," gives up on passive endurance (52). He locates the cave's dungeon and discovers the secret of subduing the tyrant. Placing the magic fillet around Barbarico's neck while he sleeps, Mignon sets off to locate Benefico. The shepherd, Mignon, and the good giant return to the cave, where Benefico lops off Barbarico's "yet grinning Head" (61). The

good giant is anointed "Their governor, their father and their kind Protector" (62).

The lovers are reunited and Mignon is revealed to be Amata's lost brother.

The story of the giants, which was so popular it was published under separate cover in America (Boston: Mein & Fleeming, 1768), shows deep-seated desires and wishes being fulfilled. When the dwarf/child marshals his courage, his success is consummate. The diminutive hero saves an entire community, restores its wealth, and acquires a good guardian to replace a bad one who symbolizes tyrannical adults. Children triumph over oppression and the allure of passive suffering is repudiated. In Familiar Letters, Sophronia alludes to "Giants" as the passions and ambitions a woman must subdue in order to earn contentment (2: 30). The Governess reinstates giants as magically powerful figures. Fielding also introduces a pastoral romance between Fidus and Amata, who "flew like Lightning into each others arms" (65). This romance is diametrically opposed to the sensible union exemplified by Mr. and Mrs. Teachum.

By sharing Mignon's tale, Jenny provides a liberating influence. But as female exemplar, she is required to stress moral lessons and does so by reminding the girls that Benefico prevailed on the strength of his "Goodness." The girls ignore the moral of Benefico's "Goodness" and, in true child-like fashion, they react spontaneously. Sukey says she likes the decapitation scene best; Lucy enjoys the point where Mignon destroys Barbarico's power. Dolly wonders at the love interest. Polly explains her greatest pleasure comes from the thought "that it should be in the Power of that little Creature to conquer such a great Monster" (71). The girls' reactions are appropriate

to their ages--an unusual phenomenon for the time. In her preface to The Countess of Dellwyn, Fielding observes that when "children see Tragedies," they are likely to "place their chief Delight in the Noise of the Kettle-drums and Trumpets" (xxxiii). Her awareness of a child's perspective is keen, and she protects the sanctity of this state by giving younger audiences excitement and sensory stimulation.

A belief in the purity of childhood is apparent in Sarah's "History of Anna Boleyn," her anonymous contribution to Henry's Journey from This World to the Next (1743).³⁵ Anna's childhood is joyous because she is allowed the "childish Plays" said to be "most suitable to that State." The narrative goes on to condemn parents who treat their children "as so many Objects of a Tyrannic Power." Sarah's authorship of this "History" has never been indisputably proven, yet with respect to theme, Anna's perspective on childhood foreshadows The Governess. In the story of the giants, adult tyranny is condemned, and the narrator, whom one might have expected to be didactic, refrains from condemning the girls' immature enthusiasms. Children are shown relishing adventure, romance and conquest. They delight in rolling heads. Only after they take their pleasure are Mrs. Teachum's exempla obligingly reiterated by Jenny, who tells the girls to do good, like Benefico, and to endure suffering, like Mignon.

³⁵ Sarah Fielding's anonymous "History of Anna Boleyn" can be found in Henry Fielding's Journey from This World to the Next published in his Miscellanies. Her authorship is remarked upon by A. J. Hassall and J. F. Burrows in "Anna Boleyn and the Authenticity of Fielding's Feminine Narratives" 448. Hassall credits Henry Fielding with seeking out his sister to establish a more "polyphonic" mode of narration. For a discussion of Henry's alleged masculinist attitudes, see Angela J. Smallwood's Fielding and the Woman Question.

This tension between socializing and liberating children can be seen when Sukey reads The Funeral: Or, Grief a-la-Mode aloud. Her school friends delight in Steele's play; when asked by Teachum to recount it, they conjure up images of familial deceit, bigamy, a feigned death, a love triangle, the incarceration of two lovestruck girls by the wicked Lady Brumpton, and the heroism of the faithful servant Mr. Trusty. Following the play reading, Mrs. Teachum reminds the children of Lady Brumpton's "conscious guilt" (206). However, this does not occur until after the girls receive a healthy dose of action-packed literature. Exemplum follows pleasure, and not the other way around.

Mary Anne Schofield, in Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind, identifies Fielding's position as both moralist and imaginative writer, but does not analyze how Fielding manages to subvert her homilies. She does so through a narrative sleight. When Mignon's tale is told, the omniscient narrator offers the children's perspective. Jenny provides the empowering tale and counters it with a reminder that the girls should seek moral lessons. Mrs. Teachum, as the voice of propriety, remains discreetly absent. Upon hearing of the day's story, Teachum demystifies fantasy. She explains to Jenny (and to suspicious adults): "Giants, Magic, Fairies, and all sorts of supernatural Assistances in a Story, are only introduced to amuse and divert" (68). "Therefore," Teachum warns, "by no means let the Notion of Giants or Magic dwell upon your Minds." Seeing Jenny's dismay at having been corrected, the governess retrenches. She tells her prefect that fairy tales are acceptable, provided no better activity is on hand and the stories are edifying. For all this posturing, Mrs. Teachum

rarely can be found selecting or monitoring recitations, as do the controlling governesses who dominate Sarah Maese's The School (1766-72) and Ann Murry's Mentoria (1778). It is only on one occasion that Mrs. Teachum dictates material: she asks Jenny to read aloud from Edward Moore's Fables for the Female Sex (1744), in which girls are advised to imitate the nurturing "Dove."³⁶ Otherwise, the novel encourages pupils to choose and defend their own choice of material. To some extent the students must be seen as learning self-regulation; however, Mrs. Teachum's adroitness in rationalizing Jenny's selections enables readers to master the equally valuable art of self-justification.

Given Fielding's concerns about adult disapproval of her methods, Mrs. Teachum's absences are handled gingerly; the headmistress insists she wants to hear each girl's history but fears her presence "might be a Balk to the Narration" and would inhibit confessions (78). Jenny dutifully transcribes each girl's history for the governess. Amusingly, Sukey's alleged "confession" reveals adult shortcomings. Sukey's mother dies and her father remarries, leaving her in "the Care of an old Servant" (76). The servant over-indulges her so much that she loses all sense of right and wrong. Sukey begins to beat "a little Play-Fellow," the daughter of one of her father's employees, abetted by the live-in governess who rationalizes that Sukey beats "but a Servant's girl" (77). The private governess is made to seem inadequate compared to the combined forces of Mrs. Teachum and Jenny. The academy is

³⁶ "The Assembly of the Birds, a Fable" is taken from Edward Moore's "The Sparrow and the Dove" in Fables for the Female Sex (1744). Ruth Yeazell considers Moore's relationship to conduct books in Fictions of Modesty 46-47.

represented by the narrator as a "well-regulated family"; as such, it is superior to Sukey's home. (113)

As in Familiar Letters, repetition in anecdotes lends emphasis to important issues. Lucy Sly makes a "confession" similar to Sukey's. Lucy's sickly mother entrusts her to a private governess, who, every time Lucy does something wrong, blames the mishap on a servant. Lucy breaks a china cup and hides it in the Foot-boy's quarters. The boy is whipped, although Lucy and her governess know she is responsible. Sukey and Lucy apologize for past wrongs, but the adult reader knows the governess is guiltier than the child, and the parent more culpable than the governess.

The doubling of bad governesses, indifferent parents, and victimized servants indicates where the author's sympathy lies. In "Romantic Literature and Childhood," Jonathan Cook explains how during the late eighteenth century, "childhood becomes a highly sensitive register for revealing the particular class interests which might underlie attitudes toward the child" (46). Cook focuses on Blake's "Songs," where children such as the chimney sweep speak poignantly of their abuse. Fielding does not give voices to the poor, but her middle-class girls acknowledge their participation in an exploitative system. On another occasion, the girls walk home from a dairy farm run by a "good old Woman" who gives them delicious things to eat (116). En route to the school, they encounter a beggar. Mrs. Teachum grows suspicious, warning the girls not to be tricked by men who "were Lazy and would not work" (117). Dolly pipes up that the man looks famished; ignoring Mrs. Teachum, each girl

gives the beggar the amount she chooses. They proceed back to school for supper, prayers, and bed.

The beggar incident shows thoughtful girls learning to make their own decisions about their elders. On the ninth day of school, the girls walk past a nobleman's estate. Mrs. Wilson, the housekeeper, overhears them admiring the stately home. She invites the children to view the premises, since her employers are visiting London. The girls view rooms adorned by tapestries, paintings, ornate needlework, and "a Variety of dazzling gaudy Things" (222). Mrs. Wilson, who like the old dairy woman and the narrator takes "Delight in giving them any pleasure," offers sweetmeats, while graciously answering questions (223). "How happy must the Lord and Lady of this fine Place be!" a delighted Polly exclaims (223). Jenny reminds them of Mrs. Teachum's edict, that happiness springs from "the content of our own Minds." Mrs. Wilson concurs, adding that her Lord and Ladyship are impervious to their accommodations. Betty independently compares Lord X's estate to the wicked Barbarico's treasure hall. In an earlier fairy tale, "The Princess Hebe," the girls learn of Brunetta's castle, where beneath a facade of "Pleasure and Delight" people engage in "Screams and Howling" (169). Nanny Spruce thinks to compare Lord X's estate to Brunetta's opulent castle, she and Betty draw analogies between the wicked inhabitants of fairy tales and the self-indulgent gentry. By using fairy tales to comment on the lives of dissipated gentry, the girls show the ways in which disparaged forms of "make-believe" have real-life implications. The shallowness of aristocratic life is explained for younger readers; older readers learn the relevance

of "childish" fairy tales. Fielding believes in the girls' finer judgment and common sense, and consequently she uses students to instruct readers. Although mentoring figures give the impression the girls are being improved, the subject most commonly being reformed is a foolish, vain, and materialistic adult. Because stories are told through collaborative effort, age differences are often erased; teacher, students, and a housekeeper like Mrs. Wilson become equals in understanding, sharing a mutual awareness of flawed elders and self-serving social superiors.

Adults are implicated again in the episode where Lord Delun's daughters visit Jenny at school one Sunday. The eldest, Lady Caroline, wears "a Pink Robe, embroider'd thick with Gold, and adorned with very fine Jewels" and plays with a diamond cross "that hung down on her Bosom" (184-85). The narrator indicates that Caroline and her sister have learned their ostentatious ways from Lord Delun, who represents money without breeding and title conferred without a sense of its attendant responsibilities. Caroline's diamond cross symbolizes the commodification of religion, a theme apparent in Volume the Last, where Mrs. Orgueil quotes St. Paul to justify her acquisitiveness (359). Sarah Fielding offers the same values to children as she does to adults, only in a simplified form. Her feelings about the relationship of marriage to money are reflected in "The Story of Caelia and Chloe," as told to the girls by Dolly. Taken into an aunt's care, two orphaned and penniless cousins are pursued by men who mistake them for heiresses. When Caelia and Chloe reject these social climbers, they earn "the Name of Jilts" (87), a term applied to heroines in Familiar Letters, usually when they spurn the attentions of coxcombs.

Both cousins fall in love with the earnest young Sempronius. Chloe tries to entice him, but the more virtuous Caelia wins his affection. Once Chloe repents, Aunt Amanda agrees to divide her estate equally between both nieces at the time of her death. Amanda arranges it so that "in her lifetime, there was no occasion of settlements, or Deeds of Gift, for they lived all together and separate Property was not so much mentioned or thought on in his Family of Harmony and Peace" (101).

When Dolly finishes, Jenny dutifully reminds the tearful, overjoyed girls of "the miserable Effects that attend Deceit and treachery" (102). Yet there are no "miserable Effects" to speak of. The story ends with economic parity established between married and unmarried women. The girls learn that a "jilt" is a female who has been falsely labelled by fortune hunters, and that familial harmony can be brought about through shared material comfort. In this tale, a heroine is shown caring more for her cousin's affection than for the admiration of any suitor. The emphasis on female friendship seen in the Familiar Letters is reiterated for younger readers; Celia and Chloe represent the sisterhood invoked by Fielding's quotation from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

A comparison of Familiar Letters and The Governess suggests that Fielding expressed a consistent philosophy and reiterated the same beliefs, whether writing for children or adults. The double-edged nature of her narratives resulted primarily from her need to address more than one audience--in the case of the Letters, men and women, and in the instance of The Governess, parents, educators, and children. She was clearly an educational reformer, but hoped to please (and appease) her

readers. Sarah Fielding understood the human psyche to be quite complex and never could have written a straightforward conduct book. Samuel Richardson wrote to her on December 7, 1756, in praise of Familiar Letters:

Have re-perused them with great pleasure, and found many new beauties in them. What a knowledge of the human heart! Well might a critical judge of writing say, as he did to me, that your late brother's knowledge of it was not (fine writer as he was) comparable to your's. His was but as the knowledge of the outside of a clock-work machine, while your's was that of all the finger springs and movements of the inside. (qtd. in Battestin and Probyn 132)

Sarah Fielding gracefully introduced polemical ideas into fiction, offering readers an unambiguous moral code communicated by strong-willed, sensible females. These women and girls know they are men's equals, and when men fail to acknowledge their abilities, they increasingly rely on one another for affirmation. In this regard, Sarah Fielding was in the vanguard of eighteenth-century pedagogical reform. She was also a literary innovator whose enlightened vision of female education was well served by her narrative experiments.

Chapter 3

"Defective Organs, or a Mistaken Education": Nature versus Nurture in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft's writings are difficult to assess for several reasons. Copious biographical data exists about her, as it does not for more obscure eighteenth-century female writers such as Sarah Fielding. As a result, Wollstonecraft's works have often been read through the lens of biography, almost as involuntary responses stemming from an unhappy childhood and personal difficulties she faced as an adult. Another problem posed by the pervasive biographical emphasis is that Wollstonecraft enjoys mythic status within contemporary feminism. Critics pay homage to A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) in particular; Cora Kaplan lauds the polemic for having "set the terms for a debate that is still in progress" (155). Mitzi Myers refers to Wollstonecraft's articles in Joseph Johnson's and Thomas Christie's Analytical Review as the work of a "pioneer feminist critic" ("Sensibility" 121-39). Frances Ferguson defends Wollstonecraft from charges of having echoed an Enlightenment discourse steeped in class prejudices and applauds her for writing undisguisedly as a woman, for confronting male literary authorities such as Edmund Burke, and for demanding that her audience "learn to read the similarities of reason that link men and women."¹

¹ Frances Ferguson addresses questions raised by Timothy Reiss. See "Wollstonecraft Our Contemporary," in Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism ed. Linda Kaufmann 51-62. Reiss's essay is "Revolution in

The titles of Gary Kelly's and Jennifer Lorch's studies speak for themselves; they are, respectively, Revolutionary Feminism and The Making of a Radical Feminist.²

Given Wollstonecraft's importance to the history of feminism, few have tackled the thorny issue of her ambivalence toward other women, which undermined her calls for educational reform in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and compromised her ideas in the books she wrote for girls. Mary Poovey is one of the few. Poovey views Wollstonecraft as having attempted to transcend "her femaleness" by feigning a level of "disinterestedness" which allowed her to isolate and suppress her emotions.³ Susan Gubar goes even further, claiming that in the Vindication, Wollstonecraft exhibits a "feminist misogyny" equal to "Black self-hatred and Jewish anti-Semitism."

Repeatedly and disconcertingly, Wollstonecraft associates the feminine with weakness, childishness, deceitfulness, cunning, superficiality, an overvaluation of love, frivolity, dilettantism, irrationality, flattery, servility, prostitution, coquetry, sentimentality, ignorance, indolence,

Bounds: Wollstonecraft, Women and Reason" 11-50. Reiss sees Wollstonecraft "trying to readjust the order of beneficiaries, so to speak, in the dominant order" (15).

² Kelly's study points to a philosophical evolution in Wollstonecraft's literary career, as does Jennifer Lorch's Mary Wollstonecraft: The Making of a Radical Feminist. Lorch discusses Wollstonecraft's experiences in Paris with the Girondists as a water-shed period. I question theories of evolution and perceive Wollstonecraft expressing herself differently, depending on her choice of genre.

³ Mary Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer 80. Also see Catherine Parke's analysis of Wollstonecraft's sense of contradictions in "What Kind of Heroine Is Mary Wollstonecraft?" in Sensibility in Transformation, ed. Conger 108-19. Parke takes an optimistic view, claiming that Wollstonecraft became increasingly inventive, moving from determinism toward a desire to "invent the future condition of our earthly existence" (116).

intolerance, slavish conformity, fickle passion, despotism, bigotry, and a "spaniel-like affection." (456)

Gubar, like Poovey, suggests that the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli and other men broke Wollstonecraft's heart and left her with a sense of vulnerability which was, according to Gubar, transmuted into female bashing. Gilbert Imlay is indicted as well, and the critic inquires: "Could the disgust at fallen, fated, or fatal females be self-disgust? (460)." Hence, those who deal most directly with Wollstonecraft's ambivalence trace it to her personal experience rather than presenting her conflicts as symptomatic of anti-female sentiment apparent in the discourse of her time.

My intention is to de-personalize Wollstonecraft's alleged "misogyny" by relating it to English cultural trends and literary practices existing during the late 1780s and 90s, as well as to the prose of other reforming women writers. Wollstonecraft was not alone in urging educational change by disseminating images of incompetent mothers and empty-headed daughters in need of drastic improvement. Her acolyte Mary Hays did the same in her Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous (1793); Hays's preface vigorously protests men's subjugation of women, while the stories that follow it depict mothers giving their daughters superficial educations and teaching them profligacy. One wife, educated in this manner, kills her child because she does not believe in vaccinations: she drives her husband to the brink of bankruptcy and dies from alcoholism. Another woman is so incompetent that her husband is forced to place their children "with his own relations" (42). Even the good wife, Serena, who is devoted to her children, suffers a feminine form of debilitation. Writes Hays: "She had no will of her own (for the little energy she

inherited from nature, had been quenched by the despotic discipline of the good lady (her mother)" (40). Innate female weaknesses, whether intellectual, emotional, or physical, are shown being exacerbated by bad maternal training. Mary Ann Radcliffe, in The Female Advocate (1799), employs a similar strategy of demeaning women: the fallen "Eve in Paradise" is assigned the power and will to corrupt "innocent and inexperienced young men" (418). In each case the reforming woman writer panders to existing prejudices, suspecting that only blatant appeals to male self-interest would motivate her readers.

This represents but one facet of a complex situation. A further problem is that some, like Wollstonecraft, were equally plagued by the question of whether females were inherently inferior or had been handicapped by inadequate education. A November 1790 Analytical Review article on Catharine Macaulay's Letters on Education exposes Wollstonecraft's uncertainty over whether females were "bred fools" as Lady Mary Chudleigh contended in The Ladies Defence (1701) or were naturally inferior to men.⁴ Wollstonecraft, signing herself simply as "M.", praises Macaulay as "this masculine and fervid" writer (7: 309).⁵ "M." acclaims Macaulay's quality of thought, which "either through defective organs, or a mistaken education,

⁴ Wollstonecraft's November 1790 review of Macaulay's Letters on Education can be found in The Works 7: 309-11. Analytical Review articles will be taken from this edition. For a discussion of the Analytical Review, see Gerald Tyson's Joseph Johnson.

⁵ Todd and Butler explain that it was "the usual practice of the day" to sign Analytical Review articles with an initial (The Works 1: 29). Reviews attributed to Wollstonecraft are signed "M.," "W.," and "T.," and the editors acknowledge the possibility that she used other initials as well.

seldom appears in female productions" (7: 322). This type of "either/or" ambiguity riddles Wollstonecraft's prose, signalling a gray area for the author. "M." sees Macaulay writing clearly, logically, and unapologetically in a manner that society (not just Wollstonecraft) associated with male authors. The rare female book reviewer, much as Macaulay was the uncommon female historian, "M." raises the prospect that other women writers, possibly working in female-identified modes such as sentimental fiction, which she deplored in her reviews, may have had "defective organs."⁶ Her non-specific word "organs" evokes the female brain, the womb, or all the internal apparatus combined.⁷

The issue of "defective organs" reappears in Mary, a Fiction (1787), where the narrator lauds the novel's eponymous heroine for being the unusual woman with "thinking powers." The narrator adds: "The female organs have been thought too weak for this arduous employment; and experience seems to justify the assertion." Laurie Langbauer, in an essay on Wollstonecraft and maternity, quotes the first half of this statement alone, so that Wollstonecraft appears ready to refute assumptions about female weakness. Langbauer selectively reads "organs" as not "the womb but

⁶ In the Analytical Review, Wollstonecraft took Charlotte Lennox and Elizabeth Inchbald to task for excessive sensibility. She criticizes Lennox's novel Euphemeia (1790), writing the author's "notions of female delicacy and reserve are carried as far as any sentimental French writer ever pushed them" (The Works 7: 308). She condemns Inchbald's A Simple Story (1791) for giving "sanction to the libertine reveries of men" (The Works 7: 370). Wollstonecraft faults Inchbald for making women appear weak, but commonly depicted women as weak herself.

⁷ See John Mullan's chapter "Hypochondria and Hysteria" in Sentiment and Sociability 101-241. Mullan cites a number of medical manuals from 1729 onward, isolating hysteria as a female disorder related to heightened sensibility.

the mind"; however, the narrator of Mary does not seem sure. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman reiterates this uncertainty over who and what was responsible for women's degradation. Observes Wollstonecraft: "That woman is naturally weak, or degraded by a concurrence of circumstance, is, I think, clear" (52). While this ruminating voice denies there is any urgency to resolving the issue of nature or nurture, a chapter promoting coeducational schools takes its impetus from the idea that males and females were intellectually equal. Poor schools left girls physically and mentally "weak"; back braces and "wearisome confinement" enfeebled them (169; 164). But Wollstonecraft does not sustain this line of reasoning, instead reverting to allusions about women's "weak heads" (186). Nagging doubts about nature or nurture undermine Wollstonecraft's positive recommendations, the result being that her vacillations discredit the subjects whose well-being she expects to promote.

Mary Wollstonecraft herself received minimal formal schooling. She cultivated her own genius with little help and was proud of having transcended the limits imposed upon women. As a child, she experienced several years of day school; during her teens, she was assisted in her studies by a neighbor, Dr. Clare, who introduced her to serious literature. Biographers document her relationship to a weak, helpless mother and a tyrannical, abusive father with little regard for female education.⁸ Her parents favored their son Edward, who was groomed to become a lawyer and acquired the bulk of their diminished estate. Known for her nurturing

⁸ Claire Tomalin, The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft; Emily Sunstein, A Different Face: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft. Sunstein writes of the author: "The original battlefield was her home" (12).

impulses toward relatives and friends, Wollstonecraft supported herself and others by working in a succession of "female" occupations. She started out as a paid companion, after which she and her sisters Everina and Eliza, and her close friend Fanny Blood, ran a boarding school in Newington Green from 1784 to 1786. The school ran out of funds after Wollstonecraft left to join Fanny, who had married and moved to Lisbon in 1785; after Fanny died during childbirth, a despairing Wollstonecraft returned to England. She spent a year in Ireland as governess to the daughters of the Kingsboroughs, a landed, titled family whose affluence and affectations left Wollstonecraft feeling "declassed and depressed."⁹

Letters to Everina and Eliza, to Fanny's brother, George Blood, and to her future publisher, Joseph Johnson, confirm her unhappiness about working in a menial position. She writes to Eliza on November 5, 1786, of how Lady Kingsborough "is a clever woman and a well meaning one; but not of the order of being I could love."¹⁰ She speaks fondly of her three charges; the oldest, a girl of fourteen, is vaguely fearful of her mother, as is the governess. Although Wollstonecraft contends

⁹ See Mitzi Myers, "Pedagogy as Self-Expression in Mary Wollstonecraft: Exorcising the Past, Finding a Voice," in The Private Self, ed. Shari Benstock 198.

¹⁰ The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. Ralph Wardle 123. Wardle's preface provides a useful synopsis of her life. Also see Janet Todd's chapter "The Unsex'd Females" in The Sign of Angellica 236-53. An awkward relationship between mothers and private governesses can be seen in Elizabeth Appleton's Private Education: Or, A Practical Plan for Studies of Young Ladies (1815). Appleton describes governesses as upper servants whose needs should be gratified in minor ways. Amusingly, Wollstonecraft's review of Macaulay's Letters on Education sides with parents. Wollstonecraft questions Macaulay's faith in the "sobriety, discretion, and wisdom" of "governors and governesses" and complains that hiring such help can be "difficult" and produce "anxiety" (The Works 7: 311).

she is well treated, she informs Eliza that she senses her "inferior station." Referring to the eldest daughter as "my sweet little girl," Wollstonecraft hints at a competition with Lady Kingsborough, toward whom she feels morally and intellectually superior.

She writes bitterly to Everina on November 17, 1786:

Confined to the society of a set of silly females, I have no social converse. . . . Lady K's animal passion fills up the hours which are not spent in dressing. All her children have been ill--very disagreeable fevers--Her Ladyship visited them in a formal way--though their situation called forth my tenderness--and I endeavored to amuse them while she lavished awkward fondness on her dogs--I think now I hear her infantine lisp--She rouges--and in short is a fine Lady without fancy or sensibility. (126-27)

Wollstonecraft's allusion to Lady K's "animal passion" refers to her lapdogs; this image of the fine lady coddling her pet appears in Mary as a metaphor for decadent court culture and the maternal neglect of children. Her correspondence can be seen as the genesis of the more-than-a-mother posture she was later to assume in literature. In April of 1787, she complained to Joseph Johnson:

Confined, almost entirely to the society of children, I am anxiously solicitous for their future welfare, and mortified beyond measure, when counteracted in my endeavours to improve them. (148)

Wollstonecraft hints at her growing displeasure over being relegated exclusively to child care; at the same time, a more open conflict between the society lady and the proud governess appears, as Wollstonecraft claims to "feel all a mother's fears" in a way that the indifferent Lady Kingsborough apparently does not. Within a year Wollstonecraft was dismissed and Johnson, whom she relied on for "support and comfort," helped her relocate to London (Tyson 106). She began writing full-time, nursing an abiding sense of the degradation of being involved in a vocation which

accorded females no social status and little money, and for which they had been ill-prepared as the result of their own meager educations.

The concept that an idealized male mentor might compensate for the deficient, ineffectual mother is first seen in Wollstonecraft's philosophical "fragment," The Cave of Fancy (1787), published by her husband, William Godwin, after her death. The Cave focuses on a girl who is rescued from a shipwreck by a wise old man named Sagestus, who discovers her while she is trying to revive her drowned mother with a kiss. Sagestus makes inferences about the mother's mind and temperament on the basis of the corpse's appearance.

On observing her more closely, he discovered that her natural delicacy had been increased by an improper education, to a degree that took away all vigour from her faculties. And its baneful influence had had such an effect on her mind, that few traces of the exertions of it appeared on her face, though the fine finish of her features, and particularly the form of the forehead, convinced the sage that her understanding might have risen considerably above mediocrity, had the wheels ever been put in motion; but clogged by prejudices, they never turned quite round. . . . (1: 197)

The sage implicates nature along with nurture: the woman's "natural delicacy" is compounded by an "improper education." Neither factor appears within the fine lady's control, yet she is more censured than pitied. Appraising the corpse, Sagestus "was now convinced that the orphan was not very unfortunate in having lost such a mother" (1: 128). He adopts the girl, renaming her Sagesta, and considers how best to educate the child. Christine Battersby describes Sagestus as a "magician"-like figure who resembles Prospero from The Tempest, and Nicola Watson characterizes

him as a "revised Rousseau figure."¹¹ In terms of maternal influence, Wollstonecraft disposes of the lady of quality twice over: she drowns, and then her corpse is dismissed by a sage who teaches her daughter about love and duty.

Battersby concludes of this story: "Wollstonecraft wants to increase the power that women can exercise over their own lives; but she tends to equate all power with maleness" (92). This conundrum can be seen in the Vindication where Wollstonecraft contrasts the physical strength of men and women, indicating that in this regard, men will always maintain their superiority. But more important than that, Wollstonecraft associated physical prowess with mental agility; she imputes an "iron frame" to the male literary genius. The analogy in Wollstonecraft's own life might be seen in her attitude toward pregnancy. Letters to Everina (September 20, 1794) and to her American friend Ruth Barlow written from Paris (May 10, 1794) describe an easy labor with Fanny, followed by only one post-partum day spent in bed.¹² The author compares her own sturdiness to typically enervated women; her pride in her physical stamina is matched by her sense of herself as an intellectually exceptional woman.

While the frail, dissipated lady in the Cave of Fancy may have been Wollstonecraft's projection of Lady Kingsborough, who is seen being drowned by an

¹¹ Battersby 94; Nicola J. Watson also refers to the sage as a "father surrogate" in Revolution and the Form of the British Novel 1790-1825 58.

¹² Collected Letters 255. Wollstonecraft writes to Ruth Barlow about how "nothing could be more natural or easy than my labour." She expresses similar feelings to Everina (261-62). Margaret George discusses Wollstonecraft's pride in not being slowed down by pregnancy in One Woman's Situation 123.

irate former employee, the tale has another, less biographical dimension. Wollstonecraft attempted to translate Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: For the Promotion of Knowledge and the Love of Mankind (4 volumes, 1775-78), but her version was superseded by Thomas Holcroft's. Essays on Physiognomy reflects the view that by reading a man's countenance and carriage, one could determine his nationality as well as discern the degree of his intelligence and character. Much as Sagestus "reads" the drowned mother's face and detects her inferiority, Lavater "read" men's features to ascertain their genius. Women appear in Chapter Thirty-three, where the Swiss author explains his experience with females has occurred primarily "at the theatre, at balls, or at the card-tables, where they may best be studied" (171). Regarded as basically social creatures, women are said to be by nature, "pure, tender, delicate, irritable, affectionate, flexible and patient." "All their organs are tender, yielding, easily wounded, sensible and receptive" (175). Lavater's opinion of women, including his lack of specificity about "organs," echoes medical manuals of the mid-1700s which chronicled female hysteria, hypochondria, and hyper-sensitivity.¹³ Given what was perceived to be women's predisposition to somatic and mental disturbances, Lavater indicates they were destined to be subordinate to men. Moreover, Wollstonecraft was religious: Lavater quotes Corinthians to support the concept that women build on the foundation established by a more mentally and

¹³ Mullan, in Sentiment and Sociability 228, writes of how "models of a sensitized body reach a higher level of sophistication in the 1760s and 1770s with the development of schemes of nervous organization." Medical manuals like Dr. William Buchan's allude to the more delicate constitutions of females, although his goal is to make them less so.

physically capable gender; he reminds readers that Eve was more susceptible to temptation than Adam. Essays on Physiognomy exemplifies how the Bible was used as a prop for pseudo-sciences prone to allocating attributes by gender. Superior in their receptivity, but inferior in their likelihood to be swayed by others, women who defy this essential nature by showing passion or making threats, writes Lavater, "are no longer women, but abortions" (176).

Lavater's treatise had a following among Dissenters: a letter from Henry Fuseli supporting his theories is included in Holcroft's translation, and Mary Hays quotes liberally from Lavater in Letters and Essays. During the latter half of the century, Swiss and German authors were accorded intellectual stature by reform-oriented English groups. Lavater's work was not Wollstonecraft's only translation project. She translated and adapted Moralisches Elementarbuch by Christian Gotthilf von Salzmann as Elements of Morality (1790). Gregory Maertz, in a paper entitled "Wollstonecraft and the Mediation of German Culture in Eighteenth-Century England," comments:

For Wollstonecraft and other women writers, dissenters, Scots and foreigners, a grounding in German culture substituted for the Oxbridge or public school education based on Latin and Greek that was denied them on account of their gender, social background or religious affiliation. But then German culture offered its mediators in England more than mere compensation; its appeal consisted in its scientific-critical orientation and a dynamic configuration of humanism based on historicity, psychology, and subjective emotion that contrasted with the more static definition of human nature privileged by the Enlightenment.¹⁴

¹⁴ Maertz notes Fuseli's close friendship with Lavater and sees Fuseli mediating much of the German literature introduced into England.

Maertz points to the usefulness of German culture as an alternative to elite English education, from which these groups were excluded. Gotthilf von Salzmann translated the Vindication into German, which also indicates that a mutual enrichment could result from these cross-cultural relationships. But despite these new trends, the concept of innate gender differences prevailed and gained leverage from science and romanticism. Females often found themselves with a collective identity, forged, along with Eve's, back in the garden.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was another Swiss author, like Lavater, whom Wollstonecraft admired; she read Émile (1762) while working as a governess. Writing to Everina in 1787, Wollstonecraft responded immediately to Rousseau as a brilliant writer and a kindred spirit: "He was a strange inconsistent unhappy clever creature--yet he possessed an uncommon portion of sensibility and penetration" (Collected Letters 145). Wollstonecraft's adult heroines Mary and Maria possess this same crucial blend of feeling and reason. Battersby imagines Wollstonecraft's anger when encountering Émile's intended bride, the barely literate, domesticated Sophie.

A class of selfless servants was needed to prop up a society of strong, unique, authentic male egos. For Rousseau, women were the obvious candidates: they were needed as professional mothers, housekeepers, managers, wives and sex-objects. (94)

Wollstonecraft identifies with Rousseau's acumen, but she and Sophie have the bodily affinity; in the Vindication she suggests that the male author wants to sustain this dichotomy by keeping women "in profound ignorance" (87). Wollstonecraft's specific objections to Rousseau's demeaning attitudes toward women have been well analyzed by Patricia Yaeger, who sees the polemic in terms of its commitment to a

"disabling of Rousseau's authority" (173-74). But Wollstonecraft was not firmly devoted to "disabling" Rousseau. Rather, her identification with his genius required her to divide herself into male and female components. This schism is evident in Mary, which opens with a quotation from Rousseau: "L'exercice des plus sublimes vertues élève et nourrit le génie" (1: 5). Rousseau becomes the novel's spiritual mentor; at the same time, the exemplary heroine Mary is said to be antithetical to Richardson's *Clarissa*, his *Lady Grandison*, and Rousseau's *Sophie*.

Wollstonecraft's literary relationship to Shakespeare is equally problematic. Susan Wolfson considers the extent to which misogynistic remarks by Othello and Hamlet are paraphrased in the Vindication.

Wollstonecraft speaks with Hamlet to name a problem, but doing so requires her to use the voice of a male misogynist, and for the sake of her authority, to disassociate herself from "the present condition of [her] sex"; conceding Hamlet's point, she rewrites his differentiating "you" as a "they" from which she implicitly exempts herself.¹⁵

Wollstonecraft reacts to Hamlet's condemnation of treacherous women by alluding to women as "they," and in doing so, attempts to distance herself from male perceptions of a debased female nature. What Yaeger and Wolfson describe are parallel dilemmas experienced by Wollstonecraft when she approaches the works of well-known and often-cited male authors. Her authorial legitimacy, to some extent, hinges upon references to canonical texts. Wollstonecraft identifies with Rousseau and Shakespeare as Promethean literary figures and senses she has little in common

¹⁵ Susan Wolfson, "Explaining to Her Sisters: Mary Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare," in Women's Revisions of Shakespeare, ed. Marianne Novy discusses Wollstonecraft's feelings about Shakespeare's tragic heroes (17).

with their heroines. Although she challenges negative conceptions of women, Wollstonecraft does not feel free to refute them entirely, for experience suggests there is some basis for male condescension. Hers is a complex subject position. However, it is rendered even more difficult by the gender schisms Wollstonecraft perceived in the works of these male authors.

During the eighteenth century, a pervasively gendered discourse reinforced the polarization of male and female. Gary Kelly observes that the language itself was fraught with "masculine" and "feminine" distinctions (108). As Margaret Ezell writes: "The vocabulary of critical praise is masculine," although she qualifies this by saying that "the literary standard of excellence so defined was attainable by either sex" (72). Problems arising from gendered discourse can be seen in William Godwin's Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1798), his defense of his deceased wife's career. Godwin's Memoirs compliment the prose of the Vindication by calling its most compelling features "masculine" (15).

The strength and firmness with which the author repels the opinions of Rousseau, Dr. Gregory, and Dr. James Fordyce, respecting the condition of women, cannot but make a strong impression upon every ingenuous reader. The public at large formed very different opinions respecting the character of the performance. Many of the sentiments are undoubtedly of a rather masculine description. The spirited and decisive way in which the author explodes the system of gallantry, and the species of homage with which the sex is usually treated, shocked the majority. (231)

"Masculine" prose is equated with active virtues. Wollstonecraft's writing is "spirited" and "decisive"; it is marked by "strength" and "firmness." She "explodes" the dichotomy of masculine and feminine perpetuated by male conduct book writers and

Romantics such as Rousseau, who would make women an object of man's pleasure. Ironically, Godwin is required to "masculinize" Wollstonecraft before she can be seen to refute masculinist assumptions. He then must reassure readers that her decisiveness is borrowed. Her "occasional passages of a stern and rugged feature," Godwin clarifies, do not reflect "her fixed and permanent character," but "belonged to her character pro tempore."

The female polemicist must be temporarily metamorphosed; after completing her task, Godwin implies, she returned to her "permanent" status. Godwin's convoluted defense of Wollstonecraft's writing hints at the difficulty women had in expressing their true opinions on any subject, let alone in genres of their choice. Even if women writers did not internalize the dichotomy between the docile (female) and vigorous (male) writer, they had to react to being hybrid figures; Nancy Cotton alludes to a "phoenix" syndrome suffered by eighteenth-century female playwrights, "Astreas" and "Orindas," who were forced to consider their talent masculine.¹⁶ Richard Holmes notes that when Wollstonecraft writes to Everina about Fanny, her first daughter, she describes the toddler glowingly as "my little girl, who is more like a boy--she is ready to fly away with spirits--and has eloquent health in her cheeks and

¹⁶ Cotton 209. In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft states with respect to Macaulay: "I will not call hers a masculine understanding, because I admit not of such an arrogant assumption of reason" (105). Yet in the *Analytical Review* (Nov. 1790), she commends Macaulay for being a "masculine" writer (*The Works* 7: 309). Such contradictions are prevalent in Wollstonecraft's work.

eyes."¹⁷ This gendered outlook, which makes Fanny a joyous exception to conventional girlhood, shows the writer associating good health and high spirits with boyhood, which was logical given the cliché of male activity and female passivity.

Another equally vexing problem was posed by the tension Wollstonecraft experienced between the lure of romanticism and the call of activism, based on her perception of women's actual situations. Wollstonecraft wanted educational institutions to replace haphazard forms of schooling for girls; genders and classes would intermingle, at least until age nine, at which point working-class children would be channeled into vocational schools while middle-class boys and girls would continue to study academic subjects. At the same time, Wollstonecraft believed that genuine intellects, such as Rousseau's and her own, did not require institutions. In a March 1787 letter Wollstonecraft informs Everina, "a genius will educate itself" (7: 145). Autodidacticism becomes a badge of character, rather than a disadvantage, which it was for most women, including herself. This touting of individual genius did not preclude her call for universal schooling, but privately she contended that the most deserving students would naturally teach themselves: this belief is reiterated in her adult fiction, where brilliant heroines like Mary and Maria educate themselves in seclusion.¹⁸

¹⁷ Holmes 25. Holmes suggests that had Wollstonecraft lived, her children would have given her a new perspective on writing.

¹⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria. The heroine Maria is smuggled books in the mental asylum where she has been unjustly confined. Mary, in Mary, a Fiction, compiles her own reading list and is self-taught. Taylor and Luria write about the prevalence of books such as William

Wollstonecraft's first published text was a modified conduct book, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787). Chapter headings include "Moral Discipline," "The Nursery," "Dress," "Love," "Matrimony," "Benevolence," "Card-Playing," "The Theater." Middle-class girls are inculcated with a sense of their future responsibilities in a section called "On the Treatment of Servants." Glimmers of the Vindication appear on pages where the author denounces the triumph of sensibility over reason. "The heart is very treacherous," warns Wollstonecraft, who questions the common sense of the mothers she counsels, adding "and if we do not guard its first emotions, we shall not afterwards be able to prevent its sighing for impossibilities" (10).

It has been suggested that Thoughts differs "only slightly" from other conduct books (Poovey 55). Be that the case, Wollstonecraft's deviations are significant for what they reveal about her image of women and her urge to depict reality. Dr. Gregory's A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (1774), which Wollstonecraft argues against in the Vindication, romanticizes men and marriage. Writing for his motherless and soon to be fatherless girls, Gregory hopes to provide them with a new source of guidance in the form of a husband. The fond father tells his daughters: "I am of the opinion, that you may attain a superior degree of happiness in a married state to what you can possibly find in any other" (105). Wollstonecraft makes no such claim; she writes:

Duff's Essay on Original Genius (1767) which stressed that true geniuses were self-taught (104).

A sensible, delicate woman, who by some strange accident, or mistake, is joined to a fool or a brute, must be wretched beyond all names of wretchedness, if her views are confined to the present scene. Of what importance, then, is intellectual improvement, when our comfort here and happiness hereafter, depends on it. (4: 32-22)

The author adds that if the man is indeed a brute, then education will provide a woman's consolation. This viewpoint is later dramatized in The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria (1798). Maria reads to comfort herself while imprisoned in a mental asylum, where she has been placed by an abusive husband; reading leads to a literary romance with a fellow inmate, Henry Darnford. Thoughts, despite its conventional organization, foreshadows marriage as presented in The Wrongs of Woman. Wollstonecraft offers darkly pragmatic and even subversive reasons why females needed "intellectual improvement."

Wollstonecraft strives to protect females against the illusions perpetuated by Dr. Gregory's and Rousseau's methods of upbringing, where girls are offered little to contemplate beyond "the pictures of their own imaginations." Advising that "reason must often be called in to fill up the vacuums in life," she urges future wives to cultivate themselves and practice Christian forbearance. But realism is undercut by her recurrent doubts about female nature. "Women are said to be the weaker vessel," she quotes from Peter 3: 7, "and many are the miseries which this weakness brings on them" (4: 32). Invoking the Bible, Wollstonecraft wonders if women may be at fault for their current state of degradation.

Cultural and religious conditioning, along with Wollstonecraft's romantic belief in the rare, exceptional woman, leads her to accentuate general female weakness.

"The marriage state is too often a state of discord," warns the narrator, "it does not always happen that both parents are rational, and the weakest have it in their power to do most mischief" (4: 9). Implying that women are "weakest," Wollstonecraft criticizes the "Mamma" who over-indulges her children and treats them as "play-things." Skepticism about maternal prudence leads her to constrict their role: operating as a more-than-mother figure, the narrator would restrict mothers to teaching children "truthfulness," a proper submission to superiors, and condescension "to inferiors" (4: 11). Presented primarily as household managers, mothers are assigned the task of reinforcing domestic hierarchies. Servants, repeatedly deemed "ignorant and cunning" (4: 9, 38), are equated with children: the narrator indicates that mothers should take charge, allowing neither to "run wild" or be "confined too strictly."

Concerns over a debilitated female nature translate into nebulous pedagogical recommendations. The narrator vaguely recommends that children be taught to think, states that writing well is valuable, and says reading provides a "rational employment" (4: 20). But she avoids outlining a specific program, unlike pedagogues such as Erasmus Darwin, the Edgeworths, Priscilla Wakefield, and Clara Reeve, all of whom provide detailed courses of study in an attempt to systematize education. Wollstonecraft's *laissez-faire* strategy is also adopted by Mary Hays in her Appeal to the Men of Great Britain: Hays rather ingenuously contends that "to point out a finished plan of education for the sex in general, is a talk far beyond my moderate abilities" (204). Reforming women can be seen becoming secretive about their

intentions, if not insincere in their self-representation. They obviously felt required to downplay their talents at times, and even to differentiate themselves from other reformers--Mary Ann Radcliffe refers to Wollstonecraft's "Amazonian spirit" and apologizes because the latter has discarded "the gentle garb of a female" in her desire to promote change (399). Their awkward situation required them to minimize their female subjects as well as each other on occasion. Whereas Hannah Wolley, in The Gentlewoman's Companion (1675), instructs women on how to carve a fowl while urging them to study Latin (31), Wollstonecraft touts the domestic at the expense of the academic.¹⁹ "No employment of the mind is a sufficient excuse for neglecting domestic duties," she warns, relying on negative terms such as "excuse" and "neglecting" to communicate women's untrustworthiness. She implies that they may be in need of policing by a strong authority figure, be it the governess figure who narrates Thoughts or a male head of house.

The creed of romantic individualism marks her section on "Reading" in which the narrator refrains from offering "fixed rules." "The mind is not, cannot be created by the teacher, though it may be cultivated, and its real powers found out" (4: 21). Here again, Wollstonecraft indicates intellectual ability is pre-determined. In doing so, she deemphasizes the teacher's importance and the potential benefits to be reaped from universal education.

¹⁹ Bathsua Makin, Hannah Wolley, and Mary Astell all tried to strike a balance between scholarship and women's fulfillment of social and familial obligations. Makin reflects their point of view when she writes "Learning perfects and adorns the Soul, which all creatures aim at" (24).

Wollstonecraft's confusion about her goals for females and her suspicions about their capabilities are manifest in her juvenile novel, Original Stories from Real Life; with Conversations, Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness (1788). The governess, Mrs. Mason, strives to make her female students rational and self-sufficient, while her repressive methods ensure Caroline and Mary will forever behave like timorous girls. Mason overshadows her fourteen- and twelve-year-old pupils. The girls' mother is dead and their father seemingly uninterested, so that the children are completely at the mercy of the governess, who works toward their moral improvement.

Current critical attitudes toward Mrs. Mason are polarized, perhaps further evidence of Wollstonecraft's conflicting emotions over how middle-class girls should be raised, given the circumscribed options available to them as adults. Mitzi Myers applauds Mrs. Mason as a "rational Dame" who sets a fine example of maternal competence ("Impeccable Governesses"). Gary Kelly sees her as a "female philosopher" (Revolutionary Feminism 64). Meena Alexander, on the other hand, aligns Mason with the disturbed caretaker in William Blake's poem, "Nurses Song."²⁰ Alexander views Blake's etchings for the first edition of Original Stories as ironic, related to the character in Songs of Experience who tells her charges, "Your spring and your day, are wasted in play / And your winter and night in

²⁰ Alexander 61. Alexander's perception of Mrs. Mason's cruelty is the more common twentieth-century perspective, filtered through nineteenth-century romantic views of children. Catherine N. Parke also sees Mason as "a tyrant of authoritarian sensibility" (108).

disguise" (47). The caretaker's criticism, with its implicit distaste for physical abandonment, childhood play, and hints of childhood sexuality, is anathema to Blake. Alexander sees the same tendencies in the behavior of Mrs. Mason, whose lessons are "tinged with cruelty" (66).

Both points of view can be effectively argued: Mrs. Mason is a moral mother-surrogate inciting her pupils to become socially responsible; she also inculcates an ethos of self-denial and self-effacement. "Be the modest rose," she tells Mary and Caroline, "not the flaunting tulip" (4: 391). This advice echoes Thoughts, where the narrator confides:

I must own, I am quite charmed when I see a sweet, young creature, shrinking as it were from observation, and listening rather than talking. (4: 11)

In The Female Reader: Or, Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose and Verse (1789), Wollstonecraft's alias, "Mr. Cresswick, Teacher of Elocution," advises girls:

But it is not necessary to speak to display mental charms--the eye will quickly inform us if an active soul resides within; and a blush is far more eloquent than the best turned period.²¹

"Shrinking" and blushing are "modest" virtues touted in conduct books by male authors such as Thomas Gisborne, Dr. Gregory, and Edward Moore (Yeazell 45-46). In Thoughts and The Female Reader, girls are similarly praised for being mute. Caroline and Mary are routinely judged until their entire self-image is derived from

²¹ In Revolutionary Feminism, Gary Kelly compares the Reader and Enfield's The Speaker (1774), noting that Enfield's model was designed for "young men going into professional life" and took on conduct book aspects when adapted for girls by Wollstonecraft (67).

the gaze of Mrs. Mason, who embodies yet another more-than-mother character. The girls' perception of Mrs. Mason is that "she was never in a passion, but her quiet steady displeasure made them feel so little in their own eyes, they wished her to smile that they might be something" (4: 388). So powerful is the teacher that Mary has difficulty at night: "I declare I cannot go to sleep, said Mary. I am afraid of Mrs. Mason's eyes" (4: 389). The girls internalize the teacher's gaze: Caroline, who is subject to occasional gluttony, is shamed when she sees pigs greedily feeding in a trough. Immediately she assumes the spectacle of their gluttony is meant exclusively for her. Catherine Parke, noting Mason's professional, no-nonsense approach to teaching, nonetheless concludes: "Wollstonecraft created in Mrs. Mason a figure on whom the children are so dependent that they are uneasy whenever she is out of sight" (109).

The narrative lures readers in two directions. Mason's desire to make the girls responsible shows a fundamental respect for them, but her withering glances promote a servility Wollstonecraft condemns in the Vindication, where women are described as becoming, through poor training, "either abject slaves or capricious tyrants" (45). Having lost her own family to illness, Mason continually attempts to toughen her charges. As a result, when Caroline is stung by wasps, the teacher tells the injured girl that weeping as the result of bodily pain is "proof of a weak mind--a proof that you cannot employ yourself about things of consequence" (4: 437). Her harshness is justified by religion; she invokes "The Almighty who never afflicts but to produce some good." To some extent, Mason's sternness reflects the tenor of the

times. Wollstonecraft's favorite children's author, Thomas Day, conducted an actual experiment in child-rearing on two orphan girls, Sabrina and Lucretia. Day burned Sabrina with sealing wax "to teach her to bear pain," his goal being to inculcate "Spartan principles with the idea of hardening her nerves and giving her the simplicity and taste of an ideal savage."²² Romantic notions about stoicism were often more misguided than mean spirited.

Nonetheless, Mason exhibits totalitarian instincts as compared to the Mrs. Teachum of Sarah Fielding's The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy (1749), who benignly allows her pupils to frolic and allows them to cultivate wisdom (101). Mason has a different agenda: "I should not value the affection of a person who would not bear pain and hunger to serve me," says the guardian (4: 438). Mason humbles her pupils repeatedly. Caroline spends her small allowance on a trinket, only to become ashamed when she and Mary visit a destitute family in London and Caroline has nothing left to offer the impoverished household. "I am glad," intones the socially conscious Mason, who has no time for childhood foibles, "that this accident has occurred" (4: 445).

Mrs. Mason invites her girls to think about poor tenant farmers, men incarcerated in the Bastille, and struggling merchants who are exploited by their

²² Michael Sadler, Thomas Day--An English Disciple of Rousseau 16. Also see George Gignilliat, Jr., for his comparison of Sandford and Merton and Émile (293). Peter Coveney writes "There are indeed forty-three editions of the work in the British Museum published before 1883" (49). William St. Clair, The Godwins and the Shelleys, provides the story of Lady Montcashel, Wollstonecraft's former student, who adopts the name of Mrs. Mason as a tribute to her former governess (175).

social superiors. However, Original Stories is very much a divided text, for Wollstonecraft's progressive attitudes toward the poor and suffering do not extend to the girls, who are told vignettes which ring with a hollow romantic sentiment the writer renounces in adult fiction. Whereas Mary (1788) and The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria (1798) compare marriage to slavery and the Vindication refers to "legalized prostitution" (60), Original Stories features Mrs. Trueman, the contented wife of a curate. Ladylike and pretty, Trueman is also musical, loves to draw, has numerous domestic qualities, and reserves her accomplishments for the pleasure of family and friends. Wollstonecraft's idealization of marriage and the ultra-feminine Trueman give juvenile readers impressions the author challenged in adult fiction, where she depicts brutish husbands and wives who despise them. Furthermore, the Sly/Trueman parable exalts financial inequality. Mrs. Trueman is contrasted with her cousin, Lady Sly, a cold, deceitful woman whose sole interest lies in her estate. Mrs. Mason stresses that Mrs. Trueman's happiness results from her having been denied her inheritance, which reverts to a male heir. Lady Sly's degeneracy, on the other hand, begins with the substantial legacy she receives from an aunt. Mason's regard for Trueman's poor but honest life is a conceit which undercuts her insistence upon the need for economic "justice" and her sense that charity was no substitute for parity (4:433). Original Stories finds Wollstonecraft vacillating between her desire for reform and a countervailing romantic belief that material and emotional deprivation bred character.

The novel resounds with forms of both types of deprivation, and this becomes even more pronounced when Caroline's and Mary's didactic experiences are compared to those of Tommy Merton and Harry Sandford in Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton (1783).²³ Day's novel for young people was praised by Wollstonecraft in the October 1789 Analytical Review and again in her preface to the Vindication, where she pits herself and Day, as advocates of sensible "women" and not fashionable "ladies," against Dr. Gregory and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (9). Janet Todd suggests Sandford and Merton as "a likely model for Original Stories" (Works 1: 14).

In Day's novel, two male protagonists, the landholder's boy, Tommy Merton, and the farmer's son, Harry Sandford, are of different classes but share one tutor, Mr. Barlow, paid for by the wealthier father, who wants Harry's character strengths to wear off on his own son. Barlow gives the boys a stringent academic program in addition to moral guidance. Tommy Merton is lazy and uneducated at the outset of the narrative; depicted as a mamma's boy, Tommy's lack of character is evident in his abusive treatment of his father's Jamaican slaves as well as his English servants. Rehabilitated by Mr. Barlow, who opens Tommy's eyes to social inequities, the boy borrows forty pounds from his father to help an indigent family. The impoverished mother is so grateful that she throws herself at Tommy's feet in church, while the

²³ Gerald Newman writes about Sandford and Merton's revealing depiction of "two sociomoral worlds" and sees the text as Day's protest against the "anti-national Francophiliac elite in charge of his own country" (100-08). Maria Edgeworth's Professional Education (1808), signed by her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth, recommends Sandford and Merton as an antidote to French decadence (138); the book is compared to Xenophon's Cyropaedia and suggested for boys going into military or naval training.

community looks on in astonishment and approval. At another point in the narrative, Harry rescues Tommy from a snake. Mr. Merton thanks Harry; Mrs. Merton invites the farmer's son to dinner. Says Mrs. Merton to her son's protector: "Well, my dear, you shall be my child henceforth, will you?" (32). Harry responds, "If you please madam; if I may have my own father and mother too." The boys' rewards for cultivating empathy include public approbation, money, and familial love. When Harry saves Tommy, he is offered two sets of doting parents. In Original Stories, although they become equally sensitized to others, the girls cannot lay claim to one loving family. Mary, who adores Mrs. Trueman, is lectured by the woman on the importance of not overvaluing "accomplishments" (4: 435). Despite the reprimand, Mary confides in her sister, "I cannot tell why, But I feel so glad when she takes notice of me." The boys thrive on positive attention; the girls gain their happiness simply from being noticed.

The juxtaposition of these narratives highlights not only unequal forms of education but also divergent reward systems for boys and girls. Caroline and Mary have no functioning parent or teacher other than Mrs. Mason; they depend on the governess for an approval that is never forthcoming. At the book's conclusion, they remain "candidates" for Mrs. Mason's respect (4: 449). She has taught them ethics, morality, and philanthropy--in domestic terms appropriate to the housewife. By comparison, Tommy and Harry study history, philosophy, and astronomy in addition to ethics, and their mastery of facts enhances their confidence. Mr. Barlow supplements but does not replace their parents, who along with a benevolent

community monitor the boys' progress and provide love and support. The mentoring paradigm for boys encourages self-sufficiency through academic studies and multiple role models. As students, Caroline and Mary have fewer and more similar mentors, as well as no apparent academic rigors. They come to fear making independent judgments, and their self-esteem becomes contingent upon the gaze of a "phallic" mother, whose power is complete.²⁴ It might be said that Wollstonecraft's empowering strategy backfires: intended as a role model, Mrs. Mason instead appears to the girls as a figure "too strong to defy and too awesome to emulate" (Dinnerstein 84).

Two subsequent texts for young people, Wollstonecraft's adaptations of Salzmann's Elements of Morality for the Use of Children (1790) and Young Grandison. A Series of Letters from Young Persons to their Friends (1790), likewise encourage girls to slavishly court the good opinion of others.²⁵ Gary Kelly rationalizes these projects as "hackwork" although Wollstonecraft affirmed that, in each case, the authors' views reflected her own pedagogical agenda. Wollstonecraft's preface to the Elements of Morality cites Salzmann for having written "a very

²⁴ For a discussion of the mother's psychic power, see Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur 84. Freud introduces the "phallic mother" in his essay on "Femininity" in New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis 126-27. Jacques Lacan explains Freud's concept in Écrits: A Selection 281-91. Lacan indicates that Freud regarded the phallus as a "signifier" rather than as an actual organ (285).

²⁵ Edna Nixon affirms the Elements' cross-cultural popularity: "Two editions appeared in London and several in America; later it was issued in Baltimore and Edinburgh, and finally in Boston as late as 1850" (59).

rational book" not dissimilar from Original Stories. She states that Salzmann "coincided with me in opinion." In the preface which follows hers, Salzmann explains that his goal is to make children "more obedient, complaisant, industrious, patient, etc." The German author is quoted as writing to mothers:

Your sex has undeniably more tenderness than ours; the female voice is, in general, more persuasive and soft, and more easily insinuates itself into the hearts of children. (2: 11)

The mother's natural abilities are touted; they give her hegemony over, but also relegate her to, an exclusively domestic sphere.

Mary and Charles Jones are the subjects of these stories; Mrs. Jones presides over the household, and Mr. Jones works at a counting house. In the first episode, the family is scheduled to go on a trip, but Mary discovers that due to her neglect, her bonnet is grimy; the disappointed girl is left at home. Wandering around the house, she encounters a servant and offers her a shilling to clean the hat. Mary realizes that the money could have been put to better use had she taken care of her clothes properly. Upon Mrs. Jones's return, she explains to Mary that on another occasion Mary lost her chance to have fruit because the gentleman doling out treats was offended by her dirty face and tangled locks. "What a hateful thing is slovenliness," discovers Mary, who resolves to be well groomed in the future and to keep her sewing basket and her drawers neat (2: 19). She is taught that her hands should constantly be busy. Ministering to the poor, but also managing them, constitutes a major portion of the daughter's curriculum.

The children listened attentively to their father's advice, and the family separated to fulfil the duties of the day. Mary went with her mother

to hear her give orders to the servants, and regulate her household matters; and she did not forget the poor taylor, and his family; she tasted the sago which she intended to send him, and put the wine into it herself. . . . (2: 105)

Nancy Armstrong describes how eighteenth-century conduct books increasingly emphasized practical aspects of domestic economy, including "household management, regulation of servants, planning of entertainment and concern for the sick" (67). Such details permeate Elements, a text in which conduct-book ideology is adapted for juvenile readers. Mrs. Jones instructs her daughter on who is deserving of charity and who is not, a lesson also imparted by Mrs. Mason in Original Stories. Mary's experience with her grimy hat teaches her the value of a shilling; one does not overpay servants for tasks one could perform oneself. Such lessons reaffirm the daughter as a housewife in miniature. While progressive attitudes, such as the importance of religious tolerance, are reflected in the text, advances are less evident with regard to gender.²⁶

Wollstonecraft's abridgement of Mme Geertruida van de Werken de Cambon's De Kleine Grandison, Young Grandison, presents the demurely feminine Emilia: she is the young lady Mary Jones aspires to be. Emilia is praised in letters written by her brother's friend William, who boards in the Grandison home, taking lessons from Dr. Bartlett, along with Emilia and Charles. Writes William to his widowed mother:

²⁶ In Elements, a Jewish dentist is defended when he cures Charles of a toothache; in Young Grandison, the boys protect a young Jewish peddler who is about to be tricked out of his wares. Religious tolerance is a progressive value expressed in both texts and defended by young male heroes.

Sir Charles and Lady Grandison have been for some days from home; but Dr. Bartlett is with us. The house-keeper, and all the servants, consult Emilia, and she, in the most modest manner, tells them what she knows her mother wishes them to do. She is not allowed to command any of them; the housekeeper in particular, a respectable woman, Lady Grandison said, ought not to receive orders from a child; but she behaves with such propriety, they are all eager to oblige her. (2: 235)

Emilia's virtue results from her ability to fill the older woman's shoes without usurping adult authority. Although she receives lessons from Dr. Bartlett, her academic training is subordinated to her moral education. By contrast, William is given a microscope by Lady Grandison, while books and mathematical instruments are supplied by her husband. Charles becomes so stimulated by Bartlett's lessons that he decides to become an astronomer, a vocation the teacher assures him will bring the boy closer to God. Incidents involving Emilia stress her qualities of sympathy. When Lady Grandison falls ill, Charles writes to William:

My mother is out of danger; my sister's letter made me very apprehensive; the tenderness of her nature makes her tremble at the least indisposition that attacks her parents, and she exaggerates the danger, till she is unable to see things as they really are. (2: 314)

The innate female "tenderness" exalted by Salzmann in his preface to Elements becomes a liability for Emilia in Young Grandison, insofar as the daughter excels at daily operations, but her over-identification with her mother disables her in a crisis. Hence the "tenderness" presented as integral to females is double-edged, for the virtue is as likely to lead to poor judgment as to enrich the world with compassion. Both of these narratives, directed mainly toward children, posit an inherent female nature and freight it with serious limitations.

Daughters are expected to replace mothers as caretakers and custodians: this was a primary goal of female education, and encouragement of identity fusion is manifest in other works designed to teach girls, such as Sarah Maese's The School (1776-72) and Ann Murry's Mentoria (1778).²⁷ Mothers, teachers, and good daughters are conflated so as to promote a unified point of view pertaining to women's domestic function. While male characters in Elements and Young Grandison are differentiated on the basis of their professional aspirations and academic accomplishments, girls and their mothers are shown sharing interchangeable personal qualities, identified as "feminine" in scope. In this manner, Wollstonecraft collaborates with her English and continental contemporaries in grooming girls for the generic roles of middle-class mother and household manager.

Lavater suggested that women were social creatures most comfortable at the theater and at balls: Wollstonecraft improves this perception by stressing women's importance within the home, where their area of expertise concerns the proper management of servants. Writing about fiction of the 1800s, Elizabeth Langland observes that "the central task of the Victorian angel" in novels was to reinforce the same hierarchy at home as her husband was perpetuating in business.²⁸ The text of Young Grandison indicates that "angels" were not necessarily a Victorian conceit:

²⁷ Sarah Maese's and Ann Murry's texts are summarized in chapter 1, where I argue that in these texts girls, mothers, and governesses are conflated. Their collective point of view becomes the norm for acceptable female behavior.

²⁸ Langland describes the nineteenth-century household as represented in fiction as the site of "the active deployment of class power" (291).

Young Grandison's wives and daughters are credited with a comparable, intuitive understanding of social protocol. A servant falls sick and Emilia cares for her "as if the poor girl had been her own sister" (2: 237). When cousin Edward reproaches Emilia for waiting on a maid, Emilia chides, "you play with a servant to amuse yourself (and such a degree of familiarity is indeed improper) and I take care of the maid, through pity." Emilia is capable of maintaining a proper master/servant relationship which Edward, through lack of insight, disrupts. Females, cited for pragmatism and compassion, are also seen as having a genius for achieving class stasis; furthermore, this ability is made to seem intrinsic to the gender.

At the end of Elements, Mrs. Jones dies, but not before Mary has assumed her mother's identity: "those who knew her mother, used to say [of Mary], this is another Mrs. Jones" (2: 204-05). Her brother Charles, by contrast, grows up to be simply "a worthy man." Emilia Grandison is last seen helping a sick widow: Emilia goes without a servant (who would have been the widow's daughter) and gives her the wages the Grandisons would have paid a lady's maid; with this gesture, Emilia virtually usurps the daughter's position. William lauds this sacrifice as an act of nobility. By closure, Mary Jones has become the universal benevolent mother and Emilia Grandison earns her place as every mother's sensitive child.

When Wollstonecraft turned her energies to adult fiction an interesting phenomenon occurred. No longer did she feel compelled to idealize a domesticated Mrs. Trueman or a Mrs. Grandison, nor did she urge self-fulfillment through philanthropy. Mary and The Wrongs of Woman show marriage as a dystopia while

disputing the desirability of identity fusion between generations. Mary's singular "thinking heroine" is different from her mother Eliza, of whom the narrator complains: "Many such noughts are there in the female world!" (7). "Noughts" smacks of what Gubar might call the author's misogyny; yet it can also be taken as Wollstonecraft's attempt to escape the confines of the collective female identity she promoted in her juvenile fiction. Wollstonecraft instead forges a strongly individual heroine who acts as a counterpoint to the more representative Eliza, an indolent mother of little use to her remaining two children (two die). The boy is sent to school, and Mary is left at home, taught to read by an aged housekeeper. As in Wollstonecraft's private correspondence, a creed of romantic individualism inflects Mary. In true genius fashion, Mary begins to learn on her own. She develops a reading program consisting of works by Thomson, Young, and Milton, designed to cultivate her sensibility along with her intellect, both of which are requisite to the mature, thinking individual.

Children have no admiration for adults in this text. When Mary's brother dies and she becomes an heiress, the narrator cynically notes: "Proper masters were sent for; she was taught to dance, and an extraordinary master procured to perfect her in that most necessary of all accomplishments" (1: 18). Wollstonecraft reveals the superiority of the genius's self-education, as compared to conventional forms of training designed to ensure the family's fortunes via an advantageous marriage. Everything useful Mary learns, she teaches herself: when her friend Ann falls ill, Mary studies "physic" in an effort to understand Ann's condition. Through reading

Mary realizes the arranged marriage Eliza insists upon is a "dreadful misfortune" (1: 22). Study provides her with insight and a useful skill; although she cannot cure Ann's disease, Mary is later able to prescribe medicine for a poor woman, who recovers (1: 56). The heroine in search of fulfillment comes to prefer older men of genius, whose minds were "of a philosophic turn" (1: 25). Henry, the man she falls in love with, is learned; he improves her mind, which leads her to experience a chaste affection for a hero feminized by his physical frailty and refined sensibilities. "If I had a father, such a father!" Mary thinks, equating paternity with the intellectual gifts Henry has to offer.

Henry dies and Mary's husband, a man she finds disgusting, returns to claim his wife. Tilottama Rajan comments that although Mary is diametrically opposed to her frivolous mother, she makes "doomed attempts to define herself through others," sabotaging her quest for autonomy (226). Rajan's interesting observation of Mary's "vicarious" identity links the latter to Wollstonecraft's juvenile heroines, all of whom are taught to define themselves through service. Despite her attempts to extricate herself from marriage and domestic duties, Mary reverts to a philanthropic role; she devotes herself to nursing the sick and administering charity because she suspects Henry "would have approved." The difference between Mary and Wollstonecraft's juvenile literature is that philanthropy, which is held up as a model of welcome behavior for younger readers, is shown to be emotionally unsatisfying for the adult heroine who craves self-fulfillment and has a sense of creativity. The novel portends

its heroine's premature death through the confluence of nature and nurture: Mary's "delicate" health is further eroded by social demands which enervate her spirit.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), Wollstonecraft's most feminist work, connects women's political and educational disenfranchisement. Wollstonecraft demands that females be allowed to share "the advantages of education and government" (167). Her quest for coeducation, implemented in a national system of day schools, is seen as inevitably leading to females' access to "civil and political rights" (5). The Vindication directly attacks existing forms of schooling seen to foster bad character. In The Wrongs of Woman, Maria's fellow inmate, Henry Darnford, a man of great sensitivity, describes being sent to Eton, where he receives neither "indulgence" nor "respect" (1: 100). Henry implies that he learns about vice at Eton, the result being, much to his shame, that he is sexually initiated by a prostitute. The Vindication labels English boarding schools as "hot-beds of vice and folly" where middle-class children are exposed to the excesses of a dissolute nobility (158). Wollstonecraft recommends day schools as the best alternative, placing "botany, mechanics and astronomy. Reading, writing, arithmetic, natural history and simple experiments in natural philosophy" on the syllabus (168). The latter subjects are to be taught by "socratic" method to further enhance children's reasoning powers.

Coeducation is the cornerstone of her plan, as it was for Catharine Macaulay; both authors were eager to eradicate false conceptions of female delicacy. Paying Wollstonecraft a backward compliment, Town and Country Magazine described her treatise as "an indignant invective against treating women as toys" (June 1792).

Despite this unequivocal rejection of women as playthings, Wollstonecraft's forward-thinking ideas are undercut by corrosive arguments. A homophobic element enters into her attack on female boarding schools:

And what nasty indecent tricks do they not also learn from each other, when a number of them pig together in the same bedchamber, not to speak of the vices, which render the body weak, whilst they effectually prevent the acquisition of any delicacy of the mind. (164)

This charge is not levelled at male boarding schools, where the author perceives middle-class boys imitating their social betters as a more urgent problem. Nina Auerbach, in Communities of Women, suggests that for Wollstonecraft, clusters of females were repellent, as "an embarrassing reminder of the observer's own sexuality, a violation of the right to private distance" (15). Susan Lanser speculates that Wollstonecraft may have experienced a "compensatory conservatism":

the phenomenon whereby someone with marginal politics or status might anchor herself--whether deliberately or unconsciously--in some demonstrably conservative position in order to offset the social and psychic costs of otherness. ("Women")

Yet another possibility is that Wollstonecraft, comprehending her readers' biases, used sexual innuendo to frighten them away from sex-segregated boarding schools and to move them toward day schools, where boys and girls would fraternize in ways that might contribute to the demystification of gender. Radcliffe uses related scare tactics when encouraging men to allow poor women vocational opportunities other than prostitution.

Wollstonecraft often appears to be playing upon her readers' suspicions about a corrupt female nature in order to promote her ideas. Like Radcliffe, she resorts to the image of a concupiscent Eve when referring to eighteenth-century women.

For they are now made inferior by ignorance and low desires, as not to deserve to be ranked with them [men]; or, by the serpentine wriggling of cunning they mount the tree of knowledge, and only acquire sufficient to lead men astray. (173)

Wollstonecraft's primary goal may have been to dramatize how powerlessness leads to "cunning," but in so doing, she elides distinctions between nature and nurture. She indicates that society thwarts women, but so do their "low desires," troped as "serpentine wriggling." Eve becomes the snake-like embodiment of corruption. Women who climb "the tree of knowledge" on their own are shown misusing it. The majority of females, the author demonstrates, are incapable of self-education and perhaps unworthy of tutelage.

Men are not held accountable, either because Wollstonecraft feared they would never accept responsibility or because she believed women were at fault. Mothers alone shoulder the burden of their daughters' dissipation.

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for at least, twenty years of their lives. (19)

Wollstonecraft's tendency throughout the Vindication is to blame mothers alone, as if by making them solely responsible for the fates of daughters she could circumvent the humiliating reality of female dependence.

A comparison of writings by Hays and Wollstonecraft suggests that contempt for the maternal educator was embedded in reforming literature. Hays's Letters and Essays portrays a mother, Sempronia, training her daughters in the narrowest fashion. Her daughter Serena marries a husband who wants to share his love of literature with his wife; when Mr. Melville reads Shakespeare aloud, Serena interrupts "the soul-harrowing scene between Hamlet and his guilty mother, to observe upon a phaeton that passed the window" (38). Fine literature is shown to be best appreciated by men and from this tale, two "guilty" mothers emerge: Gertrude and Sempronia, both of whom stand accused of destroying their respective children. In the process of trying to convince male readers to educate prospective wives more stringently, reformers like Hays and Wollstonecraft disseminated indelibly negative impressions of women.

Wollstonecraft's lack of faith in maternal mentoring led to an interesting valorization of uncles in her work. This idealized uncle has altruistic feelings toward his niece and their relationship is devoid of sexual overtones. The Vindication describes an experiment involving a "sagacious man" who takes charge of his niece, while allowing his wife to instruct their daughter.

The niece, who had considerable abilities, had, before she was left to his guardianship, been indulged in desultory reading. Her he endeavored to lead, and did lead to history and moral essays; but his daughter, whom a fond weak mother had indulged, and who consequently was averse to every thing like application, he allowed to read novels: and used to justify his conduct by saying, that if she ever attained a relish for reading them, he should have some foundation to work upon; and that erroneous opinions were better than none at all. (185)

Wollstonecraft, confirming that she and the male sage "coincide in opinion," uses the story to illustrate how the "female mind has been so totally neglected." But the uncle is seen assiduously cultivating his niece's intelligence; by comparison, the "fond weak mother" ruins their daughter. As in Mary, a "true" parent need not, and perhaps cannot, be related to the daughter biologically. The uncle's advantages as a mentor are numerous: sufficient kinship exists to justify a mentoring relationship and yet kinship is not so close that the daughter must inherit the defects of her biological parent(s). The mentoring uncle, unlike the governess, appears less concerned with socializing his pupil; rather he is interested in providing her with the semblance of a "masculine" education. Unlike the girl's father, the uncle is not implicated in upholding laws of primogeniture. Wollstonecraft felt bitterly about academic and economic favoritism toward sons, and, in this sense, the uncle/niece relationship circumvents some of the inevitable father/daughter tensions, such as seen in The Wrongs of Women, where even a man's mistress takes precedence over his daughter.

The primacy of this benevolent uncle, and his power in shaping a female, is evident in Sandford and Merton, which offers a portrait of a female exemplar, Miss Sukey Simmons; Sukey is raised by an idiosyncratic uncle (her father's brother) who takes over for his niece's deceased parents. The uncle provides a refreshing alternative to the novel's foolish mothers, one of whom, Mrs. Sandford, wants to send her daughters to boarding school "to learn French and music and wriggling about the room"; the other, Tommy Merton's mother, "never let him learn to read, because he complained that it made his head ache" (385; 12). Sukey's uncle, who resembles

Thomas Day himself, is depicted as a contrarian who at "war with most of the polite modern accomplishments" (281). The uncle makes Sukey take rousing cold baths and engage in outdoor activity. She rides "a dozen miles upon a trotting horse" and, like Jane Austen's heroine Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice (1813), is undisturbed by the resulting soiled hems. Sukey's uncle acquaints her with English and French literature, "the established laws of nature, and the rudiments of geometry" (282). Sukey's academic education is tempered by her devotion to domestic arts "now exploded by ladies in every rank and station as mean and vulgar." An idealized patriarch, Sukey's uncle embodies all the possible virtues of a good mother, a conscientious father, and a sensible governess.

Day's novel demonstrates why the uncle as a more-than-father figure might have proved attractive to Wollstonecraft. Not only does he share his ample scientific, literary, and historical knowledge, but the uncle encourages his niece to maintain the courage of her convictions. Sukey's uncle intentionally raises her to be different from other girls. Under his tutelage, Sukey becomes a teacher at a relatively young age: with poise and aplomb, she reads the story of "Sophron and Tigranes" to a gathering at the Mertons' home, establishing herself as a tutor/philosopher in the manner of Mr. Barlow. Tommy is so moved by this story of two friends, one a hunter and the other a peacemaker like Harry Sandford, that he begins to cry and undergoes a moral conversion. Whereas in Wollstonecraft's fiction, female mentors urge girls to perform acts of charity but otherwise define women's appropriate domain as the household, in Day's novel the male mentor transforms his niece into an authority

figure who has intellectual as well as moral force and can alter the path taken by an errant boy.

Sukey is not kept out of the limelight; rather, she is allowed to display her strengths in the presence of others, and in this sense, her enlightened uncle elevates her to uncommon heights. In Wollstonecraft's The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria (1798), her final, unfinished novel, Maria likewise glimpses a finer world due to the care of a benevolent uncle. He is the only adult who shows her any affection, and without his presence, Maria's life would be an unalleviated tale of woe. The uncle is described, as are her parents, in memoirs Maria writes for the infant daughter whom she cannot see because her husband has had her institutionalized. Her memoir functions both as a way to remain psychologically close to the child and as an anti-conduct book inscribing the terrors of girlhood and the tyranny of marriage.

Maria's mother is as ineffectual, and indifferent to her children, as is Eliza in Mary; Maria sees as her "one advantage" her father's brother, the recipient of "a liberal education" (76). The uncle compensates for his self-centered brother and sister-in-law. Wealthy, well travelled, and disappointed in love, he is in a fine position to devote himself to his niece's education. "It is not surprising that I quickly adopted his opinions in preference, and revered him as one of a superior order of beings," writes Maria (78). He provides Maria with books and gives her a sense of the "lofty consciousness of acting right, independent of the censure or applause of the world." As Rhonda Batchelor notes, Maria's uncle enables her to "trust and act upon these subjective perceptions of her authentic, naturally expressed self under

attack by a tyrannical social other" (348). His bravery becomes hers, and his greatest gift is in allowing Maria to be herself as opposed to a dutiful girl.

After Maria's mother dies, the uncle reacts quickly to her dire home situation. Her abusive father confiscates her books on the premise they make Maria "idle"; she is mistreated by her father's pregnant mistress and an aggressive housekeeper (133). Rescuing the young woman, the uncle introduces Maria to "some literary society" (92). He secretly arranges for her suitor, George Venables, to receive a 5,000 pound dowry; although he is duped into believing in Venables's integrity, the uncle is forgiven by Maria, who knows he is her advocate. He pays for her sisters to attend school, proving himself supportive of female education and attuned to her need to protect the younger females in her family.

When the uncle's health fails and he departs for Portugal, Maria suffers at the thought of separation.

The evening before his departure, which we spent alone together, he folded me to his heart, uttering the endearing appellation of 'child' - My more than father! why was I not permitted to perform the last duties of one, and smooth the pillow of death? (105)

Maria's love for her uncle is such that when he dies, Maria feels "widowed" (76). This sense of widowhood is not indicative of sexual feeling, for it is the uncle's celibacy which facilitates their intellectual and spiritual bond and allows him time to cultivate his niece. Their alliance is stronger than anything existing between the daughter, hungry for knowledge and experience, and her repressive biological parents. Like Henry in the novel Mary, who is also an older man and a celibate, the chaste intellectual can approach his pupil without ulterior motives and has no wish

to engage in power politics. "My more than father!" is a chivalric ideal predicated on an intellectual rapport as opposed to having its roots in sexuality. Wollstonecraft revises the Pygmalion myth: the daughter is not taught to become a man's wife, lover, and handmaiden, as in Émile or Hannah More's Coelebs in Search of a Wife, where the daughter is molded to the men's specifications. Maria's uncle almost perfectly understands his niece and shapes her education to match her interests. He takes her side, as opposed to parents who automatically favor sons and award them undeserved educations.

Wollstonecraft struggled with the ending of The Wrongs of Woman and left behind several fragments. Her most complete ending shows Maria successfully reunited with her missing daughter, whom the working-class heroine Jemima restores to her after a valiant search. The mother who has attempted death by laudanum revives when she hears the words "Mamma!" Maria cries "The conflict is over!--I will live for my child!" These three females, of varying ages, survive victimization by men; the narrative implies that they might thrive in a matriarchal world relatively free of the class barriers reinforced in Elements, Young Grandison, and Original Stories. This ending portends a new direction for the writer; Wollstonecraft eschews the stifling fusion present in her juvenile literature, where daughters had to cleave to domesticated women if they hoped for any type of approval. The Wrongs of Woman supersedes Mary by demonstrating that a heroine need not languish and die, but might live for the purpose of raising a daughter. Her posthumously published novel offers Wollstonecraft's most overt acknowledgment that the "customs, of

society," and not female inferiority, hampered women's advancement. Wollstonecraft's indictment of a society that victimized innocent women and denied them legal and educational rights is betrayed by none of the ambivalence which riddled her previous calls to action.

The idea that Wollstonecraft was embarking on a new literary direction is tantalizing. However, it is not reflected in her final work, an anonymous essay entitled "On Poetry, and Our Relish for the Beauties of Nature," published in the Monthly Review (April 1797), a publication geared toward a Dissenting readership.²⁹ "On Poetry" dwells on the pitfalls of formal education for boys, who are said to be taught techniques at odds with the development of their imaginations and their sensibilities. A stilted sublime results, as males produce "technically correct" verse lacking in genuine feeling or spontaneity. Gary Kelly lauds Wollstonecraft's piece for anticipating Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads: in what might have been an indirect endorsement of self-education, Wollstonecraft claims that true poetic creativity stems from natural genius and cannot be stimulated by learning styles inculcated in schools.

While foreshadowing the romanticism of the early 1800s, "On Poetry" is disappointing in two ways. The essay ignores the goal Wollstonecraft set out for

²⁹ "On Poetry" appears in The Works (7: 7-11). Gary Kelly, in Women, Writing, and Revolution, indicates the Monthly Magazine, first published in 1796, was geared toward a dissenting audience and included Mary Hays's writings in defense of "Revolutionary feminism" (20). This leaves a question as to why Wollstonecraft was so circumspect, if not evasive, when writing for this publication.

herself in the Vindication by effacing the female pupil; it also neglects the female practitioner of the poetic sublime who emerges in The Wrongs of the Woman and Mary. "On Poetry" identifies a poet as "the man of strong feelings." The incipient poet is also male; he is a schoolboy "of abilities." The sublime and formal education are linked exclusively to boys and men. The essay alludes to Dr. Johnson and James Thomson, authors relished by the heroine Mary.

Dr. Johnson in fact, appears sometimes to be of the same opinion (how consistently I shall not now enquire), especially when he observes, that Thomson looked on nature with the eye which she only gives to a poet. (7: 10)

In this passage, Wollstonecraft reverts to literary conventions: "nature" is represented as female; "she" is man's inspiration and a natural force. The pronoun "she" is alternately used to signify "reason," seen to exercise her will by leading men away from "the sensual tumult of love" toward the "pleasures of affectionate friendship" (7: 11). The primary goal of this "she" is not to participate in the poetic sublime but rather to curb men's passions and coax them toward companionate marriages.

Given the progressive editorial bent of the Monthly Review, it would seem that Wollstonecraft would have had no need to fall back on platitudes. Yet "On Poetry," written after Mary and The Wrongs of Woman, becomes all the more notable for overlooking women. In her two adult fictions, her heroines Mary and Maria are shown to have a natural, unschooled brilliance, emotional responsiveness, and fertile imaginations, all conducive to an appreciation of the poetic sublime. Maria is given a copy of Rousseau's Nouvelle Héloïse while she is in the asylum. Rereading his novel, she is spiritually transported.

The air swept across her face with a voluptuous freshness that thrilled to her heart, awakening indefinable emotions; and the sound of a waving branch, or the twittering of a startled bird, alone broke the stillness of reposing nature. (1: 95-96)

Maria's reveries help her to transcend the boundaries of prison. In Mary, the heroine "would gaze on the moon, and ramble through the gloomy path, observing the various shapes the clouds assumed, and listen to the sea that was not far distant"; thoughts of the sublime bring Mary closer to God (1: 11). These heroines have precisely what the essayist's male students lack: an intuitive appreciation of the natural world, undestroyed by rote training, along with an almost visceral need for sublime stemming from their personal isolation.

Wollstonecraft shared her heroines' love of the sublime. Her Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, written in 1795 and published in 1796, demonstrate the author's ability to see individuals in the context of nature. She describes arriving in Norway:

The view was sterile: still little patches of earth, of the most exquisite verdure, enamelled with the sweetest wild flowers, seemed to promise the goats and a few straggling cows luxurious herbage. How silent and peaceful was the scene. (6: 247)

Accompanied by Fanny, Mary Wollstonecraft compares the sleeping infant to the many "closing flowers" dotting the countryside. Letters synthesize Wollstonecraft's delight in the Northern landscape, her pleasure in motherhood, and her acuity as an observer of foreign cultures. She paraphrases Shakespeare and alludes to Milton, while commenting on the quotidian practices of fishermen and farmers.

Despite her awareness that she and her finest heroines craved these types of meditations, "On Poetry" does not argue for female prerogatives. As in the Vindication, women are expected to be practical and take responsibility for reforming men, a project Wollstonecraft believed was more important than their personal desires. The unsex'd author of "On Poetry" perpetuates a persistent dichotomy between male and female, educated and uneducated, poet and muse, debaucher and woman of prudence. Analysis of this piece suggests that Wollstonecraft, even after the portentous Wrongs of Woman, could not decide how to situate females within a complicated educational debate which involved genre along with gender. While the sentimental novel allowed Wollstonecraft to air grievances and wishes, and she believed epistolary fiction gave women a chance to indulge their "talent" for "chatting on paper," the essay form appears to have inhibited the free flow of her ideas.³⁰ At best, it seems to have forced her into an imitative posture.

Wollstonecraft struggled throughout her career to free herself of these dichotomies and the public penchant to collectivize females into a domestic role which suppressed their individuality and tamped down their aesthetic and academic aspirations. She faced innumerable barriers. She grappled with gendered discourse, proud to be a "masculine" author like Macaulay and at the same time concerned about being perceived as a "masculine" woman. She sensed the existence of generic

³⁰ Wollstonecraft describes women's "knack" for epistolary writing in relation to Helen Maria William's Letters Written in France, in the Summer, 1790, to a Friend in England; Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution; and Memoirs of Mons. and Madame Du F---; see the Analytical Review (Dec. 1790) in The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft (7: 322).

constraints, as can be seen in her awkward approach toward the schoolgirls in Original Stories and her effacement of the schoolgirl in "On Poetry." To label Wollstonecraft a "misogynist" is to minimize the misogyny which surrounded her and her many attempts to extricate herself from the boundaries imposed upon her as a woman and a writer. Whatever may have happened to Wollstonecraft in the course of her personal life, none of these events was more insidious than the demands made upon her by a culture inhospitable to her reforming impulses and her craving for self-definition on what most assumed were male terms.

Chapter 4

Maria Edgeworth and the Relationship of Pedagogy to Domestic Fiction

Contemporary criticism of Maria Edgeworth's work tends to be polarized on the issue of the author's literary and philosophical independence. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace presents Edgeworth as psychologically dominated by Richard Lovell Edgeworth, who edited many of her novels and stories. She is treated as a "case study in complicity" whose adult domestic novel Belinda (1801) inscribes the demands made by a patriarchal culture (12).¹ Kowaleski-Wallace points out that Edgeworth's exemplary heroines are domesticated; the good wife's counterpoint, an outspoken character such as Mrs. Harriot Freke, is an Amazonian type who exemplifies "buffoonery."² In contrast, Mitzi Myers, who has written extensively on Edgeworth's juvenile fiction, argues that Edgeworth was not male-dominated, but portrays powerful women as mentors: wise maternal surrogates abound in her work, and exemplary mothers can be found rationally raising their talented, intelligent girls.

¹ Kowaleski-Wallace refers to Maria Edgeworth's "psychological dependencies" on a father whose approval she coveted (22). Catherine Gallagher, in her chapter "The Changeling's Debt," describes Maria's sense of indebtedness to her father, who was not above signing his name to her work, as in the case of Professional Education (1808). Gallagher questions the idea that theirs was a genuine "partnership" when he contributed ideas but she did all the writing (270).

² Harriot Freke is cited for "buffoonery" (233) and, in a Freudian slip, refers to herself as a former "schoolboy" (236). Ellen Pollak discusses satires of Amazonians in The Poetics of Sexual Myth. Claudia L. Johnson refers to this type, prevalent in literature until 1815, as "the freakish feminist" who amounts to "a sop thrown to gullible readers" (19). Johnson senses that this seeming caricature has a more complex function than is immediately apparent. I agree.

Myers offers Edgeworth's "Rosamond" tales (1796-1821) as stories of development, each teaching younger readers how to "think, judge and act for themselves."³

The apparent gap between Edgeworth's vibrant schoolgirls and her more cautious, feminized adult heroines might be explained, in part, through a comparison of the author's early pedagogical treatises and her subsequent domestic fiction. Edgeworth's ideas on society and gender are embedded in Letters for Literary Ladies (1795), a polemic protesting educational strictures against women.⁴ Her concerns about the sedentary fate of middle-class women are reflected in Practical Education (1798), a two-volume manual on curricula which she coauthored with Richard. Although a plethora of educational tracts appeared during the eighteenth-century, before Practical Education there were only "two significant educational theories based on empiricism published in England: John Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Émile (1762)."⁵ Émile and Thoughts

³ Mitzi Myers, "The Dilemmas of Gender as Double-Voiced Narrative" 71. Another useful essay is Myers's "Daddy's Girl as Motherless Child: Maria Edgeworth and Maternal Romance; An Essay in Reassessment," in which she questions the excessive critical focus on Richard Edgeworth. For example, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in Madwoman in the Attic suggest Maria "used her writing to gain the attention and approval of her father" (147). This is too simple an assessment. Myers's essay "Reading Rosamond Reading" approaches Edgeworth's "wee-wee" story of "The Bee and the Cow" from the Continuation of Early Lessons and demonstrates how the author places "children's literature on the same narrative plane as canonical masterpieces" (68).

⁴ Citations will be from the Garland reprint edition, which includes Gina Luria's helpful introduction.

⁵ Mark Hawthorne, Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth 1. Hawthorne locates the Edgeworths alongside Locke and Rousseau in terms of their importance to pedagogical theory. Richard Edgeworth visited Rousseau in Paris and was impressed with his theories, although he became disillusioned when he

promoted a paradigm for the male tutor/male pupil relationship and marginalized girls; Practical Education is an advancement, inasmuch as almost identical programs are advised for children of both genders, and the curricula includes mathematics, philosophy, history, and science. John Locke wrote for gentlemen's sons: the Edgeworths expanded Locke's parameters by undertaking to educate an entire middle-class population.⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau rendered *Émile's* Sophie as a seductive child of nature to be cultivated by a wiser, more worldly husband. Maria Edgeworth rejected this romantic non-education and, instead, promoted the advantages of female mentoring. She did not displace domestic arts but subordinated them to academics, demonstrating to readers how skills like sewing could reinforce the appearance of femininity, thereby allowing women to involve themselves covertly in more intellectual pursuits.

A symbiotic relationship has always existed between Edgeworth's fiction and her pedagogy. The satire contained in Letters for Literary Ladies is implemented in her novella, The Modern Griselda (1805), where Griselda fights against using reason because she does not recognize that reason is in her best interest. Moral Tales (1801), a series of edifying and entertaining short stories, reflects Practical Education's ideology: in "The Good French Governess," children read works by Anna

applied them to the education of a son.

⁶ Marilyn Butler discusses middle-class aspects of the Edgeworths' work, their association with Dissenting circles, as well as negative reactions to the text's secular nature in Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries 95-96.

Barbauld, Thomas Day, Adam Smith, and David Hume.⁷ Their prudent governess takes them to a "rational toy-shop" devoid of the whips, soldiers, and dolls traditionally used to reinforce stereotypical forms of male and female behavior. In this and other Moral Tales, readers see their fictive counterparts being offered a spectrum of adult female mentors; girls choose, either rashly or wisely, from among these women, and readers are shown the consequences of these decisions.

Younger children are the intended readers of the Rosamond tales, first published in The Parent's Assistant: Or, Stories for Children (1796, 1800) and later in Early Lessons (1801), the Continuation of Early Lessons (1814), and Rosamond: A Sequel to Early Lessons (1821).⁸ Rosamond, who has a loving but condescending older brother, Geoffrey, and a protective older sister named Laura, visits a "manufactory" in "The Silver Cup." She's exposed to poorer children desperate to achieve literacy: Rosamond also learns that her society is becoming increasingly mechanized and she must comprehend the dynamics of change. "The Microscope" shows Rosamond studying math and science; the girl catalogues books in her father's library and teaches Geoffrey the need for mutual cooperation. While more "radical" authors such as Wollstonecraft and Hays derided frivolous, destructive mothers,

⁷ Practical Education also recommends Smellie's Natural History, Priestley's History of Vision, and texts by Franklin, Lavoisier, Chaptal, and Condillac: the emphasis is on thorough and useful education. The Edgeworths are receptive to the idea of private education and schools, if they are well run.

⁸ Citations from "Rosamond" stories such as "The Microscope" will be taken from Rosamond by Maria Edgeworth, Collected into One Volume from "Early Lessons".

Edgeworth depicts a mother who offers her daughter a book on microscopes as a reward for completing her sums.⁹ Geoffrey, often acting as a "patronizing masculinist" ("Reading Rosamond" 62), mocks his baby sister's ability to understand science, and Laura challenges her brother: "But we will all try and ought to try, to make ourselves as happy as we can, without hurting anybody else," said Laura coolly (276). Throughout these stories and her Moral Tales, the capabilities of girls and women extend beyond the drawing room; females make competent entries into "masculine" disciplines.

In certain respects, Edgeworth's writing exists in an inverse relationship to Mary Wollstonecraft's. Wollstonecraft acted as a provocateur in the Vindication, referring to married women's enslavement, but then, her Original Stories teaches girls obedience and duty and insists that devotion to a husband and children produces the greatest happiness for women.¹⁰ Maria Edgeworth's stories for girls encourage them to master academic and coping skills in the present with little regard for social pressures or fashion, but in her adult novels like Belinda and Helen (1834) older women who have experienced public or familial censure warn their protégées against

⁹ Examples of "radical authors" are discussed in the chapter on Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Hays in Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous describes unfit mothers, as does Mary Wollstonecraft in Mary, a Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria. These mothers are not redeemed, as are fallible mothers in Edgeworth's fiction.

¹⁰ Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman 60. Wollstonecraft notes the pressure on females to "marry advantageously" which implies selling oneself; this theme of marital commerce is reiterated by Maria Edgeworth in Practical Education.

displays of ambition. Wollstonecraft's middle-class heroines Mary and Maria proclaim a victimization and a romantic sensibility that Edgeworth's women reject.¹¹ The latter's heroines acknowledge the lure of the poetic sublime, but present it as detrimental to women's educational and political advancement. Practical Education employs the economic terminology of Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations (1776), a treatise quoted in Professional Education where the author praises "the enlarged mind of a political economist" (430). In Practical Education, accomplished daughters are branded "commodities" on a glutted market. Ingeniously, Maria Edgeworth encourages parents to cultivate female "genius" as a means of individuating a daughter in the surfeit of eligible girls.

Edgeworth's educational experience was bound up in her sense of family.¹² Born in 1768, she lost her natural mother to illness in 1773. After Richard Lovell Edgeworth remarried, Maria was sent to Mme Latuffier's boarding school in Derby from 1775 to 1781, where she "excelled in penmanship, French, Italian and embroidery" (Harden 8). She spent a brief period at Mrs. Devis's fashionable London school, an experience biographers characterize as painful, given Maria's bookishness, her eyesight problems, and diminutive size. Of this latter, P. H. Newby writes: "As a child Maria was thought rather small for her age, so an ingenious

¹¹ See Janet Todd's chapter "'The Unsex'd Females': Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays" in The Sign of Angellica for an analysis of female sensibility in Mary and Maria (236-52).

¹² Marilyn Butler's Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography offers the fullest background on Edgeworth's life. Also see Elizabeth McWharter Harden, Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction.

contrivance of ropes and pulleys was invented by which she was hanged every morning in the hopes of making her taller" (15). She felt out of place in an academy where girls were being groomed for marriage and wrote pejoratively about boarding schools in Moral Tales as well as in her epistolary novel Leonora (1805). Returning to Edgeworthstown, her father's Irish estate, Maria, who never married, spent years helping to teach her twenty-one siblings, the result of two more marriages for Richard. Their home became a pedagogical crucible, for Richard wanted to educate his children without "any tutor or governess" (Butler 98). According to Walter Sidney Scott:

In her late teens, in order to amuse the younger children, Maria began writing stories on a slate, which she would then read to the children; if they approved of them, she would copy them out in an exercise book. When her stepmother was recovering from the birth of a child, in 1787, she wrote The Freeman Family for the invalid's amusement. This she afterward enlarged into her novel Patronage.

She initially wrote to be useful and entertaining, although humble works sometimes provided the inspiration for her commercially successful and much admired adult fiction.¹³ Like Sarah Fielding, whose The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy (1749) was written for a niece's pleasure, Edgeworth used her writing to reinforce familial connections; she read works in progress aloud to household members at night, and their mutual delight is chronicled in family letters.¹⁴ She also wanted to

¹³ Edgeworth's popularity with Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Ivan Turgenev, and other literary figures is discussed in Janet Egleson Dunleavy's essay, "Maria Edgeworth and the Novel of Manners."

¹⁴ Jill Grey's introduction to the reprint of Sarah Fielding's The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy suggests that The Governess was written for Henry

be of service to mothers: she wrote to her aunt Mrs. Ruxton in July 1813 that she had begun "a new series of Early Lessons, for which many mothers told me they wished" (qtd. in Hare 1: 229).

Her first attempted literary project was a translation of Mme de Genlis's Adèle et Théodore; ou lettres sur l'éducation (1782), a book of instructive letters written by a mother who undertakes to educate her children in the country, away from corrupt urban influences.¹⁵ Edgeworth's translation has never been traced in print; it is believed that Richard Edgeworth's close friend, Thomas Day, discouraged Maria's translating, proclaiming his "horror of female authorship" (Newby 30). Although Maria expressed affection for the author of Sandford and Merton, whom she described as being "more benevolent in practice than theory," she must have been deeply affected by Day's attitudes.¹⁶ Day died in 1789. Six years later, Letters for Literary Ladies was published, based on Day's objections to female education, coupled with Maria's recollection of her father's responses to his misogynistic ideas.

Fielding's daughter, Harriet, as a labor of love. Letters indicate she read aloud portions from Helen while the work was in progress between 1830 and 1833; see Collected Letters of Maria Edgeworth, ed. Augustus Hare 2: 546-47. Charles Sneyd Edgeworth, Richard Edgeworth's second son by Elizabeth Sneyd, writes to his wife: "It is altogether in Maria's best style" (2: 547). Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland: Selections from the Edgeworth Family Letters describes her feelings about how various of her works were received on the continent; the response to her work seems to have been positive.

¹⁵ For a discussion of Mme de Genlis and her career as teacher of the nobility, see Ellen Moers's chapter "Educating Heroism: Governess to Governor" in Literary Women 211-42.

¹⁶ Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq. Begun by Himself and Concluded by His Daughter, Maria Edgeworth 2: 94.

The unsigned Letters for Literary Ladies (1795) uses diverse rhetorical techniques to further her goal of convincing people that change was needed. The first part consists of letters between male friends. What begins as a congratulatory note from one man to another on the birth of his daughter rapidly becomes a diatribe against literary women. The argument is followed by a tactful but firm rebuttal. In the second part, the romantic Julia and the rational Caroline engage in a dialectic of sense and sensibility concerning a woman's position within marriage. The third part, entitled "An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification," takes a satirical approach to women's behavior. A male jocularly outlines ways in which a woman can use wiles to exasperate her husband. The essay recognizes manipulative tactics as a perverse response to strictures placed upon women, much as A Vindication of the Rights of Woman comments upon women's "cunningly obtained power" (38). Less judgmental than Mary Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth simply reminds readers that the exercise of reason will bring about better results.

In the opening piece, the Day persona, "AN-," determines the qualities the two men agree are necessary to female character: virtue, delicacy, and sense. AN notes that his friend is more the advocate of "equality of the sexes" than he is. AN deplores female prodigies, describing them as "scarcely less offensive to my taste than monsters" (3); he compares the prodigy's "mental deformities" (5) to physical deformities known to inhabitants of "certain mountains of Switzerland" (4). Recapitulating traditional arguments about innate female flaws, AN insists women's intrinsic taste for "dissipation" can be seen in their attraction to "lighter parts of

literature (5)." Learned ladies are depicted as anxious for public acclaim, which makes them susceptible to the "intoxicating effect of wit" (25). Men are said to handle admiration better, for they have experience in dealing with envy in others. "How will you preserve your daughter from that desire of universal admiration, which will ruin all your work?" he asks, as if immune to vanity himself (39).

AN presents women's minds as inferior to men's, but volunteers that women lack significant opportunities.

We mix with the world without restraint, we converse freely with all classes of people, with men of wit, of science, of learning, with the artist, the mechanic, the labourer; every scene of life is open to our view;--every assistance, that foreign or domestic ingenuity can invent to encourage literary studies, is ours almost exclusively. From academies, colleges, public libraries, private associations of literary men, women are excluded, if not by law, at least by custom, which cannot easily be conquered. . . . (7)

AN undermines his misogynistic ideas by illustrating how man's experience is enlarged through exposure to the world, academies, libraries, and accomplished male role models; male prerogatives are supported by law and social customs. He reiterates Rousseau's belief that a learned man prefers to marry beneath himself, so that self-interest emerges as a critical reason for discriminating against women. The writer complains: "I should not expect that my house affairs would be with haste dispatched by a Desdemona, weeping over some unvarnished tale . . . at the very time when she should be ordering dinner, or paying the butcher's bill" (36-37).

It is not known to what extent Maria Edgeworth repeats arguments she heard Day make or elements of his actual correspondence with Richard Edgeworth. In style and substance, AN's arguments are akin to those presented dialogically by

Bathsua Makin in her Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Women (1673). Makin's male antagonist contends women do not desire higher learning because of their "soft fickle natures"; women are "not capable" of public employment and have no need for book learning; they will become "intolerable proud" if educated (6). In both Edgeworth's and Makin's text, a more temperate male comes forth to refute each of these prejudices. These texts amount to defenses, but also fulfill other purposes: Makin's spokesman promotes the teacher's actual girls' school in Tottenham High Cross, so that her Essay doubles as advertisement. Edgeworth's new father lays the theoretical foundation for the specific program detailed by Maria and Richard in Practical Education.

Although written over a century after Makin's Essay, Letters approaches male misogyny with a similar tentativeness. Edgeworth's new father expresses his concern for his daughter's happiness--not over women's rights; still, he contends one gender cannot be subjugated without its disadvantaging the other. The character introduces ideas about childhood development which are remarkably modern and were rarely, if ever, acknowledged in other tracts of the period. He informs AN: "Girls usually write much better than boys: they think and express their thoughts clearly at an age when young men can scarcely write an easy letter upon any common occasion" (49). Authoritatively, he argues for girls' superior cognitive skills:

Women begin to taste the real pleasures of reading just at the age when young men, disgusted with their studies, begin to be ashamed amongst their companions of alluding to literature. When this period is past, business, the necessity of pursuing a profession, the ambition of shining in parliament, or of rising in public life, occupy a large portion of their lives. (50-51)

"Young men" appear as reluctant scholars susceptible to peer pressure, while "women" of the same age are not. He describes female developmental strengths all but overlooked by male conduct-book writers such as the Marquis of Halifax and Dr. Gregory, both of whom emphasized their belief in inherent forms of female weakness.¹⁷ Once men begin specializing in their careers, the new father suggests, they lose track of all but their immediate professions. Women, by contrast, have both the capacity for learning and the opportunity to cultivate their understanding.

Neither Makin nor Edgeworth directly challenges the separate spheres argument; rather, they address male antagonists who believe that educated women will lose all sense of boundaries. The new father reassures AN that even if women are educated, they are unlikely to "acquire the species of direct power which you dread" (52). He recommends that girls study botany, chemistry, and mathematics, none of which require bodily strength and all of which could be "pursued in retirement" (65). Judith Drake follows this same line of reasoning in An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696). "Arithmetik" is touted as a sedentary skill appropriate for women to study; Drake cleverly asserts that by enabling women to participate in business activities, men would become free to engage in "Employments, where hands and strength are more required" (35-36).

Maria Edgeworth participates in, but also exceeds the boundaries of earlier polemics by using fictive characters and offering readers a semblance of plot to

¹⁷ Ellen Pollak discusses Halifax's The Lady's New Year's Gift or Advice to a Daughter (1688) in The Poetics of Sexual Myth 46. Nancy Armstrong presents Gregory as Halifax's successor, along with Hester Chapone (62).

stimulate their imaginations. Part I of the Letters works to educate and placate anxious men. At the same time, women are provided with a model for debate and the tools with which to deconstruct misogyny. Just as Wollstonecraft recapitulates Émile in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), creating a dialogic interaction so as to situate his misogyny "in a context she can control," Edgeworth loosens AN's tongue for a related purpose.¹⁸ The 1790s were a period during which women's ability to reason was hotly debated.¹⁹ Edgeworth shows that AN is not as rational as he claims, but has visceral prejudices, as when he compares educated women to monsters and Swiss mountaineers with goiters. In Part II of Letters for Literary Ladies, the sensible Caroline explains to the romantic Julia that "a skilful disputant" makes use of another's confusion rather than creating her own in order to stymie adversaries (13). Caroline appears to be contemplating Edgeworth's strategy in Part I, where the author exposes irrationality and male self-interest.

The second piece, the Letters of Julia and Caroline, uses characters to present a tactical debate over the merits of sense and sensibility.²⁰ Caroline tries to

¹⁸ Patricia Yaeger, Honey Mad Women 161. I believe Edgeworth recaps Day's arguments so that his slips in logic and the extent of the male's self-interest become evident to readers.

¹⁹ In The Brink of All We Hate, Felicity Nussbaum discusses the issue of women's rationality as questioned in satires by men.

²⁰ Nicola J. Watson describes the erasure of the heroine of sensibility in "Redirecting the Letter: Counter-Revolutionary Tactics 1800-1819," Revolution and the Form of the British Novel 1790-1825 73-75; in Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, Marilyn Butler considers how the Letters, Leonora, and Belinda assert the importance of "right reason" (124-57). Catherine Gallagher sees as the goal of this piece "to identify the sort of reading that would create stable, reliable domestic women, who could in turn raise useful, productive children" (275).

dissuade Julia, who bears the name of Rousseau's romantic heroine from Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) and of Henry Mackenzie's equally romantic Julia de Roubigné (1777), from marrying a nobleman for status. She suggests that Julia marry for companionship alone. Failing that, Caroline futilely urges Julia against taking a lover and deserting her family. Julia finds herself stranded in France, estranged from her husband and children, and stripped of her reputation. Remorseful, Julia languishes in a state of torpor before assigning Caroline the task of raising "Little Julia" after her death.

Julia and Caroline function as polemicists, although as Nicola J. Watson points out, a bias is shown toward the prudent heroine, who writes six of the seven letters: most of Julia's discourse exists as "dismembered quotation" (74). Still, Julia makes a cogent argument in claiming that males are permitted to indulge themselves in "Extacy and despair" while women are disallowed sublime feelings and experiences (7). The romanticist argues in an analytical manner: "The graces flourish not under her empire; a woman's part in life is to please, and Providence has assigned to her success all the pride and pleasure of her being" (8). Julia does not want to be a wife who educates children, engages in philanthropy, and devotes herself to relatives. She believes in genius, destiny, passion, and the vagaries of fortune; she dreads domestic tranquility, which she refers to as "apathy" (5).

Gallagher only analyzes Part II but refers to this middle segment as Letters for Literary Ladies: I feel this diminishes what was a tripartite, interactive text.

Caroline appreciates Julia's frustration but views sensibility as affectation. Objecting to what she calls Julia's "favorite doctrine of amiable defects" which permits women to substitute "folly and weakness" for logic, Caroline implies that impetuous behavior is learned and does not result from some wellspring of feeling (13). Beneath this rationale lies a more compelling argument, for Caroline sees women as having few options. She writes bitterly:

From domestic uneasiness a man has a thousand resources; in middling life, the tavern; in high life, the gaming table suspends the anxiety of thought. Dissipation, ambition, business, the occupation of a profession; change of place; change of company, afford him agreeable and honorable relief from domestic chagrin. If his home becomes tiresome, he leaves it--if his wife becomes disagreeable to him, he leaves her, and in leaving her loses only a wife. By what resource has a woman?--Precluded from all the occupations common to the other sex, she loses even those peculiar to her own. (44-45)

Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen appreciated each other's works: the former read Persuasion and Mansfield Park (Hare 1: 260); in 1816, Austen sent her a copy of Emma.²¹ In her biography of Edgeworth, Marilyn Butler suggests Austen "was reading Maria's tales during the long fallow period before she published anything" (328). Anne Elliot, the heroine of Persuasion (1818), explains to Captain Harville why women seem preoccupied with love; her voice echoes Caroline's.

We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world

²¹ A letter Maria Edgeworth wrote to Mrs. Ruxton on February 21, 1818, indicates she found Persuasion "exceedingly interesting and natural" but thought the General's behavior in Northanger Abbey was unrealistic (qtd. in Hare 1: 259-60).

immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions. (236)

Anne and Caroline share a perception of the middle-class woman's life as sedentary. Women have no recourse from "domestic chagrin" (Edgeworth) and can fall "prey" (Austen) to emotions which fester or flourish in idleness. The opposite occurs for men, whose myriad pursuits "weaken" already superficial feelings, suggested by Austen's choice of the word "impressions." Anne phrases her objections delicately; Caroline's sarcasm indicates she is galled. Edgeworth's italicized "only" as in "only a wife" is significant, since in Practical Education girls of marriage age are troped as products whose value resides in the scarcity of their accomplishments. Edgeworth admonishes parents that because so many have been "speculating in the same line" the market is likely to be overstocked; therefore, the value of "the commodities must fall" (2: 529).

The relative ease with which a man could obtain or discard a wife is a recurrent theme in Edgeworth's work and bears directly on her efforts to expand female education beyond the confines of boarding school amenities. Edgeworth saw girls entering a marketplace, unequipped; she believed females deserved equal education but also needed to have more intellectual resources in the event marriage was not in the offing. Helen's Lady Davenant engages in this same economic discourse:

In short, the market is so overstocked with accomplished young ladies on the one hand, and on the other, men find cheap wives and establishments so expensive, clubs so cheap and so much more luxurious than any home, liberty not only sweet but so fashionable, that their policy, their maxim is, "Marry not at all, or if marrying be

ultimately necessary to pay debts and leave heirs to good names, marry as late as possible;" and thus the two parties with their opposite interests stand at bay, or try to outwit or outbargain each other. (181)

Counseling Helen, Davenant reiterates Caroline's premise that women can be surplus commodities: as Adam Smith says of labor in The Wealth of Nations, "dear in one case, and cheap in the other" (2:49). Davenant contends that men find wives and clubs "cheap" while liberty is "sweet"; economically dependent females must understand their situation. Nonetheless, Lady Davenant warns Helen against accepting a husband on any terms; better to remain single and pursue a solitary education, the older woman advises, than to hire "dancing-masters, music-masters, and all the tribe" and train for "the grand event" (182).

Women's economic disadvantage within marriage can be seen again in her novel Ennui: A Tale of Fashionable Life (1809), where readers encounter the young, unregenerate Earl of Glenthorn who marries badly because "In my imagination young women were divided into two classes: those who were to be purchased, and those who were to purchase" (150). Choosing a wife "by the numeration table," he discovers he has chosen an acquisitive wife (221). As a man, however, the Earl is protected: he simply finds a gentler, more humble woman and takes her as his second wife. Caroline anticipates vast damage to Julia if she emulates a heroine of sensibility. A peeress may be able to leave her husband, warns Caroline, but not a peasant's wife or a middle-class woman. Caroline views the restless wife as deracinated and in danger of permanent ostracism: "Her occupation is gone. She becomes a wanderer through life." Another of Edgeworth's rootless heroines is Lady

Olivia in Leonora (1805).²² Olivia abandons her husband and child to seek refuge "in foreign climes" (245). Leonora's mother, the Duchess, equates Lady Olivia's negligence with excessive novel reading, leading the latter to conclude that she and Goethe's protagonists have something in common.

Critics have charged Edgeworth with exaggerating the blissfulness of eighteenth-century domesticity for women. But Caroline, who was the writer's earliest domestic heroine, argues for diminished expectations. Educating children becomes a woman's "glory" by default: Caroline cites it as Julia's only means of distinguishing herself (50). "Such will be your future fame," she exhorts Julia, who finds no validation in her status-oriented marriage. Julia is commodified, as when Caroline compares her to Lord V's "buildings, his paintings, his equipages" (53-54); she advises Julia to "become a greater distinction to him" than Lord V's material possessions.

Given her sense of women's circumscribed alternatives, Maria Edgeworth was eager to stake a claim for the mother as teacher. Her preface to The Parent's Assistant objects to Dr. Johnson's offering himself as an expert on child rearing. She insists that only those who have taught children from "the first processes of reasoning" can understand how they learn and appreciate the "difficulties" of writing for children (vi). Edgeworth demands recognition for those most intimately involved with children, namely mothers, governesses, and writers of children's literature. Dr.

²² Mme de Staël's Delphine (1802) describes a heroine who falls in love with another woman's husband; however, Delphine is meant to be sensitive and noble. She is not maliciously destructive like Lady Olivia.

Johnson, who appears to have criticized Anna Barbauld, is depicted by Maria Edgeworth as an interloper who usurps women's area of greatest expertise; society, in turn, is seen giving short shrift to practical knowledge and favoring speculation and theory. Rousseau appears as another somewhat hypocritical theoretician. In January of 1803, while in Paris, Maria visited Mme D'Houdetot, Rousseau's model for La Nouvelle Héloïse; she wrote to Mary Sneyd about the French woman's memories of Rousseau. Edgeworth quotes Mme D'Houdetot as saying "whilst he was writing so finely about Education he left his own children in a foundling hospital."²³ But this self-deception, Mme D'Houdetot tells Maria, was rationalized "with so much eloquence that even those who blamed him in their hearts could not find tongues to answer him." Edgeworth expresses pride that Mme D'Houdetot genuinely admires her pedagogy, insofar as D'Houdetot claims to have used Belinda as an exemplar for her granddaughter.

Edgeworth lacked Wollstonecraft's and Hays's urge to upbraid indolent mothers--she was too interested in converting even the worst of them into teachers. Rather than looking for "natural" frailties, Edgeworth advises that many a society lady avoided contact with her children because she felt crippled by a lack of education. In this sense, Edgeworth's point of view resembles that of her friend Elizabeth

²³ Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland 75. In Literary Women, Ellen Moers contrasts Rousseau to Mme Genlis: the male pedagogue, quips Moers, "dumped his own bastards at the door of a foundling home" while Genlis "incarcerated herself in a rural retreat with a parcel of little princes and princesses" (228). Moers and Edgeworth imply that thinkers such as Rousseau and Johnson pontificated about child-rearing but had little actual experience as compared to female pedagogues who devoted themselves to teaching.

Hamilton, who in Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (1802) sympathized with mothers who feared losing their children's esteem. "The Good French Governess" shows Mme de Rosier, an aristocratic emigré fleeing from the terrors of Robespierre, working with the English Mrs. Harcourt's children. Harcourt is rarely found at home because she is discomfited by maternity. When Mme de Rosier teaches her pupils about language, philosophy and science, Mrs. Harcourt experiences "joy and sorrow": pleased that her children are learning, she grows anxious that they will cease to love and respect their ignorant mother (322). On Mme de Rosier's evening off, Herbert asks his mother a question about Xenophon's Cyropaedia, a text about the training given a prince. "This would tire the patience of Job," Mrs. Harcourt mutters (324). Her fulminating makes Herbert stumble; he ceases to work. Edgeworth intimates that the "dissipated" mother attacks her child because she feels inadequate; Mme de Rosier realizes part of her job is to reassure Mrs. Harcourt that the latter is educable, lovable, and capable of operating as a competent teacher. Rosier is a more-than-mother figure such as seen in Mary Wollstonecraft's Original Stories and Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: only in Edgeworth's tale, the governess's tender treatment of the mother puts an end to the insidious forms of competition which developed when the woman with knowledge decided to assert her superiority over an employer who laid claim to affluence and status.

Part III of the Letters, "The Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification," provides readers with a biting satire. Each barb is well-timed, well-placed, and

incremental to her overall project. In "The Noble Science" a wry male narrator points out various ways in which women can exasperate their husbands. As always, human behavior is characterized as acquired, a premise which erodes stereotypical views of women. The narrator indicates that women may become perverse and exert feminine wiles not because their nature compels them to do so, but because they are angered by calls to marital obedience. "Long may your husbands rue the hour when first they made you promise 'to obey'" ends the Letters, suggesting their preoccupation with how one could most effectively challenge patriarchal authority (47). Earlier, the narrator proposes that rather than using reason to thwart domination, women inappropriately act out their frustrations by using guerilla tactics. Swooning, weeping, screaming in order to win arguments, incessant talking--"for what man can prevail upon himself to debate three hours about what could be as well decided in three minutes" (9)--and laying the blame elsewhere are seen as ways of responding to an unequal situation.

The narrator is charmingly satirical in advising unmarried women to practice their arts on "fathers, brothers, and female friends"; he encourages them to "shun definitions" whenever possible, and always to defend the wrong side of any argument (5; 19). If his reader is married to a "weak man," the narrator recommends fighting in front of a "full audience" (22). Other hints include stalking out in the middle of an argument, acting distracted, keeping accounts of grudges, and using eloquence to "vex him" (30).

Edgeworth's satire brings to mind an unusual piece by Jane Collier, Sarah Fielding's collaborator on The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable (1754).²⁴ In Collier's satire, An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting; with Proper Rules for the Exercise of That Pleasant Art (1753), she observes how either sex can master the art of perversity, much of which stems from power imbalances between individuals. Collier uses implicitly sexual terms, comparing the "exterior power" of husbands, originating with their legal authority, to the less potent "interior power" of wives, emerging from women's affective position within a household (9). She comments "the visible power of the husband comes next to that of the parent" (45). A wife, being so demeaned, retaliates in ways comparable to those described by Edgeworth. Collier's satire was well known: Frances Burney alludes to "the art" when depicting the relationship between Juliet and her patron, the irascible Mrs. Ireton in The Wanderer (1814). It is conceivable that Edgeworth drew upon it when developing her "Self-Justification"²⁵

Jane Collier lists noxious things a husband might do to alienate his wife: smoke, criticize his food, be abusive, flaunt mistresses. Her notions on how to plague a husband are still relevant: she tells widows who remarry to torment their second

²⁴ See the general introduction to Battestin and Probyn (eds.), The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding for the editors' observation that The Cry exhibits "thematic concern for female self-definition in a world that demanded their self effacement" (xxxiv).

²⁵ Frances Burney enacts scenarios from Collier's Essay in chapter LII of The Wanderer. Mrs. Ireton accuses Juliet/Ellis of having perfected the aggravating techniques common to toad-eaters, or female companions.

husbands by praising the first. Other techniques include crying, railing against a husband's friends, and disdaining his relatives. Playing with images of the delicate female, Collier suggests wives refrain from eating at the dinner table, while bribing servants to bring food to her lady's dressing room. Women whose husbands enjoy domesticated wives are told: "neglect your family as much as ever his temper will bear; and always have your white gloves on your hands" (58). The husband who longs to read Shakespeare to an attentive wife should be undermined by "perpetual interruptions" (58). The offensiveness of such anti-intellectual behavior is underscored by Mary Hays in Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous (1793) and earlier by Sarah Fielding in Familiar Letters (1747): to the former, this type of wife is a scourge; to the latter, she is a creation used by men to reaffirm their superiority.

No matter what the act of passive aggression, however, Edgeworth and Collier both present marriage as a state of disequilibrium, with perversity resulting from a woman's sense of powerlessness. By using satire to address women, Collier and Edgeworth suggest a change in the way female readers were thinking and being educated and in the approach they took toward male readers as well. Betty Rizzo observes: "Collier's satire is calculated to shame the punishers of the weak into adopting the more beneficent ways to which they were already hypocritically pretending."²⁶ Traditionally, English satires on women were written primarily by

²⁶ See Betty Rizzo's "Satires of Tyrants and Toadeaters: Fielding and Collier" in Companions without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women for a study of the female-authored satire (41-60).

men and served to discharge hostility. Swift, Pope, and the Earl of Rochester ridicule the Belle, the Amazon, the Whore, the Learned Lady as types exhibiting "the natural tendencies of their sex" (Nussbaum, Brink 131). Ellen Pollak identifies "popular stock deviants": "the coquette, prude, pedant, scold and superannuated virgin or old maid," all of whom signified "the futile narcissism of women seeking the prerogatives of masculinity" (65). But unlike male satirists, Collier and Edgeworth use satire for genuinely reforming, educative purposes. Vexing wives are presented as social products, not character types. Edgeworth's satire includes a passionate exhortation to female readers, urging them to eschew reactive behavior. "Fair ideots!" the narrator berates his pupils (41). "Let women of sense, wit, feeling, triumph in their various arts, yours are superior." Whether she must indoctrinate, implore, cajole, or berate her readers in order to enlighten them, Edgeworth proves willing to do so.

Edgeworth's project of exhorting women to fight discrimination with reason carried through to her fiction. The Modern Griselda (1805), based on "The Noble Science of Self-Justification," illustrates the destructive consequences of women's using wiles and manipulation to challenge calls to marital obedience.²⁷ The wife's chicanery results from poor education. Griselda, who has some of the characteristics of Arabella in Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote (1752), has been raised on frivolous literature and therefore cannot distinguish life from romance. In her quest

²⁷ See Ronald Paulson's chapter "Fielding the Anti-Romanticist" in Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England 100-31. Paulson discusses Lennox's The Female Quixote (275-79).

for an abject lover, Griselda tests her new husband's endurance. She craves flattery, pretends weakness, is mercurial, and demands heightened responses from her tolerant but bewildered spouse. Griselda argues with Bolingbroke about the time of day, the width of a straw, and how to make tea. Lovestruck, Bolingbroke still reaches his limits. Griselda's obstinacy and senseless demands lead to the dissolution of their marriage.

The Female Quixote attributes faulty education to Arabella's obsession with "romantic Notions"; a suitor, Mr. Glanville, admires Arabella's natural superiority, but laments the inadequacy of her reading and her experience.

Sometimes he fancied Company, and an Acquaintance with the World, would produce the Alteration he wished; Yet he dreaded to see her exposed to Ridicule by her fantastical Behaviour, and become the Jest of Persons who were not possessed of half her understanding. (117)

It troubles Glanville that individuals with "half her Understanding" will never appreciate Arabella's intelligence because of her idiosyncrasies. Ronald Paulson analyzes her essential "Quixotism" as "rigidity of behavior--her favorite word is "questionless" (276). Griselda is equally rigid: the heroine cannot conceive that Bolingbroke is neither a knight in white armor nor a sinner who regards her as a "plaything" (419).

Arabella is cured by her exposure to a "divine" who explains to her that "nothing is more different from a human being, than Heroes or Heroines" (380). Griselda, however, is unresponsive to practical advice. She ignores the story's exemplar, Mrs. Emma Granby, who is characterized as "the original Griselda revived" (424). Quiet, refined, and happily married, Emma cares for sick relatives, teaches

poor children how to plait straw for hats, and identifies herself as part of the Granby unit. A group of female friends congregate and read aloud a portion of Chaucer's "The Clerk's Tale" in which the Clerk's wife pledges her submission. "Abominable! Intolerable! Insufferable! Horrible!" declare all but Emma (426). "Would you have made the promise that was required from Griselda?" they maliciously ask, waiting for Emma to cower. "No," Mrs. Granby retorts, "distinctly no, for I could never have loved or esteemed the man who required such a promise" (427). The other women are made to appear ridiculous as Emma hints that only a fool would elect to marry a tyrant.

The narrative depicts an oversimplified situation insofar as the author assumes women have free choice in marriage and can draw from a pool of enlightened potential husbands: arranged, forced, or abusive marriages are not an issue, as they are in Wollstonecraft's adult fiction. Edgeworth turns an equally blind eye to infidelity, which Collier's Essay indicated was a rather commonplace event and which occurs in Leonora, where the eponymous heroine waits and agonizes until her husband overcomes his infatuation with Lady Olivia. Griselda reflects Edgeworth's fear over women's economic dependency, causing her to avoid some of the harsher realities of eighteenth-century marriage. Instead, she encourages women to consider their historical progress. Griselda's narrator claims that during Chaucer's epoch women might have been "slaves," but that marital servitude no longer existed by 1800. Similarly, in Practical Education, Maria compares her contemporaries with foremothers whose elaborate needlework, in the form of "tent work chairs and

carpets" and portraits of "Solomon and the queen of Sheba," attested to "the strange patience and miserable destinies of former generations" (2: 533, 529). Helen's Lady Davenant contends that "the position of women in society is somewhat different from what it was a hundred years ago, or as it was sixty or I will say thirty years since" (260). This belief in progress, along with the comfortably middle-class status of her characters and audience, leads Edgeworth to present Griselda's fears of servitude as irrational.

Anxiety shadows this optimistic position. Julia's and Griselda's experiences illustrate that the wife who romanticizes her situation and balks at playing a domestic role can destroy her life. Julia literally withers and dies without solace; Griselda is spurned even by the meddlesome Mrs. Nettleby, who encouraged her rebellion. Although Mark Hawthorne describes Griselda as a "sadistic femme fatale" for having tormented Mr. Bolingbroke (60), by the end of the tale, Griselda is shown having victimized herself. Men survive marital mismatches, as Edgeworth well knew: they maintain their standing in the community and can always remarry. The heroine of sensibility, by contrast, becomes doomed once she denies laws of scarcity and surplus.

In Sensibility: An Introduction, Janet Todd writes about the pervasive middle-class concern that sensibility might cause women "to live through fantasy and so avoid becoming devoted wives and mothers" (134).²⁸ Todd traces anti-romantic sentiment

²⁸ Elizabeth Harden also refers to an anti-romance genre, including works by Mary Charlton, Sarah Green, and E. S. Barrett. Lydia Languish as the prototypical romantic heroine of stage plays is discussed by John Loftis in Sheridan and the Drama of Georgian England 53. The same anti-romance tradition apparent in novels can be found in British theater.

back to 1677, with the Ladies Calling. She alludes to Eliza Haywood's Love in Excess (1719) and George Colman the Elder's Polly Honeycombe (1760), a play which inspired Richard Sheridan's rollicking portrait of "Lydia Languish," a girl desperate to elope in The Rivals (1775). Moral Tales continue in this vein. "Mlle Panache" features a French milliner-turned-governess and Lady Augusta's card-playing mother, both of whom make the girl so lightheaded that she runs off with rakish Mr. Dashwood. A picaresque entitled "Angelina: Or, L'Amie Inconnue," finds Angelina, a parodic heroine of sensibility, embarking on a quest for Araminta, the author of The Female Genius. Araminta writes Angelina a letter about "rocks and woods, and a meandering river-balmy air-moonlight," and refers to Angelina as "sublime confidante!" (226; 225). Once Angelina tracks down the peripatetic authoress, she turns out to be the loud-voiced, brandy-drinking Miss Hodges of Bristol, whose "slatternly dirty appearance" disillusions the heroine (267-68). Lady Frances Somerset, an older, wiser female mentor, enlightens Angelina by gently confirming that common sense is more useful to women than "genius" (282).

Todd connects Edgeworth's mockery of sensibility to a fear of female sexuality, subconsciously perceived as an anarchic force.²⁹ Certainly, sexual contagion factors into "Mlle Panache," where the empty-headed Augusta absorbs tales of amour and consequently leaves her family and forfeits her honor. Leonora

²⁹ Edgeworth was not alone in fearing female sexuality. Cora Kaplan suggests Wollstonecraft felt that "female desire was a contagion caught from the projection of male lust"; see "Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism," Sea Changes 147-76. Mary Poovey discusses Wollstonecraft's "mistrust" of sexuality in The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer 73-81.

displays a similar causal chain: Lady Olivia, intent upon writing "the history of my sensations," enlivens her correspondence by seducing another woman's husband (244). However, the contaminant in "Angelina" is not rampant sexuality resulting in the dissolution of the family unit, but rather a poetic sublime which inspires female authorship. "Angelina" attacks the idea of a woman's writing any sort of romantic manifesto and cultivating notions of free-spirited "genius" among female readers. Unlike Wollstonecraft's heroine Mary, in Mary, a Fiction, who is inspired by the poetic sublime to write devotional verses and hymns, Edgeworth's Araminta merely distorts everyday experience and dupes readers like Angelina into believing in illusions. These bearers of false messages are vilified by Edgeworth; she constructs a slovenly, self-absorbed Araminta and later a mannish Harriot Freke in Belinda. Such women are exposed for exploiting and misleading their friends by urging them to appropriate assorted types of "masculine" prerogatives.

Edgeworth militated against female adventuring, believing that reform would be better facilitated if middle-class women bided their time, gave the appearance of being ladies, and continued to learn as much as they could. Practical Education (1798) promotes this ideology through a comprehensive educational program. Richard Edgeworth supplied chapters on academic subjects: "Grammar and Classical Literature," "Geography," "Chronology," "Arithmetic," "Geometry," and "Mechanica." Maria's chapters include "On Attention," "Servants," "Acquaintances," "Truth," "On

Sympathy and Sensibility."³⁰ Recommended are numerous scientific texts as well as periodicals such as the Rambler, the Guardian, and the Adventurer; more mature students are offered works by Robertson, Gibbon, and Voltaire. Richard advocates that boys alone should be taught a functional form of Latin; however, the language is regarded as a tool, rather than as a signifier of class or gender supremacy. The devaluation of Latin can be seen again in "The Mimic" from The Parent's Assistant; Sophy thwarts her brother's attempts to flaunt his new-found knowledge by arguing that conflating "wouldn't," "shouldn't" and "couldn't" in Latin seems nonsensical, inasmuch as words are meant to have different connotations (1: 228-29). Frederick impotently retorts: "Well, reasoning or disputing. Women have no business to do either, for how should they know how to chop logic like men." Edgeworth's strategy is to put the subject in its proper place, at the same time deflating masculinist attitudes as expressed by a still-malleable brother.

There is a consistency of theme throughout these works, which reaffirms the existence of her coherent belief system pertaining to educational reform. Maria's chapters on "Female Accomplishments" and on "Books" provide insight into her dilemma as a pedagogue who envisioned equal education but found herself working in a transitional stage where "fashionable" skills had to be taught along with academic subjects.

³⁰ Richard Edgeworth's preface to Practical Education clarifies what work was done by him, by Maria, and what was influenced by his wife Honora. He informs his audience: "The chapter on Obedience was written from Mrs. Edgeworth's notes, and was exemplified by her successful practice in the management of her children; the whole manuscript was submitted to her judgment" (x).

Women are peculiarly restrained in their situation, and in their employments, by the customs of society: to diminish the number of these employments, therefore, would be cruel; they should rather be encouraged, by all means, to cultivate those tastes which can attach them to their home, and which can preserve them from the miseries of dissipation. Every sedentary occupation must be valuable to those who are to lead sedentary lives; and every art, however trifling in itself, which tends to enliven and embellish domestic life, must be advantageous, not only to the female sex, but to society in general. (2: 522-23)

Edgeworth's language betrays her reservations about the domesticity some contemporary critics insist she believed in almost religiously. Her use of the words "restrained," "cruel," and the twice repeated "sedentary" underscores her belief that passivity was a condition of marriage and was not without its consequences to the female psyche. The concept of "trifling" accomplishments shows an author ill-at-ease with her recommendations. Domestic life is not represented as automatically appealing: females are said to need every aid to keep themselves from "dissipation." Nancy Armstrong refers to Practical Education as an attempt "at institutionalizing the curriculum proposed by conduct-book literature."³¹ But Practical Education is actually atypical: superficial learning is discouraged, and pupils are expected to learn to their utmost capacities. With respect to socializing girls, Maria Edgeworth, like

³¹ Armstrong 63. Armstrong also sees Erasmus Darwin's A Plan for the Conduct of Education in Boarding Schools (1798) as a glorified conduct book. However, Darwin tried to improve girls' boarding schools by presenting a plan which included more comprehensive curricula and healthier living facilities. The Edgeworths similarly wanted to equalize education, not to create "a distinctively feminine discourse" (63). Claudia L. Johnson detects subversive strategies in Edgeworth's fiction but writes that Practical Education shows no "concern for the condition of women" (149-50). This is not true: she pushes against the boundaries of conventional female education all the time, in non-fiction as well as fiction.

Mary Wollstonecraft in Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787), refuses to glamorize marriage. Accomplishments, and book learning itself, are positioned as forms of consolation for females who suffer an unnatural and unwelcome confinement.

Edgeworth frequently used the French term "ennui" in her writings to signify vague, unsettling emotions which left characters discontented. Lady Delacour in Belinda experiences "ennui": her boredom lures her toward a frivolous life. In Leonora the term denotes aristocratic excess. The Earl of Glenthorn in the novel Ennui suffers an aimlessness of spirit which does not seem cured until he visits his ancestral home in Ireland and recovers the details of his personal history. Practical Education, however, relates ennui to the immobilized female body. Edgeworth's chapter on "Female Accomplishments" quotes from Madame Roland's prison diary:

Therefore the study of the fine arts, considered as a part of female education, should be attended to, much less with a view to the acquisition of superior talents, than with a desire to give women a taste for industry, the habit of application, and a greater variety of employments; for these assist us to escape from ennui, the most cruel disease of society. . . . (2: 527)

Edgeworth asks readers to refrain from judging the politics for which Roland was hanged, although she admired the French author and wrote to Sophy Ruxton in 1796: "she was a great woman and died heroically" (qtd. in Hare 1: 45). Instead, Edgeworth refers to Roland's need for music and drawing as "employments in prison." A seemingly innocuous parallel is drawn between the passivity of the Englishwoman's life and Roland's life in captivity. Roland herself makes the same implicit parallel: living with the awareness that she could die at any moment, she

contemplates the purpose of female accomplishments, the "ennui" of domestic life being elicited by the terror and boredom of prison.

One of the "fine arts" practiced by middle and upper-class women was sewing, not necessarily meant to serve a practical purpose. Embroidering passed the time and was demonstrably feminine. Sewing as a diversionary ploy is discussed in Helen, where the mature Lady Davenant, a brilliant conversationalist, uses sewing as a prop so that she can conduct a literary salon. Cecilia, her daughter, tells her mother about women whom Cecilia detests: "those who never raise their eyes from their everlasting work; what is said, read, thought, or felt is with them of secondary importance to that bit of muslin in which they are making holes" (150). Cecilia praises her mother for always having embroidery in front of her, commenting approvingly, "to do you justice, you never attend to it in the least" (151). Lady Davenant admits to being "a sad bungler" (although she is quite uninterested) but insists that women must continue to have "the privilege of the needle" as it can provide "an antidote both to love in idleness and hate in idleness" (151). Lady Davenant represents sewing as protection against emotions which are intensified by this sedentary life. She and her daughter, alike, recognize that sewing is a ruse: the tambour frame shields her ladyship from criticism.

Cecilia Macheski, in "Penelope's Daughters," cites the many functions of sewing in eighteenth-century fiction; in Pamela for instance: "Pamela knows that needlework is a scheme, a work that encourages the appearance of virtue while at the same time actually defending her chastity from illicit suitors" (89-90). Pamela,

like Lady Davenant, does not care about needlework per se: she uses sewing to protect herself from being seduced. Lady Davenant creates a demure facade for herself in order to keep from being lampooned as a bluestocking and to avoid being resisted as a politician. It is the appearance of performing domestic skills, and not the skills themselves, which affords women respectability. Edgeworth senses that fashionable accomplishments are "trifling" arts, but worries about the consequences were women to forsake them.

The difficulty of changing public attitudes is reflected in her chapter on "Books" where she argues that girls should be allowed to read adventures such as Gulliver's Travels and Robinson Crusoe, whereas boys should do so only if their parents intend them to become soldiers or sailors.

The taste for adventure is absolutely incompatible with the sober perseverance necessary to success in any other liberal professions. To girls this species of reading cannot be as dangerous as it is to boys; girls must very soon perceive the impossibility of their rambling about the world in quest of adventures; and where there appears an obvious impossibility in gratifying any wish, it is not likely to become, or at least to continue, a torment to the imagination. (1: 336)

Nancy K. Miller's essay "Emphasis Added" argues against Freud's contention that "romance dominates the female daydream and constitutes its primary heroinism," while male fantasy centers on heroic adventures (32). On the contrary, Miller suggests that numerous woman writers repressed "not erotic impulses but an impulse to power" (35). Maria Edgeworth, who lived in Ireland during periods of war, revealed in her private letters her eagerness for political involvement which she deflected into writing. In June of 1798, she wrote to her cousin Sophy:

I am going on in the old way, writing stories. I cannot be a captain of dragoons, and sitting with my hands before me would not make any one of us one degree safer. I know nothing more of Practical Education; it is advised to be published. I have finished a volume of wee wee stories, about the size of "The Purple Jar," all about Rosamond. (qtd. in Hare 1: 56)

Edgeworth positions her writing as a modest ("wee wee") response to the impossibility of female adventuring, and yet the reader can sense a gratification coming from sublimated impulses. In Practical Education, reading replaces actual adventure; Edgeworth avails herself of a curiously enabling tactic by advising parents that Gulliver's and Robinson Crusoe's stories cannot affect girls whose hopes of wish fulfillment have been suppressed. It must be remembered that *Émile* is given Robinson Crusoe--"the remarkable eighteenth-century record of a man living by his wits" (Summerfield 117). Cries of impossibility veil an empowering strategy: much as in Letters for Literary Ladies AN insists that educating women is harmless, for they know better than to expect "direct power," in Edgeworth's "Books" chapter she recommends exciting tales for girls without acknowledging that a glimpse of the world might generate new enthusiasms.

Edgeworth's adult fiction has been analyzed for the tensions she creates between country and city life, domesticity and dissipation, sense and sensibility. Less noticed is the fact that Belinda (1801), her first domestic novel, and Helen (1834), her last, show the implementation of ideas articulated in Letters for Literary Ladies and Practical Education. Edgeworth uses her fiction to identify what constitutes a good mother and wife and to reinforce the pleasures of family life. The novelist also depicts a society in which women's motives are second guessed, requiring them to

conceal their personal aspirations and the hopes they harbor for the next generation of females. In Belinda and Helen, the novels' main protagonists are not the girls featured in each novel's title--rather, the spotlight falls on Belinda's and Helen's married female mentors, Lady Delacour and Lady Davenant. The latter are well read and worldly women who struggle to reconcile their temperaments and drives with the expectation that they remain dutiful wives and mothers. The prominence of these troubled but engaging mentors suggests that Maria Edgeworth was ambivalent about embracing "family values." Lady Davenant and Lady Delacour are converted to domesticity, but in the process of their reformation Edgeworth airs these women's grievances about how society treats the older, self-possessed woman who wants to make her mark outside the home.

As Lady Delacour's confidante, Belinda operates as the sounding board for the older woman's complex story. Delacour is not naturally inclined toward marriage and motherhood; she leads a whirlwind life but finds it brings her little gratification. This divided individual shines at parties but admits privately to Belinda that she fears she is suffering from an incurable wound to her breast. Delacour incurred the wound during a duel she undertook dressed as a man, at the urging of Harriot Freke. Delacour's injury turns out to be no more than a serious bruise, but her suspicion that she is critically ill with an illness related to the maternal body causes Delacour to fend off her natural daughter, Helena. The novel's theme is synopsized by the errant heroine, whose belief in her physical ailment reflects her mental turmoil. When Mr. Clarence Hervey praises maternal educators for their importance to

society, Lady Delacour responds with embarrassment: "I advise you to write a sentimental comedy, a comédie larmoyante, or a drama on the German model, and call it *The School for Mothers*" (168).

The "School for Mothers" poises Lady Delacour between two irreconcilable role models: Lady Anne Percival, who nurtures her own children as well as the neglected Helena, and Mrs. Freke, configured as a subversive, homoerotic force. Freke resembles Araminta in "*Angelina*" and Hannah More's Miss Sparkes in *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*: Sparkes is "a wit and an Amazon" who wears "masculine attire," has a booming voice, and argues with men possessed of superior judgment (2: 84, 85). Edgeworth states of the equally brash and unkempt Mrs. Freke that "though she had laid aside the modesty of her own sex, had not acquired the decency of the other" (42). Freke virtually leers at Belinda, calling her "handsome as an angel" and admiring the way she would look "on horseback" (217; 220). The portrait of the disruptive female is infused with undercurrents of lesbianism, much as Araminta is discredited by her unseemly predilection for liquor.

Lady Anne, as Freke's polar opposite, becomes an obvious exemplar; Anne, who is comforting rather than threatening, runs a democratic household in which she and husband Charles offer stimulus to their four children, give them chances for self-expression, and avoid discriminating by age. Mr. Percival proudly informs a friend that his wife is hardly "an old-fashioned, spiritless, patient Griselda" (90). Like Emma Granby in *Moral Tales*, Lady Anne is rational and intelligent. The Percival

marriage strikes Belinda as a sincere "union of interests, occupations, taste, and affection."

She was at first astonished by the openness with which they talked of their affairs in her presence; that there were no family secrets, nor any of those petty mysteries which arise from a discordance of temper or struggle for power. (208)

Rather than being structured as a pyramid, all family members have a voice in decisions. As a whole, they participate in "general occupations or amusements." Belinda notes that Lady Anne's children "were treated neither as slaves nor as playthings, but as reasonable creatures" (208); the rejection of children as "mere playthings" is repeated in Professional Education (37). This language with respect to children echoes Wollstonecraft's vocabulary in the Vindication, where women are neither to be treated as "abject slaves" nor made to live in a "gilt cage" (45; 44). Each author demands that her respective subject be treated with dignity. As in Practical Education, children in Belinda are said to learn best when they are "induced by example, and confirmed by sympathy" (209). There is no rote learning, no lecturing on the part of parents, and no corporal punishment. Lady Anne steers each of her progeny toward the activities they love: chemistry, gardening, painting, and music, emphasizing academics and the fine arts in equal measure. Kowaleski-Wallace raises the issue that Lady Anne, as an idealized help mate, is continually "yielding" to her husband's "superior wisdom" (121). But if one looks first to Practical Education, the Percivals function as a mentoring team, and this concept is unusually modern. Mr. Percival is no ordinary patriarch, nor even a "new patriarch" devoted to manipulating others through guilt. The father "took an interest in everything

which entertained his children" (240). As he watches them play "jack-straws," Belinda grows incredulous. Lady Anne explains her husband's behavior: "he is of Dryden's opinion, that if a straw can be made the instrument of happiness, he is a wise man who does not despise it" (240). In this context, one can see the conventional heterosexual romance plot supplanted by a twentieth-century family romance. This is typified by the entire family's journey to "the great Rocking Stones at Brimham Crag"; the trip includes one of Belinda's admirers, a Creole gentleman named Mr. Vincent (241). Husbands, wives, children, protégées, and suitors form a peaceful England in microcosm, immune to the tensions manifest in romantic and "Jacobin" novels.

By comparison, Austen's Persuasion articulates the more traditional position of the patriarch within the household. When the eldest Musgrove boy dislocates his collar-bone, his father, Charles, reacts with benign detachment:

The child was to be kept in bed and amused as quietly as possible; but what was there for a father to do? This was quite a female case, and it would be highly absurd in him, who could be of no use at home, to shut himself up. His father very much wished him to meet Captain Wentworth, and there being no sufficient reason against it, he ought to go; and it ended in his making a bold public declaration, when he came in from shooting, of his meaning to dress directly, and dine at the other house. (81)

Charles Musgrove relegates caretaking to the women, continues his gaming after the crisis, and dines elsewhere when he realizes his son is in no danger. Mr. Percival eschews this role, for he would prefer to play with, enjoy, and educate his children. As if anticipating feminist complaints, Mr. Percival rejects patriarchy as having been foisted upon him.

Husbands may sometimes have delicate feelings as well as their wives, though they are seldom allowed to have any by these unjust novel writers. Now, could a husband who has any delicacy be content to possess the person without the mind? (248)

"Possess" is a provocative term. However, Mr. Percival insists delicacy should not be gendered, but is a virtue equally necessary to men. He believes in comparable education for boys and girls, conceding to his adversary Harriot Freke: "I grant you that nothing can be more different than innocence and ignorance" (221). Edgeworth disassociates modest behavior from a lack of academic knowledge; this same approach occurs in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, where Wollstonecraft argues that greater spiritual and physical purity will result from girls being taught the sciences, history, and receiving physical education. The Duchess in Leonora likewise stresses the need to isolate "female ignorance" from "female innocence" (251). Moreover, she warns Leonora that the reason why women must aspire to even greater "virtue" as their "intellectual cultivation increases," is because men, seen as a powerfully reactive force, might otherwise decide to "prohibit knowledge altogether as a pernicious commodity."

Edgeworth's fear of male power, which they exerted by regulating female education, troped as a "commodity" of negotiable value, motivates Edgeworth to question Harriot Freke's motives. Lady Delacour must reject Freke's coarsening influence before her breast can heal, allowing her to become a tolerant wife and emotionally receptive to her daughter. Since Freke is described in a chapter entitled "Rights of Woman," and appears to be against the institution of marriage, one might surmise that Edgeworth was conducting an assault on Mary Wollstonecraft.

However, a verbal exchange between Mrs. Freke and Mr. Percival suggests that the pair do not dispute the need for social reform--rather, they spar over tactics. States Mrs. Freke: "the present system of society is radically wrong." Mr. Percival agrees, but he interrogates her as to how she would do things differently. She recommends, for a start: "I'd have both sexes call things by their right names" (223). This sentiment is reminiscent of A Vindication, where Wollstonecraft insists that girls "be taught the elements of anatomy and medicine" (177). Mr. Percival asks Freke how far she is willing to go: "But you would not overturn society to attain it, would you?" Mrs. Freke would do just that; disconcertingly direct, she thinks in absolutes. "Friend or foe! peace or war!" she demands to know when Belinda declines her invitation to a ball because it is just too frivolous for the exemplary heroine (224). Percival is taken aback by Freke's brashness and need for unquestioning loyalty; he prefers less confrontational methods of resolving social and personal conflicts.

His and Lady Anne's more restrained approach reflects Edgeworth's desired strategy for change. Mr. Vincent exemplifies male chauvinism; he perceives his countrywomen to be naturally indolent and is, to some extent, charmed by the attribute. Lady Anne deftly interrogates him: "Does Mr. Vincent wish to confine our sex to the bliss of ignorance?" she asks (225). Mr. Vincent becomes embarrassed and replies: "I am sensible that I have many prejudices;--Miss Portman has made me ashamed of some of them" (226). Edgeworth shows how Lady Anne is in a better position than Mrs. Freke to modify anachronistic attitudes. Both characters appear

to have a similar goal in mind, but Edgeworth intimates, as did Hannah More, that female aggressiveness discourages others from listening.

This can hardly be called a radical strategy. Nonetheless, it is a reforming one, supported by a concrete educational platform and predicated on Edgeworth's sense of the public's reluctance to accept change and her belief that women, through "masculine" behavior, could find themselves socially regressing. As the Duchess informs Leonora: "Opinion obtained freedom for women; by opinion they may be again enslaved" (251). This was Maria Edgeworth's not-so-idealized view of reality. Furthermore, she felt that social stability originated with the family unit. By contrast, Wollstonecraft had little faith in families and constructed her own in fiction, based on temperamental and intellectual affinities between characters. Maria Edgeworth valued the family unit too much to contemplate alternative models. In keeping with her desire to work within existing systems, Edgeworth tries to use the widespread preference for feminine-seeming women to women's advantage. Frances Burney does the same in The Wanderer, where Juliet/Ellis's "simplicity" is juxtaposed with Elinor's theatricality, providing readers with a lesson in accommodation (358). Edgeworth's female characters' dilemmas point to complex dimensions of identity which Wollstonecraft ignores in her polarization of women as domestic creatures (a general category assigned to most) and woman as romantic heroine (a category of one). Edgeworth sees most women as being concerned with maintaining their families and their individuality. Susan Fraiman writes about this situation in terms of a conflict seen in conduct books involving a female's desire for "affiliation" and her

impulse to assert "ambition."³² Belinda and Helen acknowledge this tension; community and familial expectations must be fulfilled, but women must also be respected as intelligent and differentiated individuals.

Embedded within Belinda is a sub-plot which exemplifies how Edgeworth resisted the figure of patriarchal mentor; she uses the character of Clarence Hervey, an Oxford graduate, to reveal the sexual motives underlying a mentor's "benevolence." Mr. Hervey is modeled on the example of Thomas Day, who supervised the upbringing of two orphan girls, intending to make one his wife.³³ Mr. Hervey is described as having spent time in France before the Revolution; he develops a repulsion for the "vanity, affectation, and artifice" of Parisian women. Having read Émile, Hervey decides to create his own "Sophia" (361). Riding through the bucolic New Forest, he encounters a blushing, blue-eyed beauty of "artless sensibility" (373). Entering the girl's home, Hervey witnesses the death of the girl's grandmother. The grandmother extracts a promise from Hervey that he will not debauch the girl, but rather will become her guardian.

Hervey keeps his word and renames the girl "Virginia" after the heroine of Bernardin de St. Pierre's romance. As in Elizabeth Inchbald's play The Child of

³² Fraiman 16. Most of these conflicts are located in female authored conduct books, such as Ann Murry's Mentoria (1778). The male authors, as might be expected, do not reflect an affiliation/ambition conflict.

³³ Thomas Day's experiment raising two orphan girls, Sabrina and Lucretia, according to his own pedagogical program is discussed by Dorothy Gardiner in English Girlhood at School 451-52. For background on Day, see Sadler and Gignilliat.

Nature (1788), the girl is kept isolated so she may remain unspoiled and unexposed to other men.³⁴ Rumors in town circulate that Virginia may even be Hervey's mistress. The mentor is unsure of what he wants and considers making her his consort; yet he knows his honor requires him to protect her purity. Consequently, he places her with Mrs. Ormand, the mother of Hervey's tutor at Oxford. Mrs. Ormand gives Virginia a minimal education, believing that is the way in which Hervey intends to preserve her simplicity of nature. Deprived of books and company, Virginia is visited only by Hervey and an elderly clergyman.

Initially, Hervey is enchanted by Virginia's naïveté. When he offers her a choice between diamond earrings and a "moss rosebud," Virginia disarmingly chooses the latter. An erotic tension surfaces as Edgeworth reveals the sexual tensions underlying this "child of nature" mythology. Virginia sees "the pretty sparkling things," and while does she not know what earrings are, she offers to have her ears pierced if Mr. Hervey wishes. She examines Mrs. Ormand's ears, exclaiming "oh! you have holes in your ears; but I have none in mine" (361). Mrs. Ormand explains "that holes could easily be made in her ears, by running a steel pin through them." Virginia reacts physically to the idea of ear piercing:

She shrunk back, defending her ear with one hand, and pushing the diamonds from her with the other, exclaiming, "Oh, no, no!--unless, added she, changing her tone, and turning to Clarence, "unless you wish it:--if you bid me, I will." (361)

³⁴ The Child of Nature was derived from Mme de Genlis's Zélie, a play from Genlis's Theater of Education.

Hervey is stunned by Virginia's submissiveness and the suggestiveness of his ward's offer. His response, for once, is unpremeditated:

Clarence was scarcely master of himself at this instant; and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could reply to her with that dispassionate calmness which became his situation and hers. (361)

The narrator adds that Hervey would have been more clear-headed "if his pupil had not been quite so handsome." The ear-piercing exchange requires Hervey to reexamine his motives in addition to his pedagogical techniques. He is forced to admit that the uneducated young lady seems to be "an insipid, though innocent child" as compared to Belinda, the rational heroine who possesses "an active understanding, a knowledge of literature, the power and the habit of conducting herself" (368). Only through trial and error does Hervey discover the introspective heroine is more appealing than the wife/mistress posited by Rousseau.

Hervey, for all his superior authority, does not have the courage to reject Virginia, who confesses to Mrs. Ormond that she feels gratitude, but not love, for her guardian. Her orientation is more visual than verbal; Virginia falls in love with a drawing of young man who turns out to be Captain Sunderland, a "young, dashing lieutenant in the navy" (481). Sunderland watches Virginia from afar; concealed in a thicket, he is captivated by her rose and bee tending activities. In a gory dream, Virginia sees two knights in armor and plumage fighting over her. Analyzing this dream, Virginia admits to Mrs. Ormand that the black knight "weltering in his own blood" was none other than her illustrious guardian. The unidentified white knight is Sunderland, whom she wished "to be victorious" (378).

Because Belinda scrupulously avoids dealing with any type of subconscious, imagistic world, Virginia's fantasy assumes added meaning.³⁵ Her subconscious reveals her anger at being molded and controlled by a man who initiates a puerile educational scheme on the basis of what appears, in retrospect, to be a sexual impulse he is too polite to fulfill. Virginia senses her mentor's condescension: she shows him her sketches of the New Forest and asks Hervey if he sees them as indications that she might one day "conquer" her "natural indolence" (387). By deprecating her artwork, Virginia defers to the university-educated guardian, but while in a dream state, she allows a young, handsome, and adoring admirer to vanquish the patriarch and replace him as her desired suitor. The narrative questions the patriarch's right to project his wishes and desires onto a female ward. Hervey's romanticism, Edgeworth suggests, is a form of self-delusion inappropriate to his rank and education: worse, it is founded on undisclosed erotic feelings. Virginia's romanticism, on the other hand, makes sense; it suits her personality and her station and leads her in the direction of a fitting lover.

Helen, written at the close of Edgeworth's career, has structural and thematic affinities with Belinda. Again, the novel is named for the protégée who listens even though her mentor is far more fascinating. Lady Davenant is depicted as a "nobler kind" of individual: a wife, mother, confidante, political counselor to her husband, a

³⁵ Katherine Sobba Green identifies "Hervey's misguided Rousseauism" in The Courtship Novel, 1740-1820 150. Green does not read animosity into Virginia's dream of seeing Hervey stabbed. I see it as indicative of problems relevant to class and gender.

patron of the arts, and counselor to young people (272). Helen is her daughter Cecilia's best friend, and Lady Davenant diagnoses Helen's primary "defect" as an "inordinate desire to be loved" (31). She suggests that Helen should concern herself with truthfulness and not with garnering approval from others. Much as Lady Delacour urges Belinda to come to terms with who she is, Lady Davenant tells Helen to stop being passive and become involved in politics.

Women are now so highly cultivated, and political subjects are at present of so much importance, of such high interest, to all human creatures who live together in society, you can hardly expect, Helen, that you as a rational being, can go through the world as it now is, without forming any opinion on points of public importance. You cannot, I conceive, satisfy yourself with the common namby-pamby little missy phrase, "ladies have nothing to do with politics." (250)

Lady Davenant thinks highly of women, assumes they will behave rationally, and wants them to be part of the social fabric. Bluntly, she attacks "namby-pamby little missy" prejudices. But her personal experience causes her to fall short of advocating activism. Lady Davenant describes a formative moment to Helen. Having read Madame de Staël's Sur la Révolution Française, she feels "mortified" by Staël's opinion that Englishwomen were timid and colorless. She tells Helen that, at the time of her reading, she did not recognize French ways were "unsuited to the manners, domestic habits, and public virtue of our country" (71). Challenged by Mme de Staël's low estimation of her English counterparts, Davenant decides to become an "English Corinne" (71), patterning herself after the heroine of Staël's Corinne, ou l'Italie (1807). The tragic actress is described by contemporary critics as "inspired priestess dedicated to the cult of genius," and as "a poet, too, sibyl and

muse."³⁶ Staël was herself referred to as "Corinne" by Elizabeth Inchbald, among others. While the Edgeworth circle relished Staël's genius and repeated her witticisms among themselves, many were wary of having direct contact with the author, given Staël's situation of exile and her reputation for having taken a series of lovers.³⁷

Lady Davenant surrounds herself with eager young people and begins expounding on her ideas. Her friend Dumant warns her that a "doggrel pasquinade" circulates:

"Tell me, gentles, have you seen,
The prating she, the mock Corinne?" (71)

Humiliated, Lady Davenant tries to be less vocal; she is shamed, not only because she is linked to a controversial woman, but also because she is, by nationality if not

³⁶ See Ellen Moers' chapter "Performing Heroicism: The Myth of Corinne" in Literary Women for discussion of "The inspired priestess" (181). Madelyn Gutwirth describes Corinne as "sibyl" in Mme de Staël 173. Gutwirth notes that Corinne was composed while Staël was performing in Phédre. Nancy K. Miller writes about Corinne's mixed lineage in "Performances of the Gaze: Staël's Corinne, or Italy." In 1808, Edgeworth wrote to her aunt, Mrs. Ruxton, of Staël's novel: "I am dazzled by the genius and provoked by the absurdities" (qtd. in Hare 1: 165).

³⁷ Mme de Staël's charm is alluded to in several of Maria's letters. She appears not to have met Staël but wrote to Mrs. Ruxton on Nov. 25, 1813: "All Agree that Mme de Staël is frankness itself, and has an excellent heart" (qtd. in Hare 1: 233). In March of 1819, she shares an anecdote with Mrs. Ruxton about how the Duchess of Wellington was hesitant to meet Staël because the former "was to be an Ambassadors" and was unsure of how Staël would be "received by the Bourbons" (qtd. in Hare 1: 290). Christina Colvin refers to Staël's politically and socially controversial image in her introduction to Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland xxiv-xxv. Madelyn Gutwirth states that Staël was condemned "for defending divorce, free love and suicide" (259).

by nature, deemed a poor imitation. More rumors arise; Lady Davenant's desire for her husband to excel as a peer causes others to intimate that she has prepared his speeches, so that "Lord Davenant was only Lady Davenant in disguise" (68). Gossip mongers eagerly attack the marriage and attempt to stifle Lord Davenant's career. Lady Davenant sees her husband as being unusual inasmuch as he was "above all jealousy of female influence or female talent" (68). But his patience only accentuates the injustice of attacks being made against him.

Gradually Lord Davenant questions his wife's goals. He smiles soberly and says to her: "The patronage of Europe would not satisfy you; you would want India, and if you had India, you would sigh for the New World" (72). Guilt, as Kowaleski-Wallace rightly observes, becomes a means of regulating the ambitions of women, and Lady Davenant plumbs her past for other transgressions, confessing to Helen that in her ignorance she attempted to exploit her husband's power. At her mother's behest, she asked Lord Davenant to obtain "public money" so her mother could renovate a "dairy" with "Dutch tile," "fancy windows," and "a porch hung with French mirrors" (74). Lady Davenant blames her lack of training in "logic" for these errors of judgment. On one side, a manipulative mother urges the heroine to use her husband's position for personal gain; on the other, an honorable husband offers money for his mother-in-law from his own account. Intensely self-critical, Lady Davenant assumes full responsibility for her mother's blunder. Displaying her ambivalent relationship to power, Davenant concludes she is unqualified to present herself to the world as either a politician or a philosophe.

The chastened Lady Davenant informs Helen that she brought about her own reform by trying "with all my might to acquire knowledge" (79). Her ladyship's self-education, a facsimile of what her husband and his cohorts received at university, becomes "the happiest time" her ladyship remembers (79). Extensive book learning makes Lady Davenant more circumspect in revealing her tastes to others. A local pundit, Horace Churchill, finds Helen reading one of Lady Davenant's books. Churchill is surprised to see that the book "was more scientific than literary" (140). The older woman shares her scientific bent with Helen by transmitting the text and relies on profuse marginalia in order to silently communicate her values to her protégée. Much as in The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria, the heroine and Henry Darnford confirm their mutual sensibility by inscribing messages in the margins of Rousseau's Héloïse, in Helen women rely on marginalia to attest to each other's rationalism.

Education teaches Lady Davenant how to deal with a society resistant to outspoken women. Nonetheless, the unreformed attitudes of society leave her vulnerable. A page named Carlos betrays a "diplomatist" by stealing a confidential letter from Lady Davenant's desk, and Lady Davenant is accused of having "revealed a secret of state that had been confided to my husband" (271; 262). She is attacked for having possessed the letter and dreads being "dishonored and despised" although she has betrayed no one's confidence (262). Helen discovers Carlos's treachery, saving Lady Davenant the difficulty of a public scandal. Lady Davenant's response

to this near disaster is to warn Helen carefully to distinguish between female "influence" and "interference."

Female influence must, will, and ought to exist on political subjects as on all others; but this influence should always be domestic, not public--the customs of society have so ruled it. Of the thorns in the path of ambitious men all moralists talk, but there are little, scarcely visible, thorns of a peculiar sort that best the path of the ambitious woman, the venomous prickles of the domestic bramble, a plant not perhaps mentioned in Withering's Botany, or the Hortus Kewensis, but it is too well known to many, and to me it has been sorely known. (261)

Davenant's allusions to "Withering's Botany" and the "Hortus Kewensis" link the expanded curriculum of Practical Education to a "domestic bramble" unexplored in taxonomies of plants. Botany is more than just an increasingly popular study in the late eighteenth century: Edgeworth shows heroines experiencing the discipline almost physically, in terms of the "thorns" and "venomous prickles" sprouting in their path. As a female politician who reads scientific texts, Lady Davenant is living proof that intellect is ungendered. But public derision and a virtuous husband's skepticism teach her to move gingerly. In the course of the novel, she learns to conceal her desire for public involvement and to communicate her educational values to Helen in covert ways; both Practical Education and Letters for Literary Ladies prepare readers to decode and appreciate the need for these veiled communications.

Practical Education and Letters for Literary Ladies laid the groundwork for a progressive pedagogy which can be glimpsed in a Helen, where Lady Davenant arms her protégée for a future in which women have expanded roles. Written in 1834, Helen reflects Edgeworth's belief that English society was hardly ready for a lady politician or philosophe. This did not deter Maria Edgeworth from presenting

a comprehensive plan designed to create more equal conditions between men and women. Her pedagogy, stated in non-fiction and dramatized in fiction, is oriented toward a world in which elite, classical education is replaced by a more pragmatic focus on the natural sciences. She lowers the barriers between boys and girls by demonstrating that they should be taught the same subjects in comparable ways. Belinda suggests that refinement and respectfulness should not be gendered attributes but must apply to heroes as well as heroines. Children are championed and given rights not accorded them earlier in the eighteenth century, when they were silenced and kept at arm's length from parents. Edgeworth may have feared confrontation, but she looked forward to change. Unlike Mary Wollstonecraft, she took pains to assure that the messenger bearing news of a new, more democratic household, where mothers, fathers, and children all had similar rights, would not be attacked before the program could even be considered.

Chapter 5

Eros and Education: Elizabeth Inchbald as Playwright/Novelist

Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) had a checkered career. During the 1770s she worked as an actress and playwright; her original comedies and adaptations of continental works were performed at Covent Garden and Dublin's Smock Alley Theater.¹ In the 1790s, she gained recognition as a novelist, and has retrospectively been identified as England's "first female drama critic."² While writing plays, she began experimenting with the novel form. A virtually unknown epistolary novel, Emily Herbert: Or, Perfidy Punished (1786-87), exhibits the generic cross-fertilization

¹ The earliest source of information on Inchbald's life and career is James Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald, 1833. Also see Roger Manvell's Elizabeth Inchbald; Samuel Littlewood, Elizabeth Inchbald and Her Circle; and Todd, A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800 173-76. Inchbald's theatrical history is described in A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, ed. Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans 8: 79-85. Her performances are documented in The London Stage, 1660-1800, ed. Hogan, Part 5, Vol. 2, 1776-1800. For more background on Inchbald as playwright, see Paula R. Backscheider's introduction to The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald (ix-xxvii) and Patricia Sigl's article on Inchbald in Dictionary of Literary Biography: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Dramatists, ed. Backscheider 198-215. Cecilia Macheski's "A Feeling Mind: The Early Literary Career of Elizabeth Inchbald" analyzes much of her work up to, and including, A Simple Story (1792).

² Katharine Rogers, "Britain's First Woman Drama Critic: Elizabeth Inchbald" in Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820, ed. Schofield and Macheski 177-290. For Inchbald's remarks on plays, see her prefaces in The British Theatre.

which tintured her work.³ One of the characters in Emily Herbert, the beautiful but vain Lady Stanley, is tricked into marrying a Lord's "valet du chambre," believing him to be a Duke. The same mishap is narrowly averted by the heroine in The Midnight Hour (1787), a comedy Inchbald adapted from the French of Dumaniant. In the play, Julia is preyed upon by a suitor who feigns noble rank when he is actually a "valet to the Marquis" (29). Emily Herbert and The Midnight Hour were published in rapid sequence; her novel fell into obscurity while the play was produced for twelve years running.⁴

Yet despite Inchbald's success in writing for the stage, contemporary critics treat her almost exclusively as a novelist. Gary Kelly positions A Simple Story (1791) as pre-Jacobin for its incipient critique of English education and clusters this and her subsequent Nature and Art (1796) with works by "Jacobin novelists" Robert Bage, William Godwin, and Thomas Holcroft.⁵ Eleanor Ty compares A Simple

³ The British Library catalogue and the STC credit Inchbald with Emily Herbert: Or, Perfidy Punished. A Novel. In a Series of Letters (Dublin: Printed by William Porter. For Mess. White, Colbert, Cash, W. Porter, Lewis, Jones and Halpen, 1787). This edition is unsigned. The National Union Catalogue cites an earlier London edition, Printed for T. Jones, 1786, signed "By the Author of Appearance is Against Them." Bibliographies do not list this work: Emily Herbert is not cited in G. Louis Joughin's An Inchbald Bibliography. See my article, forthcoming, for an explanation of why Emily Herbert can be definitively attributed to Inchbald and is a literary antecedent to A Simple Story.

⁴ For information on the few produced women playwrights of the late eighteenth-century, see Judith Stanton's essay "This New-Found Path Attempting" in Curtain Calls, ed. Schofield and Macheski 325-54. Stanton locates Inchbald as one of the few leading female playwrights. Joughin provides an interesting "Tabular Analysis" of her plays and the number of reprintings they received (73).

⁵ Kelly, The English Jacobin Novelist 1780-1800.

Story to novels by "unsex'd revolutionaries" Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Charlotte Smith, and Helen Maria Williams.⁶ Ty and Kelly offer welcome insights into Inchbald's desire for social reform, but the category of Jacobin is problematic, given her status chiefly as a self-supporting widow concerned with maintaining her livelihood and her personal reputation.⁷

Terry Castle compares A Simple story to novels by the French authors Marivaux, Laclos, and Rousseau, observing that aside from A Simple Story, English fiction gives short shrift to erotic aspects of guardian/ward relationships. Citing novelists from Burney to Austen, Castle states:

The exclusively noneroticized nature of this particular male/female bond is usually marked symbolically by an age difference or the marital status of the guardian. (310)

⁶ Inchbald is situated among female "Jacobin" novelists in Eleanor Ty's chapter "Disruption and Containment: The Mother and Daughter in A Simple Story" in Unsex'd Revolutionaries 83-100. Catherine Craft-Fairchild mentions her in conjunction with Hays and Wollstonecraft in "Elizabeth Inchbald's Not So Simple Story." Mary Anne Schofield treats A Simple Story as a "romance's romance" in Masking and Unmasking the Female Mind 175-82. These fine studies are all novel oriented.

⁷ Roger Manvell's biography of Inchbald quotes from a 1797 letter she wrote to William Godwin upon the death of Mary Wollstonecraft, who bore her first child out of wedlock. Inchbald states: "I did not know her. I never wished to know her--as I avoid every female acquaintance who has no husband, I avoided her" (2: 102). This letter is alleged to have created a rift in their friendship. Katharine Rogers, in her essay "Inhibitions on Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists," writes about the pressure Inchbald felt to create heroines who were above reproach. Cecilia Macheski comments on Inchbald's refusal to accept Wollstonecraft's cohabitation with Godwin in her essay "Herself as Heroine: Portraits as Autobiography for Elizabeth Inchbald" in Curtain Calls (36); in Macheski's dissertation she comments on the excessive moralizing tenor of Inchbald's remarks on Centlivre's A Bold Stroke for a Wife (86).

But what was true of some, and hardly all English novels, did not apply to the theater.⁸ For example, Animal Magnetism (1788), which Inchbald adapted from Dumaniant's Le Médecin malgré, features a quack doctor who tries to induce erotic feeling in a young female ward. Inchbald routinely reworked "continental" plots taken from plays by Patrat, Destouches, Mme de Genlis, and Kotzebue, among others, in order to entertain and titillate British audiences. She was indebted not only to her play writing contemporaries in England, Germany, and France, but also culled ideas from Shakespeare, whose plays she had read, performed in, and remarked upon in the first five volumes of the twenty-five volume anthology she compiled, entitled The British Theatre (1808).

This chapter will explore the synergy between Inchbald's theatrical experience and her two major novels, A Simple Story and Nature and Art (1796), both of which

⁸ Castle appears to use the criteria of mutual desire in typecasting these fictions. She disregards English works, although many concern a guardian's sexual scheming in relation to a female ward. The New Atalantis (1709) by Delarivier Manley is a case in point; her work will be discussed later in this chapter. Eliza Haywood's The Fortunate Foundlings (1744) describes how the guardian Dorilaus feels "passion" for Louisa "under the shape of friendship and paternal affection" (11). He sends her to boarding school in defense of these feelings. Other examples include Sarah Scott's The History of Cornelia (1750) and Millenium Hall (1762). In Millenium Hall, Mr. Hintman's "caresses" which "suited" Louisa Mancel "in her earlier years were now become improper" (57). Hugh Kelly's play The Romance of an Hour (1774) makes light of this theme, whereas novels, intended primarily to instruct and caution female readers, treated these attempted seductions more seriously. Kelly's play also deals with prostitution in a comic manner. The Town and Country Magazine; Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction and Entertainment (Jan. 1772) devotes a brief episode, "The Boistrous Lover," to the matter of a guardian's unwelcome attentions (31), as does the Westminster Magazine (Oct. 1775), which published the story of Miss Warner, a seduced ward who becomes pregnant (521-24).

analyze the relationship of education to the formation of human character.⁹ She shared this theme with Mary Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth, among others. However, Inchbald wrote neither juvenile literature nor polemics. Her strength, as Maria Edgeworth proclaimed in admiring letters to the author, lay in creating pathos and drama.¹⁰ Another derivative of her career in the theater is that she was unafraid to acknowledge the sexual ramifications of her themes. Edgeworth read A Simple Story four times and wrote of its hero:

I am glad I have never met with a Dorriforth, for I must inevitably have fallen desperately in love with him; and destitute of Miss Milner's powers of charming, I might have died in despair. (qtd. in Boaden 1: 153)

Her considerable stage experience taught Inchbald how to pique readers' emotions. It has been suggested that Dorriforth was modeled on the dashing actor John Philip Kemble, who was a good friend of Inchbald's, and that this portrait influenced Charlotte Brontë "in creating Mr. Rochester."¹¹

Like Jane Eyre, A Simple Story and Nature and Art depict the tensions resulting from disparities in the educations and social status of male and female

⁹ Lytton Strachey offers an incisive preface to a 1908 edition of the novel. Strachey notes Inchbald's theatrical background and connects her with the "French classical tradition" of Racine (iiv).

¹⁰ Maria Edgeworth's letter in praise of A Simple Story is quoted by James Boaden (2: 153). Other letters show that Edgeworth sent Inchbald a copy of her novel Patronage and her Comic Dramas, suggesting she valued Inchbald's opinion of her work (2: 192-93; 208-09).

¹¹ Samuel Littlewood 76; Linda Kelly 89. Linda Kelly, in The Kemble Era, suggests that Kemble was the model for Dorriforth, who became the basis for Mr. Rochester. The Kemble Era discusses Inchbald's close personal and professional relationship with Kemble and his sister, Sarah Siddons.

characters. A Simple Story involves a seminarian's relationship to his younger, fashionably educated female ward. Boarding school leaves Miss Milner undisciplined, and seminary training makes her guardian intractable; drawn to each other as complementary opposites, the pair marry, but their divergent educations produce havoc. Nature and Art is anchored by the tragedy of Hannah Primrose, a beautiful, illiterate country girl who discovers "herself a fool in comparison with her learned seducer" (2: 112). In these texts, Inchbald is sympathetic to the flawed but honorable heroines. She implies that heroines such as Miss Milner and Hannah Primrose, both of whom die, could have been saved if they had had received "A Proper Education," to reiterate A Simple Story's final words.

Inchbald's zeal for improving female education stemmed from several motivations. She came from a farming family of modest means; one of eight children, she was raised near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. Inchbald's father died when she was seven, leaving her mother with sole responsibility for the household. There is no evidence that any of the Simpson girls received formal education, and Inchbald's preface to the first edition of A Simple Story laments "an education confined to the narrow boundaries prescribed by her sex." Inchbald read voraciously throughout her life, but felt handicapped by her lack of education, particularly with regard to novel writing, which she described as "unremitting labour."

It has been speculated that Elizabeth's sister Debby was seduced and abandoned, increasing the author's concern over women left without fortune or skills (Littlewood 97). As Susan Staves points out, the "seduced British maiden" was a

staple in late eighteenth-century fiction by novelists from Oliver Goldsmith to Amelia Opie.¹² Inchbald, of all the authors Staves considers, overtly connects educational neglect and a woman's sexual vulnerability. Her fear that illiteracy made women fair game is reflected in her "Remarks" on Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent in Volume Ten of The British Theatre. Inchbald suggests the tragedy of Calista's love for a rake was a thing of the past because of improvements in female education.

It is not requisite here to ascertain what kind of education the ladies of Italy received, at the time Rowe placed these scenes on the "Ligurnian shore;"--but certain it is, that, since the ladies of Great Britain have learnt to spell, and have made other short steps in the path of literature, the once highly favoured Lothario of illiterate times has sunk in estimation. . . . (10: 3)

Associating "illiterate times" with the ruination of women, Inchbald emphasizes the importance of giving women "a degree of masculine study" (10: 4). She presses not simply for "moral" education, as was commonly assigned to eighteenth-century women, but for literary studies, on the rationale that women might become "better qualified than heretofore to choose their lovers and husbands."

Working within the male-dominated genre of drama criticism, Inchbald came under attack as a female who dared to evaluate plays written by presumably better educated male authors. Volume Twenty-One of The British Theatre, devoted to

¹² Two of the authors whom Staves cites, Elizabeth Griffith and Susannah Rowson, were actresses as well as writers and their fiction is melodramatic. Staves briefly comments on Griffith's The History of Lady Barton (1771); Lady Barton narrates the story of Otivia d'Alembert, who bears an illegitimate child. Rowson's Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth introduces Charlotte at boarding school and it is in this unsupervised environment that Lieutenant Montraville finds himself able to use a French teacher to help him to seduce the naive girl.

plays by George Colman the Younger, contains Colman's angry remarks about Inchbald's attitudes toward his play The Heir-in-Law. Referring to Inchbald mockingly as a "scholiast" and successor to "the learned Madame Dacier," Colman disparages himself in order to attack his critic.

My writings (if they deserve the name) are replete with error;--but dear madam! why would you not apply to me?--I should have been as zealous to save you trouble, as a beau to pick up your fan.--I could have, easily, pointed to twenty of my blots, in the right places, which have escaped you, in the labour of discovering one, in the wrong. (21: ii)

By comparing Inchbald to a belle and himself to a beau, Colman moves his antagonist outside her chosen literary sphere and into a world of emphatically gendered and artificial social relations. Inchbald rejected this demeaning image in an attached reply, explaining that much as she was not "Madame Dacier," neither was Colman "Homer." Still, Inchbald was made to feel defensive about her gender and her lack of formal education: she refers to herself as "illiterate" in comparison to "learned" predecessors and feigns surprise that Colman could have been upset "by the cursory remarks of a female observer" (21: v). On more than one occasion she had reason to feel self-conscious: an otherwise flattering review of A Simple Story in Town and Country Magazine (March 1791) describes Inchbald's style as often "obscure and ungrammatical."¹³ Town and Country often reviewed her work, and

¹³ The Town and Country Magazine (Mar. 1791) 116. The reviewer writes that in A Simple Story, character is "accurately delineated and faithfully preserved." Mary Wollstonecraft was less impressed: in the Analytical Review (May 1791) she criticized Inchbald for not creating a greater contrast between the mother and the daughter, both of whom exhibit excessive "sensibility" (The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft 7: 369-70).

the reviewer charitably adds "many of these inaccuracies are probably errors of the press."

Inchbald had a literary relationship with George Colman the Elder, stage manager of the Haymarket Theater. Jovially, he defended women playwrights in an epilogue to an early Inchbald comedy, I'll Tell You What (1785):

Men, 'tis true, in their Noddles huge Treasures may hoard,
But the Heart of a Woman with Passions is stor'd.
With Passions not copied from Latin or Greek,
Which the Language of Nature in Plain English speak.

Colman the Elder asks theatergoers to accept women writers for their ability to convey passion, using the "Language of Nature" spoken in their native tongue; he minimizes the "copied" ideas espoused by classically trained male authors. Colman's anti-elitist, pro-feminist stance is presented in such a way as to win over audiences with humor and diverges from Colman the Younger's perspective. The latter, wounded by Inchbald's criticism, scorns the woman drama critic as being unlettered. Colman the Elder, who had a financial investment in Inchbald's success and was likely to have solicited this play, intimates, to the contrary, that "masculine" education was beginning to outlive its usefulness for the late-century author.

Inchbald wrote or adapted at least ten comedies while working on A Simple Story; this situation alone suggests the likelihood that a cross-pollination between genres might have occurred.¹⁴ Although it is known from her diaries that she read

¹⁴ Inchbald's penchant for synthesizing genres can be seen in a play which has been attributed to her, Cross Partners, a comedy. Cross Partners is said in the Folger Library catalogue to be "based on Destouches's L'Amour usé and a novel, The Kentish Maid."

numerous sentimental novels during this period, and several have been mentioned as possible influences on her fiction, Inchbald was also constantly exposed to the theater.¹⁵ She stayed with John Kemble while he was writing his tragedy Belisarius; or, Injur'd Innocence (1778).¹⁶ Belisarius, said to rather awkwardly combine aspects of Coriolanus, Cymbelline, Othello, and King Lear, was performed in Hull, where Inchbald went on stage to deliver the prologue in the character of Lucretia, a general's daughter whose chastity is questioned by a suspicious husband.¹⁷ Drama critics have expressed their belief that Kemble's play "inspired" her to begin writing A Simple Story (Highfill 8: 81). While in all probability she gleaned material from multiple sources, her novel exemplifies how Inchbald drew upon her theatrical past when searching for ideas. A Simple Story was rejected for publication by Stockdale in 1779 on the basis of the heroine's story alone. Inchbald subsequently added a daughter's narrative, using structural devices traceable to The Winter's Tale; she

¹⁵ Inchbald's diaries reveal that she read sentimental novels such as Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771), Rousseau's La nouvelle Héloïse (1761), and Frances Brooke's The History of Lady Julia Mandeville (1763). Nature and Art was bound with Lady Julia Mandeville in an 1810 edition (London: F.C. & J. Rivington), suggesting that these novels were aimed at one type of reader. Gerard Barker offers literary parallels between Inchbald and Mackenzie in "Inchbald's Dorriforth."

¹⁶ Inchbald's involvement with Belisarius is mentioned in Highfill, Burnim, and Langhams (eds.), A Biographical Dictionary 8: 81.

¹⁷ Herschel Baker in John Philip Kemble describes Belisarius as a poorly received amalgam of "Shakespeare and Edward Young" (42).

rewrote several of Shakespeare's characters and revised various of his themes.¹⁸ Catherine Craft-Fairchild notes that A Simple Story has been disparaged for its "textual discontinuity"; critics assume that for expediency's sake, she cobbled together two disparate works (96). But a comparison of play and novel, such as begun by James Boaden in Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald (1833), suggests that Inchbald was thinking of The Winter's Tale when she expanded her own narrative. Using Shakespeare as yet another source of inspiration, she adds details about a younger, more prudent generation, bisects the novel with a time lapse analogous to that which occurs in The Winter's Tale, and creates a father/daughter reconciliation, followed by the daughter's marriage to a suitor who steadfastly works to win her father's approval.

Given her diversified background and her individualized course of self-education, Inchbald needs to be seen as an eclectic author. Her version of Destouches's Le Philosophe marié, called The Married Man (1789), features a popular plot which had implications for her novels. In The Married Man, the erudite Sir John Classick marries a young beauty, but conceals their marriage to avoid alienating a wealthy relative, Mr. Tradewell. Matilda's very existence disturbs

¹⁸ Inchbald wrote "Remarks" on The Winter's Tale and reprinted Kemble's adaptation in The British Theatre (3: 4-5). Dennis Bartholomeusz chronicles the history of the play as staged during the 1700s. A detailed comparison of play and novel would require a separate study. James Boaden briefly compared the two vehicles on structural and thematic grounds (1: 177-79). J. M. S. Tompkins indicates Inchbald "designed her book on the model of Winter's Tale" in The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800, but goes no further (339).

Classick's concentration and his comfortable bachelor life. Scene One, occurring in his library, finds the husband railing:

A scholar, a philosopher to change his peaceful hours, his nights of study, and his days of fame!--And for what?--A Wife!--A wife without fortune too!--where was my wisdom?

Lucy, a servant, feels sorry for her mistress, whose husband is "Always reading! And never thinking of his wife, day nor night." An erotic tension develops when "Lord Lovemore" begins pursuing Matilda, thinking her unmarried. Mr. Tradewell materializes and accuses Matilda's sister Emily of having "ensnared" Sir John. Emily retorts:

Ensnare--ensnare a man with his head fortified with Latin and Greek, and his heart made hard with philosophy--You might as well suppose a poor honest tradesman could ensnare a rich hardened contractor. (57-58)

Several concepts integral to Inchbald's fiction are touched upon in this comedy. Eros and education are dichotomized: Matilda embodies romance, and Classick represents learning. By viewing himself as a philosopher, the erudite male is able to deny whatever sexual and romantic impulses he feels toward his wife. Matilda becomes bewildered by her husband's evasions and longs to see their feelings for one another acknowledged. Opinions of this secret match become polarized along gender lines. Mr. Tradewell perceives Matilda as calculating in her efforts to obtain a learned husband, but Emily suggests the reverse, that her sister is analogous to "a poor honest tradesman" and Sir Classick to "a rich hardened contractor." Men are suspicious of women, while the latter, be it a sister of the bride or a lady's maid, interrogate male

assumptions that women are sexual predators who intellectually debilitate their more learned partners.

This battle of the sexes was presented in slyly amusing terms, with a happy reconciliation, as was typical of plays produced during this period. Sexual tensions arising between a scholarly man and a lovely young woman appear again in Mme de Genlis's *Zélie*, known in English as *The Child of Nature* (1788). Inchbald's adaptation, reprinted thirteen times between 1798 and 1833 (Joughin 73), presents the seventeen-year-old heroine, Amanthis, who is raised from infancy by the Marquis Almanza when her father is presumed dead. The thirty-year-old Marquis has given the seventeen-year-old girl a sequestered upbringing in his castle. She "has never been seen by mortal, except the Marquis, and the old Duenna who is shut up with her." Her virtues are "perfect beauty," "enchancing grace," "timid innocence," and "matchless sensibility," the latter imputed to her isolation. Others suspect the Marquis's intentions; Count Valentia observes "many people suppose she is but his mistress--and some believe (and indeed that is the general opinion) she is his daughter" (5). Count Valentia, himself a libertine, is aroused by the fact that Amanthis has only seen two men during her life.

Amanthis's education consists of an abundance of books, "all of his [Almanza's] own hand-writing" (10). Duke Murcia fears that his nephew, the Marquis, has been plying Amanthis with love letters or poetry. This seduction ploy appears in English fiction: Sarah Scott's novel *The History of Cornelia* (1750), finds Octavio urging his female ward to read "plays, romances, and poetry" in lieu of the

philosophy texts once given to Cornelia by her father; Octavio hopes that by reading in feminized genres, Cornelia will become more receptive to his entreaties (8). An even more blatant example of this ploy can be found in Charlot's story, as fabricated by Delarivier Manley in The New Atalantis (1709). Charlot is the ward of a Duke who raises and educates her to become his future daughter-in-law. In order to protect his son's interests, the Duke prohibits Charlot from reading "airy romances, plays, dangerous novels, loose and insinuating poetry" (30). But once he sees Charlot perform as the goddess Diana in a family entertainment, the Duke becomes tormented by sexual fantasies. He seduces Charlot by dismissing her "governante" and providing her with formerly forbidden tales of love by "Ovid, Petrarch and Tibullus": "the Duke "infused poison into the ears of the lovely virgin" (35; 37). He ravishes her, takes her as his mistress, and forsakes her when he meets a countess with greater "vivacity of . . . wit" (44). Because of this corrupt education, Charlot's life becomes one of "horror, sorrow and repentance" (45).

Delarivier Manley "read widely in the French chronique scandaleuse" and titillates readers, who see that Charlot becomes conditioned to long for her guardian's caresses (Ballaster vii). Mme de Genlis, by contrast, was writing an edifying moral tale, so that despite others' suspicions of the Marquis, Almanza is acquitted of any attempts at seducing Amanthis: acting exclusively as a surrogate father, he provides Amanthis with texts on "morality," "divinity," and "history." As in The Married Man, heroines are presented as romantic distractions, and heroes are depicted as intellects who are alienated from their feelings. Amanthis is spotted by

a man her own age who wants to marry her, but she rejects him in favor of the man who has controlled her destiny since childhood. Amanthis pleads with her guardian:

Nay, I am convinced you love me--love me dearly--does not all I possess come from you? You have even taught me to think, to speak, and to be happy. (17)

The Marquis persists in believing he wants only to be her "friend" or "father." Guardianship allows Almanza not only to shape Amanthis, but to camouflage his desire for the girl. Mme Genlis correlates educational control with access to the heroine's deepest feelings: by regulating her learning and Amanthis's exposure to the world, Almanza molds the wife he wants, keeps her virginal, and triumphs over a man who might have been a more appropriate suitor.

The Child of Nature shows how guardian, educator, and husband become conflated in what Gary Kelly refers to as Inchbald's "obsession with the "January/May theme" (96). Throughout her life, Inchbald was attracted to older men. Nonetheless, The Child of Nature was a derivative work, prepared by Inchbald in ten days at the behest of Mr. Harris, manager of the Covent Garden Theater. A pragmatic pair, Inchbald and Harris recognized that this kind of genial May/December fare was enjoyed by theatergoers. Hugh Kelly's The Romance of an Hour (1774) was written in this same spirit, only in Kelly's comedy the guardian is rebuked by a ward who feels gratitude but not love for the older man. It was not until Inchbald began to write novels that she could begin to explore these stock theatrical situations, bringing to them the complex levels of analysis that the subject deserved. Moreover, she found herself writing less for the dual audience, and more

for females alone. A Simple Story, prepared initially as letters, according to William Godwin's journal, and then converted to narrative form, became not only a didactic vehicle for her, but also a study of the uses and abuses of power.¹⁹ Mary Anne Schofield refers to the novel as a "critique of the romance genre," for its narrative focus on the hero's and heroine's efforts at controlling one another through the resources available to them. Eros continues to be female-identified, while men zealously guard their intellectual authority over women. Nature and nurture interact to forge character; in Inchbald's view, an individual's natural tendencies, some of which are ascribed by gender, are magnified by superficial and by doctrinaire forms of education.

The eighteen-year-old Miss Milner is raised in London by a socially prominent mother and attends boarding school, and both are seen as detrimental to her well-being.

Her little heart employed in all the endless pursuits of personal accomplishments, had left her mind without one ornament, except such as nature gave, and even they were not wholly preserved from the ravages made by its rival, Art. (6)

Exposure to urban society and the absence of rigorous study erode the heroine's natural virtues. After her mother's death, Miss Milner is sent to the country where she lives among three mentoring figures, each of whom exhibits a different response to the young woman. The Jesuit Mr. Sandford, an older "man of learning," tries to

¹⁹ According to Gerard Barker, Godwin's memoirs indicate that A Simple Story originated as letters (104); Barker's source is "MS Journal for 1790, Abinger MSS, Pforzheimer Library Microfilm." Considering Emily Herbert was written in epistolary form, this seems quite plausible.

shame Miss Milner into obedience (35). He decides she is vain and will coerce her into submission by his superior intellect. Miss Woodley, her thirty-year-old companion, is a sentimental type: she has a sympathetic nature but tries to suppress Miss Milner's passions, even when she has difficulty identifying them. Dorriforth is introduced as a Jesuit priest and Sandford's former pupil; he was selected by Miss Milner's father to be responsible for the girl after the latter's death. Initially, Dorriforth's position as a priest precludes romantic attachment. Once he is freed from his clerical vows by becoming heir to the Elmwood estate, the newly titled Lord Elmwood persists in denying his ardor for his ward. Although the pair marry, Lord Elmwood will only admit to wanting a dutiful wife. This produces a contest of wills between a woman who wishes to be courted and admired and a man who demands to be honored as the head of house and not demeaned as another suitor.

Miss Milner is a complex character possessing fine, inbred qualities which the author associates with women in general, such as emotional expansiveness and a lack of pretense. Lytton Strachey commented that Miss Milner, despite her flaws, is "of high bearing, of noble disposition" and suffers for her "strength" (viii). Inchbald's play Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are (1797) patterns its heroine Miss Dorillon after Miss Milner, as a prefatory note explains.²⁰ The prototypical heroine, whom Inchbald believed to be the play's "most interesting" character, is a woman "of fashion with a heart--a lively comprehension, and no reflection--an understanding,

²⁰ Preface to Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are in Selected Comedies, Elizabeth Inchbald, introd. Roger Manvell. Manvell provides a good introduction in this anthology of five Inchbald comedies.

but no thought." "Heart" and "lively comprehension" are intrinsic attributes; "reflection" and "thought" represent skills acquired through study, habit, and exposure to the proper exemplars. This type of heroine's native intelligence transcends her poor education. Although reputed by Lady Evans to be "idle, indiscreet, and giddy," Miss Milner does not display the attributes of a coquette (9). She visits Bath and finds the gay company insipid. Courted by the handsome and rakish twenty-three-year-old Lord Lawnly, she rebuffs him by comparing him accurately to her guardian. "Mr. Dorriforth sees and converses with beauty, but from habit does not fall in love; as you, my Lord, merely from habit, do" (20). Wise to the world and aware of her own feelings, she ignores Dorriforth's request that she consider marrying the rich Sir Edward Ashton; Milner informs her guardian that she will marry only a man she loves.

Dorriforth is equally complex and, likewise, a product of nature and nurture. As the narrator explains: "Lord Elmwood was by nature, but more from education, of a serious, thinking and philosophical turn of mind" (201). An exemplary man in many respects, he also has a troubling inflexibility. The very first line of the novel implicates his Jesuit training at a Catholic school in France, at one time favored by parents who were not allowed to send their sons to Anglican schools.²¹ The hero

²¹ Catherine Craft-Fairchild states that St. Omer's expelled Jesuits in either 1762 or 1763, making Dorriforth's vocation "chimerical" (85). Inchbald's point, however, was to emphasize the stringent terms on which her hero was educated. Anglican institutions, which accepted neither Catholics nor Dissenters, were reputed to promote aristocratic forms of indulgence. In his biography of Inchbald, Roger Manvell notes that John Kemble was studying for the priesthood prior to becoming an actor and takes this as further evidence that Kemble was her

has been "bred at St. Omer's in all the scholastic rigour of that college," and this, along with the private tutelage he received from the exacting Mr. Sandford, leaves him rigid and wedded to rules.

An example of Dorriforth's intractability is his treatment of his nephew Harry Rushbrook. Harry's mother, Dorriforth's sister, married for love and without her brother's permission. Feeling his authority threatened, Dorriforth ostracizes mother and son. Miss Milner tries to soften Dorriforth's resolve by bringing Harry, unidentified, into Dorriforth's home. Dorriforth kisses and plays with the child until he discovers who the boy is, at which time "the uncle took hold of each hand that had twined around him, and placed him immediately on the ground" (36). In this situation, Dorriforth displays a singular lack of compassion, and the narrator observes that his "obstinacy" contains "shades of evil" (33). Miss Milner responds with kindness by taking Harry in her arms and is seen angrily crying over her guardian's behavior. The rational, educated hero is shown irrationally punishing a guiltless child at the same time the heroine, despite her shallow education, instinctively protects someone she sees being unfairly punished.

Inchbald's critique of her character's failings is tantamount to an indictment of their schooling. The seminarian loses himself in codes of etiquette until an untrained female reminds him of values such as compassion and common sense. His schooling urges detachment from women. This theme is reiterated in August von

prototype for Dorriforth (66). Airès writes about Jesuit schools in his section on "Scholastic Life."

Kotzebue's play, Das Kind der Liebe, adapted by Inchbald as the extremely successful Lovers' Vows (1798).²² Amelia, the daughter of a Baron, falls in love with Anhalt, her older tutor. Anhalt is oblivious to his feelings and Amelia coaches him.

Amelia: So you may remember I said when you began to teach me mathematics. I said I had rather not know it-- But now I have learnt it gives me a great deal of pleasure -- and [hesitating] perhaps who can tell, but that I might teach something as pleasant to you, as resolving a problem is to me.

Anhalt: Woman herself is a problem.

Amelia: And I'll teach you to make her out.

Anhalt: You teach?

Amelia: Why not? None but a woman can teach the science of herself: and though I own I am very young, a young woman may be as agreeable for a tutoress as an old one.

Amelia, transformed by Inchbald from a "typical German naive" into a "pert young miss," offers herself to the skeptical Anhalt as a "science," implying that a young woman may prove desirable to the tutor.²³ In the play, the virginal, but sexually aware Amelia challenges Anhalt's pretense that he has transcended the pleasures of

²² Joughin estimates that Lovers' Vows was reprinted twenty-seven times between 1798 and 183--more than any other piece by Inchbald. The "political implications" of Lovers' Vows and the "vogue of Kotzebue" in England are remarked upon by John Loftis, The London Theatre World 1660-1800 282-84.

²³ L. F. Thompson, Kotzebue 63-64. Thompson sees affinities between Kotzebue's and Inchbald's works and believes the German writer may have borrowed from her plays, including I'll Tell You What and Everyone Has His Fault. For further background on cross-cultural relationships in the theater, see Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama.

the flesh, and in Inchbald's novel *Miss Milner* confronts an obtuse scholar who denies having longings even after he is released from vows of chastity. In terms of sexual politics, the heroine's goal becomes transforming the hero into "the veriest slave of love" because it is her only means of humbling an "austere guardian" (138). The provocative nature of Kotzebue's romance was questioned by characters in Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* (1814); when several attempt to perform *Lovers' Vows*, the prudent Fanny Price worries because certain roles may provide her relatives with a dangerous "opportunity for flirtation."²⁴

The emotional authority wielded by the "austere" man of learning is compounded by a second mentoring figure, Mr. Sandford, said to have "the wisdom to direct the conduct of men more powerful, but less ingenious than himself" (39). Sandford, loved by Dorriforth "as his father," has a strong influence on the latter's opinions. Mr. Sandford disdains Miss Milner on sight for being ignorant of the chains of command: she lacks experience of "the superior and subordinate states of characters in a foreign seminary" (39). His assumptions about the boarding school girl make him consistently disrespectful, although he is ideally positioned to teach the young woman. Mr. Sandford instead seeks her humiliation for he is practiced in "the mortifications of slight." He fails to call her by name, instead treating her as "an

²⁴ Avrom Fleishman discusses character's attitudes toward *Lovers' Vows* in *A Reading of Mansfield Park* 26. The play was controversial not only for its suggestive dialogue but for the plot involving a fallen woman and her illegitimate child. Kotzebue sympathizes with the woman, as do novelists of the period such as Mary Hays in *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799).

indifferent person" (40). As Sandford explains: "the mind of a woman was far above, or rather beneath, his comprehension" (88).

Sandford's attempts to quell Miss Milner's vanity mask his more fundamental concern over the allure she holds for Dorriforth. As a result, Sandford promotes Miss Fenton, a young woman whom he scarcely knows. He and Miss Milner argue over whether or not Lord Elmwood actually loves Miss Fenton, and Miss Woodley attempts to separate the pair.

"Come, Miss Milner, it is time to retire; you and Mr. Sandford must finish your dispute in the morning."

"Dispute, madam!" said Sandford, "I never disputed with any one beneath a doctor of divinity in my life." (123)

Intellectual and sexual attacks are interwoven: Sandford compares Miss Milner to "Lucifer" and wonders why she does not wear a "serpent's skin" (117). He touts the virtues of a companionate marriage between Fenton and Dorriforth: "Their passions for each other just the same--pure--white as snow" (124). "And I dare say, not warmer," retorts Milner, who resents his denial of sexuality. She responds to this repression of desire and Sandford's negative opinion of her in several ways: she rebels against his "learning, and his favorite axioms"; she also exhibits a female profligacy such as the man would expect (41). Miss Milner attends an auction at which she rashly, but deliberately parts with two hundred pounds, some of which is spent on chemistry and Latin books. Exclaims Sandford: "Why Madam, do you know what you have done? You can't read a word of these books" (146). "Can't I Mr. Sandford?" she replies. "But I assure you that you will be very much pleased with

them, when you see how elegantly they are bound." Miss Milner toys with Sandford's low expectations of her, at the same time attacking the vanity behind male erudition. Implied is that Sandford, for all his highhanded protests, may covet the status symbols of the intellectual.

Milner's companion, the sensible but far from intellectual Miss Woodley, stands by helplessly as the younger woman contends with these arrogant men. Miss Woodley is depicted as quintessentially feminine: she is a "tender-hearted," "kind" and "pious" spinster who cries easily "because there was a magnetic quality in tears which always drew forth hers" (17; 29). When Dorriforth refuses to allow Milner to attend what would have been her first masked ball, Woodley, who sees the masquerade as innocent, applies her "soft and peaceful" voice and manner to altering this edict (152). When she is derided by Dorriforth for inviting him to accompany the women, Woodley abandons the subject. The only woman in Miss Milner's life frets, fearful the ward will act without her guardian's sanction. Although the novel criticizes Milner's stubbornness, the narrative demonstrates how the combination of Woodley's moist ineffectuality, Sandford's goading, and Dorriforth's commands provoke the heroine into committing acts of defiance.

These types of power struggles in the novel are far from genial, as they were in Inchbald's comedies, since playwrights quickly learned that entertaining audiences was paramount and the play was usually a collaborative effort. In Inchbald's case, her works often originated with productions mounted on the continent. There was not much incentive for authors to tamper with the success already met by this

borrowed material. Inchbald's novels were, to a much greater extent, individual efforts and reflect introspection on the part of the writer. In a contest of wills, Dorriforth and Sandford use their superior knowledge to try to intimidate the heroine, and Milner retaliates in a provocative way by flaunting her sexual awareness. Prohibited from attending the ball, Miss Milner protests with helpless rage, "I am sure your lordship, with all your saintliness, can have no objections to my being present at the masquerade, provided I go as a Nun" (152). When Lord Elmwood is silent, she goes further: "nay, I question not, if under that inviting attire, even the pious Mr. Sandford would not ogle me." Miss Woodley, too scandalized to inject a note of calm, tries to silence Milner, who states she is "only repeating what I have read in books about nuns, and their confessors." Lord Elmwood is offended by her seeming ridicule of his religion, her forwardness, but primarily by her lack of compliance. Adopting Sandford's technique of intellectually humiliating the heroine, he replies: "Your conduct, Miss Milner, gives evident proofs what authors you have read; you may spare yourself the trouble of quoting them." This rebuke reduces Milner nearly to tears. Miss Milner sneaks out of the estate, dressed as "the goddess of Chastity" in "buskins" and a "petticoat made to festoon far above the ankle" (155). According to the narrator, the flash of leg gives Milner the appearance of a "much less virtuous" woman, and a footman, seeing her half-boots, believes she wears men's clothes. Her costume is interpreted by others as a sign of licentiousness. It is also seen as a usurpation of male prerogatives: in A Satyr upon the Present Times (1717), Susanna Centlivre is accused of wearing "the awful buskin" and scribbling plays that

"can hardly be read."²⁵ Milner's attendance at the ball, dressed in this improper manner, foreshadows not authorial presumption, but rather her future insubordination in marriage.

The symbolism of Miss Milner's costume raises an important issue about female identity. By threatening to appear at the ball in nun's attire, and actually dressing as Diana, Milner indicates that appearance should not be used as a measure of female virtue. In fact, in The New Atalantis Manley's heroine Charlot is thoroughly innocent at the time she dresses as Diana, but the costume serves to inflame the Duke's passion because it acts as a signifier of her seemingly unconquerable purity. In A Simple Story, Milner's posing as Diana also carries the threat of a loss of sexual self-control for the men, if not for Milner, who becomes the repository of their fears. For all their erudition, the men have a low threshold for ambiguity, and Inchbald uses the novel to plumb the depths of their confusion over appropriate gender roles. By comparison, English comedies often provoked laughter by having characters appear in disguise. Inchbald's A Mogul Tale: Or, The Descent of the Balloon (1784) presents a cobbler who poses as "Pope Johnny"; his wife evades the Mogul's notice by wearing a nun's habit and later appears as a harem girl.²⁶ Inchbald performed in A Mogul Tale, and also cross-dressed for the role of Bellario

²⁵ Nancy Cotton, Women Playwrights in England 1363-1750 208. Cotton presents A Satyr upon the Present Times (1717) as part of a satirical tradition involving Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot.

²⁶ Linda Kelly notes that the play was well received (40-41); the farce was also representative of comedies appearing during the 1780s.

in Fletcher's Philaster for which she received some criticism. In A Simple Story the element of a heroine's disguises assumes more threatening overtones. Mr. Sandford condemns Milner as wicked and denies the unprovoked desire Dorriforth feels for her. Dorriforth pretends to be acting as a responsible guardian when he is more the jealous suitor. Prior to his becoming Lord Elmwood, he watches Lord Lawnly cover Miss Milner's hand with kisses. Swiftly, he reacts. "Dorriforth, with an instantaneous impulse, rushed forward and struck him a blow in the face" (61). Lord Frederick staggers and releases Miss Milner's hand, which is instantly grasped by Dorriforth, who leads the faint young woman away. He gets her to her room gingerly, "without taking her in his arms." Placing her on a sofa, Dorriforth falls to his knees and apologizes for his "indelicacy." Miss Milner is appalled to find her guardian in the posture of an abject lover, for all along he has demanded to be seen as a surrogate parent.

The episode is redolent with suppressed desire; Dorriforth's violent contact with Lawnly suggests a displaced impulse to touch Miss Milner, and this awkward maneuvering of untouchable bodies is but one way in which Inchbald creates an erotic aura around guardian and ward. Like Count Almanza in The Child of Nature, Dorriforth deludes himself into thinking his sexual impulses are nurturing ones. In another episode, Miss Milner, fearing that Dorriforth has spent the day with Miss Fenton, loses her appetite. Lord Elmwood, not knowing what the problem is, entices her to eat.

Lord Elmwood had always been attentive to her; but now he watched her as he would a child; and when he saw by her struggles that she

could not eat, he took her plate from her; gave her something else; and all with a care and watchfulness in his looks, as if he had been a tender-hearted boy, and she his darling bird, the loss of which would embitter all the joy of his holidays. (134)

Lennard Davis refers to the suggestive nature of eighteenth-century novels, where language is used to the effect that "reading a book is analogous in some way to being sexually aroused by the author" (117). The "excitations" provoked by this passage result from the erotic implications of a power imbalance. Elmwood perceives Milner as a child and himself an adult; she becomes a "darling bird" and he, a "tender-hearted boy." The heroine is infantilized by a man intent upon denying his sexual feelings for someone over whom society has given him power. The reader voyeuristically watches Elmwood watching Milner bring morsels of food to her mouth. Milner's heart is said to overflow with gratitude and love. Elmwood, seizing his opportunity, "now pressed her to take one glass of wine with such solicitude, he seemed to say a thousand things beside" (135). Virtually feeding Milner and encouraging her to drink wine, the hero makes love to his fragile heroine. Terry Castle writes, "It might seem odd at first glance to juxtapose Inchbald with the Marquis de Sade"; yet images of Milner's helplessness are conducive to the comparison (304).

Despite their troubled relationship, the pair marry--only the reader learns that the bride has been given a "MOURNING RING" instead of a wedding ring at the hastily arranged ceremony (193). The novel was actually published in an abbreviated form under the title The Mourning Ring in The Novelist's Magazine (1833): A Simple Story became no more than a sub-title. This type of obvious gesture can be

found in plays: Inchbald's The Wedding Day (1794) has the bride misplace her ring after the ceremony, signalling her ambivalence about marrying an elderly man and portending more serious incidents to come (Manvell 198). Given the symbolism ascribed to a ring, it is unsurprising that the Elmwoods' marriage disintegrates during the three years his lordship spends in the West Indies. During this period, his wife, lacking the discipline for solitude, is drawn back into London's fashionable circles. After being seduced by Lawnly, Lady Elmwood's "guilt" and "shame" impel her to flee, along with daughter Matilda, to a "dreary, ruinous" retreat in Scotland (197; 220). Eventually Lady Elmwood dies a remorseful death and an increasingly embittered husband reads this news in an obituary, quoted by the narrator.

This lady, who has not been heard of for many years in the fashionable world, was a rich heiress, and of extreme beauty; but although she received overtures from many men of the first rank, she preferred her guardian, the present Lord Elmwood (then the humble Mr. Dorriforth) to them all--and it is said, they enjoyed an uncommon share of felicity, till his lordship going abroad, and remaining there some time, the consequences (to a most captivating young woman left without a protector) were such, as to cause a separation on his return. (204)

Although Lady Elmwood experiences the appropriately tortured, sentimental death befitting a fallen woman, the newspaper account functions subversively. The heiress is seen as having had the character to prefer her "humble" guardian to men of higher station, and she willingly sequesters herself from the gay life. Their union is described as having been sound until Lord Elmwood went abroad: he leaves a "captivating" woman "without a protector." Maria Edgeworth was saddened by this turn of events and wrote to Inchbald: "I am excessively sorry you made her end naughtily, though I believe this makes the story more moral" (qtd. in Boaden 2: 153). As Edgeworth

observes, Inchbald fulfilled her mandate to be edifying: she punishes her heroine's failings and provides readers with a suitable moral lesson. But the obituary also represents an authorial act of resistance, insofar as responsibility is shifted from a straying wife to the negligent, unappreciative husband seen to create the conditions for his wife's vulnerability.

The importance of a "Proper" female education resounds in the second half of the novel, where Lord and Lady Elmwood's daughter Matilda is seen as a Lockean tabula rasa who can be raised more judiciously than was her mother. Matilda returns to her father's home after Lady Elmwood's death; she is "a vision of Lady Elmwood risen from the grave in her former youth, health and exquisite beauty" (221). Raised according to Miss Woodley's ideal plan, with access to good books and exposure to hardship, the girl develops "excellent understanding" and "a sedateness above her years" (216).

Educated in the school of adversity, and inured to retirement from her infancy, she had acquired a taste for all those amusements which a recluse life affords--She was fond of walking and riding--was accomplished in the arts of music and drawing, by the most careful instructions of her mother--and as a scholar she excelled most of her sex, from the great pains Sandford had taken with that part of her education, and the great abilities he possessed for the task. (221)

For all its didacticism, the narrative is again subversive. Although Matilda's reserve is contrasted to her mother's forwardness, another type of contrast is made, as the daughter is seen being cultivated by the same mentors who suppressed, neglected, and insulted her female parent. A wiser Mr. Sandford gives Matilda the benefit of his knowledge: marshalling his "great abilities" as a teacher, he transforms the girl

into a "scholar" whose understanding exceeds that of others "of her sex." Matilda suffers the pain of being "debarred" from her father's presence (226); nonetheless, Lord Elmwood indirectly participates in his daughter's education. He helps Woodley select books, ostensibly for her but known to be meant for someone else.

One author he complained was too light, another too depressing, and put them on the shelves again; another was erroneous, and he changed it for the better; and thus, he warned her against some, and selected other authors, as the most cautious preceptor culls for his pupil, or a fond father for his darling child. (272)

The books are chosen for their educational value, but serve other purposes as well. Woodley offers them to Matilda as "presents from her father"; she also uses them to console the girl when she learns that Lord Elmwood has fired his head gardener, "a man of sobriety and honesty," merely for mentioning her mother's name (270).

At the same time Matilda receives a rigorous academic education, she is inculcated with an ethos of feminine self-abnegation. Despite being Elmwood's rightful heir, Matilda is denied any inheritance; Elmwood arbitrarily confers it upon Harry Rushbrook, the nephew he once spurned. Elmwood celebrates Harry's birthday by hosting "a dinner, a ball, and supper" for which the town bells ring (235). His own daughter's birthday goes ignored, much to Sandford's and Woodley's dismay. Yet despite their recognition of Elmwood's harshness, Sandford and Woodley coax Matilda to feel a slavish devotion to this punitive parent. Miss Woodley esteems Lord Elmwood "beyond any mortal living," and when she learns that guests are coming to the estate, she exclaims to Matilda, "Thank heaven! he will then be diverted from thinking on us" (218; 225). Sandford informs Matilda, "It is always

proper, for you to think of him, though he should never think on you" (217). Matilda's more rigorous education comes at a high price, for she is deliberately made to feel insignificant. This particular lesson is one that these mentors had been less successful in imposing on her mother.

Matilda clings to memories of her mother which her mentors try to eradicate. During one exchange, Sandford encourages Matilda's identification with her father by suggesting she likes her cousin Harry Rushbrook because Lord Elmwood does. Undaunted, Matilda reminds the man, "My mother loved him too, Mr. Sandford" (231). She refuses to forget that while her mother was alive, she pressed Elmwood to accept his nephew. The daughter insists on remembering her mother's good deeds and judgment, although mentors urge allegiance to a patriarch whom they fear. As Sandford confides in his pupil, Lord Elmwood's "eyes flash lightening, and his face is distorted with anger on the slightest motives" (223). The older man perceives an uncomfortable role reversal: "I really believe I am more afraid of him in my age, then he was of me when he was a boy." In the second half of the narrative, Elmwood is depicted as an unpredictable man who flares at the slightest provocation whereas Lady Elmwood is, in retrospect, a more temperate figure whose ability to judge character and strength of maternal feeling receive ample vindication. When Matilda fears she will lose all patience with her callous father, she appeals to the memory of her mother, invoked as "Dear, dear saint" (244). This gives her the fortitude to endure her father's cruelty.

Through the combined power of academic rigors, isolation from society, and lessons in humility, Matilda becomes what mentors expect her to be--the antithesis of a coquette, a woman who is chaste, self-effacing, and indifferent to romance and marriage. Rushbrook, who develops an increasing affection for Matilda, confirms the purity of their relationship. When Mr. Sandford accuses him of having "licentious" thoughts about the cousin he admires, the young man replies: "Oh! the pure thoughts that dwell in her innocent mind, are not less sensual than mine toward her" (262). His high regard for Matilda as a "jewel" who has been "cast away" by Elmwood is implicitly compared to Viscount Margrave's contempt for Matilda; given her lack of an inheritance, Margrave believes he can make her one of his many mistresses (241). An abduction scene reminiscent of episodes in Clarissa and Emily Herbert finds Matilda locked away in a deserted estate on the outskirts of London. She cries at Margrave: "Leave me, my lord, or I'll die in spite of all your care" (327). By maintaining chastity unto death, Matilda proves that her education has been effective. Once rescued by her father, Matilda falls to her knees before him, and in a gesture rife with sentimental and religious overtones, "bathed his feet with her tears" (329). Her joy is infectious, for Lord Elmwood also finds this moment one of the happiest he can ever remember.

Critics have been fascinated by the passionate nature of this father/daughter relationship, which exists in stark relief against the tepid romance occurring between Matilda and Rushbrook. Most offer Freudian interpretations. Gary Kelly compares Matilda's craving for her aloof father to "Simpson's" for the father who died

prematurely (75). Joseph Bartolomeo and Catherine Craft-Fairchild cite the daughter's "fetishizing" of objects belonging to Lord Elmwood, from his hat to his "phallic pen." Patricia Meyer Spacks sees a conflation of "filial and romantic" impulses which peak during their chance meeting on a stairway in Lord Elmwood's home.²⁷ These perceptions are not unfounded, but what critics fail to note is that The Winter's Tale, in which Inchbald acted the roles of Perdita and Hermione, offers a parallel reunion scene. Once King Leontes discovers his banished daughter Perdita, he is instantly struck by her resemblance to Hermione and feels overcome by emotion. A witness tells two other gentlemen:

Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of. There might you have beheld one joy crown another. . . . There was a casting up of eyes, holding up of hands, with countenance of such distraction that they were to be known by garment, not by favor. Our king, being ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that joy were now becomes a loss, cries "Oh, thy mother, thy mother." (ll. 45-55)

In A Simple Story, when Lord Elmwood and Matilda come upon each other, she screams in terror at the realization she is face to face with her parent and falls "motionless into her father's arms" (241). Lord Elmwood presses her to his bosom and utters the words "Miss Milner--Dear Miss Milner." In both instances, the mother's name is repeated twice, with even the cadence of "Milner" and "Mother" sounding similar. Oedipal interpretations aside, these reunions show a wronged wife

²⁷ Spacks, Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century English Novels 200. Bartolomeo refers to Matilda's fascination with Elmwood's "phallic pen"; Spacks cites the father's use of "phallic pistols" in order to rescue his daughter from ravishment by Sir Margrave.

being recuperated through a physically identical daughter whose education makes her far less likely to challenge patriarchal authority. Leontes and Perdita reunite off-stage, probably because Hermione's dramatic resurrection scene was to follow.²⁸ Inchbald, perhaps sensing the scene's dramatic potential, presents the event directly to readers.

Ironically, given Inchbald's reputation for creating a heroine who defies "the Law of the Father" (Ty 92), and Shakespeare's for acting as the "bard of patriarchal culture," The Winter's Tale recuperates and valorizes the mother in ways that A Simple Story does not.²⁹ Hermione, preserved as a statue by her friend Paulina, is brought to life and offers a queenly benediction: "And from your sacred vials pour your graces / Upon my daughter's head!" (V.iii.123-24). Bonds of friendship and maternity are restored, and the King, who misjudged his wife, is fully repentant. By contrast, Mrs. Inchbald, faced with the twin burdens of probability and moral edification, provides readers with a more likely string of events. Matilda alone tries to salvage her mother's reputation and is thwarted by mentors who urge her to conform to the standards of an unyielding patriarch. In this respect, the canonical male playwright offers what might be the more satisfying feminist version of events,

²⁸ The "oratio obliqua" is described and analyzed by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson in their preface to The Cambridge Shakespeare xxiii.

²⁹ Eleanor Ty and Terry Castle commend Miss Milner's valorism in contesting patriarchal authority; given the book's ending, I believe this position leads to an overvaluation of the novel as a feminist document. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar refer to Shakespeare's sexism in Madwoman in the Attic 30. Marianne Novy argues with this perception in her introduction to Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare 2.

while the female writer seems duty-bound to inscribe the rules of her culture. By ignoring Inchbald's play writing experience, critics of the novel have read A Simple Story as "Freudian" autobiography and exaggerated the daughter's "Oedipal" desires at the expense of Inchbald's calculated theatricality. Inchbald had her roots in dramatic tradition, and A Simple Story demonstrates that she elides the boundaries between drama, comedy, and the novel.

Nature and Art (1796) is a much less aesthetically successful novel, primarily because it reflects little of Inchbald's talent for dramatization. Originally labelled "Satire upon the Times," Inchbald re-named the text "The Prejudice of Education" in 1795, suggesting that she was casting about for new ways to approach her subject, which remained the relationship of character development to prevailing modes of English education. As do other "Jacobin" novelists of the 1790s, Inchbald sketches portraits of corrupt Deans, prelates, and judges, all of whom are inclined to marry gambling, gossiping, adulterous women.³⁰ Her complaints about law, the clergy, and amoral university education resemble those made by Mary Hays in Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796). Hays's narrator charges: "The study of law, is the study of chicanery.--The church, the school of hypocrisy and usurpation!" (214-15). Inchbald's friends and literary colleagues William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft brought forth similar themes in their work. However, this same moral outrage was expressed in plays, as well, insofar as "Continental political radicalism" found a place for itself

³⁰ For discussion of Nature and Art as a critique of English social institutions, see Mona Scheuermann's chapter on the novel in Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel 169-202.

within "the conventions of sentimental comedy."³¹ Inchbald's derivative Next-Door Neighbors (1791) contrasts the hedonistic life of Sir George Splendorville with the hardships faced by Henry and Eleanor, an indigent brother and sister who live adjacent to the rich man.³² The Lord offers to purchase Eleanor for "a hundred guineas" and is told by the honorable woman that she will kill him first (27). The themes of the play are a harbinger of Nature and Art: Sir George is a rake who wearies of "ready compliance" from women and wants a challenge (25), the indulgences of the rich are stressed, a clear conscience is touted as a poor man's only available virtue, and Henry and Eleanor possess virtue in abundance.

Nature and Art offers a related scheme involving two diametrically opposed brothers, William and Henry Norwynne; they are shopkeeper's sons who set out for London after their father's death. William is scholarly, having learned Latin and Greek at a free grammar school. Henry is artistic: he plays the violin, supporting himself and William by entertaining "persons of rank and fashion" (1: 9). In this dichotomization of character, William is intellectual and the feminized Henry is nurturing; the latter brings food home from the dinner concerts where he performs. William, seen studying De Oratore of Cicero, expresses his humiliation by throwing

³¹ Avrom Fleishman, A Reading of Mansfield Park 27.

³² Next-Door Neighbors, derived from L. S. Mercier's L'Indigent and Nericault Destouches's Le Dissipateur, was published by itself in 1791, and in 1811 as part of The Modern Theatre. Allardyce Nicoll, in A History of Late Eighteenth-Century Drama 1750-1800, indicates that Inchbald was known for writing "humanitarian comedy" (144). Nicoll states that Hannah More, by contrast, felt the Parisian dramas which became popular in London were often written by continental "atheists and libertines" (67).

the food at Henry's head (1: 10). Henry suggests to his brother that if he will not study the violin, he should "go down to Oxford, or to Cambridge" (1: 13). Henry finds an aristocratic sponsor for William, and this enables the latter to attend a university and eventually to become a Dean of the church.

In contrasting "nature" and "artifice," Inchbald makes her plot schematic. The brothers form predictable attachments. The unpretentious Henry marries a good woman who dies shortly after giving birth, while the upwardly mobile William weds Lady Clementina, who is devoted to "attending routs and talking of herself" (1: 44). The latter couple lead a life of dissipation and miseducate their son. William is surrounded by a bevy of tutors and taught to regurgitate his lessons until he can speak as fluently and superficially on history and politics as does his father. Henry Junior spends his childhood in Africa with his more reclusive parent, and they live among less "civilized" but more natural men than ostensibly could be found in England. When the boy reaches twelve, Henry sends him back to London for William to educate. The precociously wise child becomes a surrogate for the author; Henry Jr. compares the behavior of the Africans to his uncle's and aunt's friends. With their headdresses, trinkets, and elaborate social rituals, Henry observes, there is little difference between Englishmen and purported savages.

Inchbald's slant on this material is hardly new. As Mona Scheuermann points out, a spate of novels, from Day's Sandford and Merton to Brooke's The Fool of Quality, all tried to demonstrate how individuals "born to wealth and position are

educated to callousness and irresponsibility."³³ What differentiates Nature and Art is Inchbald's preoccupation with illiteracy and the way in which she revises the tradition of "the illiterate letter" so that it becomes notable for its pathos rather than for its comic value, as was the case with novels by Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Thomas Holcroft.³⁴ Smollett's The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (1771) includes epistles from a female domestic servant, Winifred Jenkins, who spells male as "mail" and advises her female friend, "But this is all Greek and Latten to you, Molly" (42; 44). Smollett's satire makes fun of his correspondent's class, but also implicates her gender, as can be seen even more clearly in letters from the gentlewoman Tabitha Bramble, who commits syntactical errors and invents her own terms such as "flutterencies" (45). Inchbald balked at such comic portraits of illiterate women and in her "Remarks" on Richard Sheridan's The Rivals (1775), she protests "the illiterate Mrs. Malaprop," whose portrait, she is sure, will guarantee that successive generations believe "that the advance of female knowledge in Great Britain was far more tardy than in any other European nation" (The British Theatre 19). Rather than exploiting some characters' ignorance, Inchbald was determined to clarify how serious the problem actually was, particularly for women.

³³ Scheuermann, Social Protest 169.

³⁴ Rodney Baines, Thomas Holcroft and the Revolutionary Novel 34-35. Eleanor Ty sees the problem of the heroine's illiteracy being compounded by Hannah's "lower-class roots," which, in combination, exclude her from "the social order" (108).

Illiteracy is a charge first levelled by the older William against Henry, whom he disdains as an inferior, although he once depended on Henry for support. Henry braves his brother's contempt by sending his son to William's home, unannounced. Introductions are made through Henry's heart-felt note which accompanies the boy.

Pray, my dear brother, do not think it the child's fault, but mine, that you will find him so ignorant--he has always shown a quickness and a willingness to learn, and would, I dare say, if he had been brought up under your care, have been by this time a Greek scholar--but you know I am no scholar myself. (1: 54-55)

Inchbald uses this missive to show Henry's unjustified humility when dealing with his more learned, but less compassionate brother. Yet for all her emphasis on Henry's goodness and William's shallowness, the "natural" man can be seen sending his boy to England so that he might receive a more traditional education wherein his "quickness" and "willingness to learn" will be cultivated. Inchbald's implied message is that good character, while a noble attribute, is insufficient in the modern world. She presents her readers with a dilemma: neither the university man nor the humanitarian seem complete as people or parents, but at the same time, scholarship and humanism appear to be irreconcilably polarized.

The second time "illiteracy" is mentioned, it is in relation to Hannah Primrose, one of the novel's two heroines. Hannah is the "only child of two doating parents" who are rural cottagers; the girl is never taught reading, writing or logic, although she is said to be well loved (1: 155). Like the working-class heroine Jemima in Wollstonecraft's The Wrongs of Woman; Or, Maria (1796), Hannah is the exception

to the rule: she has the delicacy of a woman of a higher station.³⁵ Hannah attracts William Junior's notice while he spends a summer on the family estate in Anfield. The law student is both lustful and coolheaded, never promising to marry the girl. Hannah holds him in "awe," much as the older Henry once stood in "awe" of William's father.

Hannah listened with a kind of delirious enchantment to all her elevated and eloquent admirer uttered; and in return for his praises of her charms and his equivocal replies, in respect to his designs toward her, gave to him, her most undisguised thoughts, and her whole enraptured heart. (1: 140)

Hannah is "enraptured" and outmatched, for she believes that their enthralling conversations are "harmless" (1: 141). She responds to William's seduction plan with guilelessness, having had no experience conversing with "men in William's rank of life" (1: 142). However, William's rank is of secondary importance. Inchbald indicates that Hannah is overwhelmed because a man "of superior education and manner assailed her heart" (1: 142-43). A similar situation reveals itself in Amelia Opie's novel The Father and Daughter (1801), which quotes Nature and Art on the subject of love.³⁶ The sweet, obliging Agnes is deceived by a young man with

³⁵ Mona Scheuermann compares The Wrongs of Woman and Nature and Art in Her Bread to Earn 169-98. In both of these texts, seduced women are driven to prostitution. Jemima has the benefit of being partially educated by an employer; Hannah is completely self-taught. Gary Kelly writes on the political implications of prostitution in his assessment of Mary Hays's The Victim of Prejudice in Women, Writing, and Revolution 116-25. The emphasis in all these novels is on woman as victim of unscrupulous behavior by others.

³⁶ Amelia Opie in The Father and Daughter creates "a simple, Moral Tale" about a man who abandons the girl he seduces in order to marry "a great city heiress" (viii; 39). William does likewise in Nature and Art. Agnes, who

"fascinating" conversational ability, and Clifford's facility with language proves the key to Agnes's heart and her ruination.

At the end of the summer, when William leaves Anfield and Hannah, letters become their only possible means of communication, which places Hannah at a huge disadvantage. She waits anxiously to hear from him, regularly walking six miles to the "post" to see if a letter has arrived (158). Two painful months later, he is heard from. Hannah tucks his correspondence in her bosom, feeling "rich as an empress." The letter is a "prize" and a "treasure" (160). These characters have antithetical value systems: William seeks actual riches; Hannah sees communication as the precious commodity. But breaking the seal, Hannah finds the letter's content still remains "a secret."

Poor Hannah had learned to write as some youths learn Latin; so short a time had been allowed for the acquirement, and so little expert had been her master, that it took her generally a week to write a letter of ten lines, and a month to read one of twenty. But this being a letter on which her mind was deeply engaged, her whole imagination aided her slender literature, and at the end of a fortnight, she had made out every word. (1: 160-61)

In this poignant passage, Hannah's literal difficulties with language are identified; Inchbald draws a parallel between adolescent boys' struggle with Latin and an older heroine's struggle with English, a knowledge of which seems crucial to her existence. Much as Hannah's seduction is secret and shameful, so is her self-

resembles the sexually naive Hannah Primrose, is shocked when she hears herself referred to as a "mistress" (41). Susan Staves argues for such heroines' fundamental innocence: "Desirable girls feel affection, not lust" (119). Lust is, of course, what makes Miss Milner so unusual.

education. Writes Inchbald: "To have beheld the illiterate Hannah try for two weeks, day and night, to find out the exact words of this letter, it would have struck the spectator with amazement" (1: 162). In A Simple Story, Inchbald relies on dialogue and actions to create a sense of drama, and in her subsequent novel emotion is generated through the use of letters. Inchbald stresses the gap not only between the illiterate heroine and her seducer, but between Hannah and more educated readers who must be taught to sympathize.

Finally deciphering William's letter, Hannah finds his words are noncommittal. He writes that he is "teazed with a great deal of business," and "called to the bar." Adding that he hopes to return to Anfield, his letter ends, "With gratitude for all the favours." Hannah finds herself "turning pale with horror, then kindling with indignation at the common-place thanks" (1: 163). William's letter is difficult for her to read and painful in its contents. Hannah desires communication with a lover whose manipulativeness she does not understand; her reward for becoming literate is to discover she has been used and abandoned.

Twenty times, Hannah begins to write William about her pregnancy; eventually she succeeds, addressing her debaucher as "Sir." Her letter obliquely refers to her being indisposed during the winter and longing for the summer when "the fields are so green, and everything so pleasant" (1: 172-73). Whereas William's letter shows a man absorbed in his career, the child of nature focuses on the seasons, writing of how she pines for summer, although she sometimes regrets that the previous summer happened. Hannah's letter, like Henry's earlier letter to William

Senior, includes an apology for literary ineptitude. "Hope you will excuse all faults," she ends her missive, "as I never learnt but one month" (1: 173).

Reinforced by his shallow education, William attempts to curb his natural inclinations. He forces himself to "shake off every little remaining affection" for the girl he admires for her "animal spirits" in order to marry Lord Bendham's niece, Miss Sedgeley, whom he considers as fake as her rouge (2: 10; 1: 178). His desire for "satiety" with Hannah makes William neglect to mention this marital commitment. Hannah refuses to engage in further sex, and William insists he will stop seeing her. His ultimatum prompts her to write another letter, which "unlike the last, was dictated without the hope to please--no pains were taken with the style, no care in the formation of the letters--the words flowed from necessity" (1: 182). William responds uncaringly to Hannah's "incorrect, inelegant lines" (1: 183). Her letter contains vital information, but is rendered without style; the lawyer reacts to her style, without mining the letter for content.

Throughout Nature and Art, written documents accentuate the heroine's pitiful situation. Hannah gives birth to an illegitimate child whom she abandons in the woods, reclaims, and takes with her to London so as to be nearer to William. Due to her lack of financial resources, Hannah works first as kitchen help, and, in desperation, as a prostitute, after which she participates in a counterfeit currency scheme and is caught. When Hannah comes before "Judge Norwynne's" bench for sentencing, William does not recognize her. He recognizes Hannah only after her hanging, on the basis of two pieces of paper: a confession detailing her last hours in

prison and a letter "To Lord Chief Justice Norwynne," alluding to a boy of sixteen, of unnamed but implied parentage. Addressing William as "Lord Chief Justice," Hannah emphasizes the disparity in rank and educational status between the professional man and the female criminal. Her guilt or innocence is moot, since under either circumstance Hannah has no protection under the law and no voice in court. Mary Wollstonecraft's The Wrongs of Woman places its middle-class heroine Maria in a similar predicament--her legal case is dismissed as mere feelings. Mona Scheuermann, in Social Protest, identifies how novels like Nature and Art diverge from sentimental tradition:

In a sentimental novel Hannah's letter of appeal to her judge and lover would reach him and effect a pardon, but in this novel, rather more realistically, her appeal is considered the delirious delusion of a lost woman. (193)

Sentimental dramas functioned in much the same manner as sentimental novels: in Lovers' Vows, the seduced heroine who bears an illegitimate son receives an apology and a belated marriage proposal from her contrite debaucher. Nature and Art reflects the greater degree of realism Inchbald tried to achieve in her novels. William delightedly receives news of a son from his liaison with Hannah, particularly since he and his wife have failed to produce an heir. But the boy's allegiance is to his mother; Inchbald punishes the rake by having the boy expire within two days of his mother's hanging.

Inchbald was accustomed to portraying contrasting characters in plays and novels: this technique telegraphed authors' messages to audiences, who were expected to instantly form allegiances with the "right" individuals. Accordingly,

Rebecca Rymer is introduced in Nature and Art to offset Hannah Primrose. This plain daughter of the widowed Reverend Mr. Rymer is seen as less marriageable than her pretty sisters. Rebecca's lack of beauty gives her a diminished value but also an advantage; "less caressed" and less acknowledged, she is allowed to educate herself. "She read--but more--she thought. The choicest books from her father's little library taught her to think" (1: 133). As with Matilda, Rebecca receives access to her father's library in recompense for paternal neglect. Autodidacticism and emotional deprivation produce these introspective heroines. Rebecca possesses "a timid eye, a retiring manner," and "a placid sweetness" which endear her to Henry (1: 133). She, in turn, discovers that his "company was more pleasing even than books" (1: 135).

Henry, like Harry Rushbrook, is a chivalric man who feels drawn toward the self-effacing woman. Together, Henry and Rebecca are a nurturing couple, and they willingly become surrogate parents decades before they find themselves in a position to marry. Henry stumbles upon Hannah's abandoned infant in the woods and brings him immediately to Rebecca, intuitively sensing her maternal capabilities. The ironic result of their concern for Hannah's and William's child is that the couple stand accused of sexual transgressions they would never dare to commit. Henry is prohibited from seeing Rebecca and, like his father before him, the young man departs for Africa where he need not contend with English mores. Rebecca, whose solitary self-education has equipped her with patience, waits decades until her fiancé returns; Inchbald concretizes the rewards of virtue by allowing Rebecca to remain

preserved in her girlish state. The couple's devotion to one another is idealized by Miss Sedgeley, who feels discontentment even before she marries William. Sedgeley concludes: "Rebecca is happier in disgrace and poverty, blest with the love of him, than she was likely to be in the possession of friends and fortune with his cousin" (2: 27).

Although Nature and Art and A Simple Story mean to exalt tender and mature forms of love, what these novels actually show is that desire is problematic for the author. Only Inchbald's repressed, asexual couples appear to achieve enduring happiness, and the exact nature of this pleasure is questioned. Feminized heroes named Henry (or Harry) populate Inchbald's novels and are intended as paradigms for the perfect husband. Despite giving the appearance of doing so, Inchbald never truly endorses this type of man; rather, she places him in competition with truer objects of desire--a priest, a lawyer, or a soldier, all of whom can boast of a "masculine" education. Whether rakish or supercilious, these virile types are the ones who appeal to Inchbald's most vibrant heroines and to appreciative readers like Maria Edgeworth. Even the most proper of heroines exhibits concern over the sexual desirability of the feminized hero she is destined to marry. In Emily Herbert, the eponymous heroine writes to a friend that she admires the benevolent Henry because "There is a softness, a gentleness in his manners which is extremely pleasing," but she fears that their mutual respect will consign them to feeling like "brother and sister" (258). Emily is initially attracted to the rakish Lord Sommerville and thinks twice about marrying Henry for tenderness is not seen as a viable substitute for

romantic attraction. In A Simple Story, Rushbrook is crestfallen when he realizes that Matilda "loved him as her friend, her cousin, her softer brother, but not as a lover" (334). Knowing that Matilda sees him "like the most harmless child" leaves Rushbrook bereft, and this impression is muted, but not dispelled, by their marriage. Catherine Craft-Fairchild describes this union as nothing short of a compromise: "In a world of patriarchal domination," she observes of the newlyweds, "the best that women can achieve is to marry a man who is powerless as a woman" (121).

Elaine Showalter, in A Literature of Their Own, a study of Victorian novels, separates these feminized heroes into two groups: one "impossibly pious and desexed" and the other comprised of craggy, rugged "brutes" whose ability to identify with women results from the hero's "symbolic immersions . . . in feminine experience" (133-52). The latter is typified by Mr. Rochester, who is humanized by his blindness and subsequent dependence upon a heroine who was, at one time, subservient to him. However, in eighteenth-century literature, this "brute" was more commonly a Lovelace figure--incorrigibly rakish, he was deemed unlikely to make good husband material. Novels of the 1700s favor Showalter's prototype for the "desexed" hero: he appears in the form of Inchbald's various Henrys, as David in Sarah Fielding's The Adventures of David Simple, as Henry in Mary Wollstonecraft's Mary, a Fiction, and as the refined Mr. Percival in Maria Edgeworth's Belinda. With their delicacy and "feminine" compassion, these men are intended to encourage female readers to make logical, rational choices when selecting husbands. By creating these paradigms, writers fulfilled the requirements of the courtship novel and also contributed to

readers' proper educations. Inchbald's problem is that she is predisposed, either by theatrical training or temperament, to the aggressive male who has been shaped by treacherous, but seductive forms of "masculine" education. Even after Lord Sommerville has proved himself to be a calculating seducer, Emily writes to her friend Sophia: "For in spite of the wretchedness he has so cruelly brought upon me, I must do him the justice to say he merits those epithets: But alas! How are those engaging perfections obscured and tarnished by ten thousand vices?" (204). Emily, like Miss Milner, and Hannah Primrose thrill to a well-turned phrase; the sensual heroine is challenged by the quality of aloofness bred into men who have been taught that they are in some way superior to women.

In Inchbald's fiction, there are no ready answers to the question of what constitutes a "Proper Education," although Inchbald pretends to know. Her novels present passion as an untutored impulse and one that is separated from love, which appears as reasoned benevolence brought about by a heroine's emotional deprivation and her solitary exposure to books. Through this dichotomy, Inchbald intimates that the passionate heroine is unlikely to also be the educated one. Inchbald had little difficulty in resolving these male/female tensions when writing comedies: Sir Classick in The Married Man and Count Almanza in The Child of Nature gradually admit to their sexuality. They concede that marriage can be as pleasurable as scholarship and discover the two activities are not mutually exclusive. Stage heroines, all of them students of men in the manner of Émile's Sophie, willingly submit to their domination. Amanthis maintains a slavish regard for the older man who educates

her. In Lovers' Vows, Amelia marries her tutor Anhalt, pledging that he will always be her intellectual and sexual "master." On the other hand, A Simple Story and Nature and Art show eros and education in a disturbing juxtaposition, for it is precisely difference, whether depicted in terms of class, education, or vocation, which piques desire. As a result, Inchbald does not offer educational parity as a solution. For the playwright/novelist who enjoyed men but refused to remarry any of her numerous suitors, comparable educations could only complicate what she knew to be a "not-so-simple" situation.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to demonstrate that the topic of education received widespread attention in eighteenth-century literature and that women writers were particularly interested in the subject insofar as they had a vested interest in reform. Literary women either tacitly or explicitly identified the connection between expanded educational opportunities and improvements in women's legal, economic, and political status. They recognized that the more academic training a woman received, the more likely she was to become wise as well as demanding in her choice of spouse, or stronger in her conviction that it was her right to refuse marriage. Both of these positions constituted acts of resistance in a society where parents expected their daughters to marry and felt justified in selecting their husbands, often on the basis of social or financial criteria. Women authors knew that if their peers were given a chance to study "masculine" subjects, such as the classics, mathematics, economics, history, and science, women would gain self-confidence and, like the authors themselves, learn to identify the prejudices and pressures brought to bear on their gender. Their pedagogical plans, often implanted within fiction, were intended to help future generations, who authors hoped might live with fewer intellectual, authorial, and, in some cases, vocational prohibitions.

Although their recommendations may seem modest by current standards and are sometimes troubling to read because women writers equivocated, resorted to homilies, or became guarded in their advocacy of women's rights, the changes they

sought were not inconsequential in the context of eighteenth-century life. Women initiated these discourses during periods in which formal schooling was non-existent for girls, and the very concept was often dismissed in favor of home schooling, to be undertaken by a "wise and prudent" but uneducated mother. The mere suggestion that curricula might be systematized, or that a female should be permitted to read Virgil and Plutarch, or Lavoisier and Condillac, had significant implications, as did writers' efforts to promote coeducation. Fielding's, Wollstonecraft's, and Edgeworth's attempts to elevate the status and image of teachers and governesses resonate in literature of the 1800s: Anne Brontë's novel Agnes Grey (1847) articulates the governess's fear that she is perceived as "a mere upper servant" and debates the question of home tutoring versus academies for girls (46).¹ Jane Eyre's experience as a private governess becomes the focal point of Charlotte Brontë's novel; both Agnes Grey and Jane Eyre suggest that a previously marginalized figure begins to move toward center stage during the mid-1800s, around the time actual reform occurs. Middle-class women's attempts to improve their own situation also led to increased emphasis on schooling for the laboring poor; and, while their motives were not purely altruistic, as Betsy Rodgers, Beth Fowkes Tobin, Kathryn Kirkpatrick, and

¹ Agnes has a bad experience working for a private family: the children are undisciplined and have been permitted "from infancy, to tyrannize over nurses, governesses, and servants" (53). The heroine's feelings sound like those of Mary Wollstonecraft, who feels demeaned working for Lord and Lady Kingsborough. Given that Agnes Grey is a nineteenth-century novel, it would seem that public attitudes toward governesses were slow to change. Mary Poovey corroborates this in her essay "The Anathematized Race: The Governess and Jane Eyre" in Uneven Development.

others have maintained, women writers and educators promoted greater literacy, nonetheless.² Basically, the history of English education, in addition to English literary history, must be considered when narratives taking education as their theme are studied.

Sarah Fielding's contributions to educational reform and to literature are significant. Writing forty years before the 1790s "radicals," Fielding was adamant in her refusal to accept externally imposed limitations on women's intellectual abilities. Familiar Letters and her other texts encourage women to believe that they have a responsibility to themselves, even if it means staying unmarried and immersing themselves in literature: Cynthia, Camilla, and their friends view women as thinking individuals and not simply as a collective body destined for marriage and motherhood. Her Letters defy conduct-book ideology by showing how relegating women to frivolous pastimes was a tactic used by men in order to maintain an unnatural dominance over women.

The Governess: Or, Little Female Academy, written at a time when boarding school teachers and schoolgirls were ridiculed, debunked pernicious stereotypes, validated the enterprise of a female academy and offered alternatives to corporal

² Betsy Rodgers in Cloak of Charity writes about the religious motivations of Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More in organizing schools (95-157); she also observes that Trimmer liked having a "career" (116). In Superintending the Poor, Beth Fowkes Tobin studies the battle between Hannah More and a male clergy opposed to female interference in public affairs (98-120). Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., in John Locke and Children's Books, discusses the political agenda which lay behind controlling what literature the poor might read (133). Kathryn Kirkpatrick sees More's efforts to educate the poor as leading to "the effective colonization of an entire class" (217).

punishment and autocratic methods of teaching. Sarah Fielding established a positive model for the protagonists of subsequent juvenile literature, insofar as Teachum's girls are no more miniaturized proper ladies than Mrs. Teachum is a punitive and judgmental teacher. Her prototype for the nurturing governess whose first priority is her girls blossoms into the persona of "M.B.," the teacher who records her pupils' narratives in Mrs. Leicester's School (1808), a juvenile work by Mary Lamb.³ A vestige of a more romantic era, Mrs. Leicester's School takes its structure from The Governess, but also owes a philosophical debt to Fielding's earlier novel.⁴ M.B. coaxes shy girls into sharing their stories by telling them: "every person is naturally eloquent when they are the hero or the heroine of their own tale" (275). Acting more as an "amanuensis" than as a teacher (173), M.B. urges the girls to express even their most awkward feelings, to care for one another, and not to be intimidated by adults whose patterns of behavior are more to be questioned than to be imitated. It is ironic that when Charlotte Yonge compiled A Storehouse of Stories (1870) in order to recover and preserve several children's classics, she included Sarah Fielding's The Governess and praised the novel's technique, but could not state who its author was.⁵

³ Mary Lamb authored seven of the ten narrative in Mrs. Leicester's School. Charles Lamb provided three stories.

⁴ Jane Aaron, A Double Singleness 32. Aaron describes the close emotional relationship between Mary and Charles, who lived together for many years and collaborated on Tales from Shakespeare.

⁵ See preface to A Storehouse of Stories. Yonge explains her inclusion of works by Sarah Trimmer, Dorothy Kilner, and Thomas Day, among others, and attributes each piece to its respective author, but makes no mention of Sarah

Mary Wollstonecraft, despite recent claims, was likely to have been neither a "radical" determined to overthrow all social conventions, nor a "feminist misogynist"; rather, she sought literary respectability and the esteem of her peers. However, she wrote during a decade in which images of the uniquely gifted artist and intellectual proliferated. This figure of heightened sensibility and powerful intelligence was rarely presented by writers as female, and Wollstonecraft struggled to see herself and her adult heroines mirrored in what was a male paradigm. Her problem of self-identity was directly related to the ongoing cultural debate over female nature versus the effects of nurture, and this created contradictions and ambiguities in her writings.

In A Vindication of the Rights of Woman as well as in her juvenile literature, Wollstonecraft promotes women as moral guardians and household managers, perhaps seeing it as the only form of agency that the majority of women might be allowed. On the other hand, in Mary, a Fiction and The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria middle-class heroines are allowed to display their poetic natures and philosophical tastes. As natural "geniuses," they earn the right to select their own books; some of these texts, like La Nouvelle Héloïse, offered messages about passion and free will which Mrs. Mason and "Mr. Cresswick" would have kept their pupils from reading. But it was largely out of necessity that Wollstonecraft advocated duty

Fielding, other than to say that "the Governess" also known as "Mrs. Teach' em" [sic] is "a name that became a proverb" (vi). Yonge cites the influence of The Governess on Mrs. Leicester's School and, more obviously, on Mary Sherwood's abridgement.

for the majority and self-realization for a few. Her instrumental feminism must be seen in relation to the rhetorical strategies practiced by other reformers such as Mary Hays and Mary Ann Radcliffe; all suspected English society would contest gender as well as class mobility and wrote with that caveat in mind. Wollstonecraft's vacillations are offset by the national system of coeducational schools she proposed in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; by advocating coeducation and inter-class mingling in elementary schools, Wollstonecraft demonstrates the same willingness to rethink attitudes toward class as she exhibits when considering the issue of gender.

Despite being Wollstonecraft's contemporary, Maria Edgeworth had little use for romantic individualism. She attacked the poetic sublime as a rather useless male prerogative with threatening implications for women. Female "outlaws" such as Harriot Freke and Araminta find their "extremist" tactics being challenged by domestic heroines who advocate a more conciliatory doctrine based on the concept of gradual historical progress. This creates a tension in Edgeworth's work, as it does in the fiction of Fanny Burney and Hannah More, among others. But Maria Edgeworth needs to be seen distinctly for who she was--a rational thinker whose practical course of action is embedded within this rhetoric of appeasement. In Letters for Literary Ladies, she challenges the male appropriation of reason as a "masculine" virtue, for like Sarah Fielding she believed the claim was a scrim for male self-interest. Edgeworth's ideas on parenting, if implemented, would have had profound implications for men in addition to women. Various of her Moral Tales present mothering as an acquired and not an inherently female talent, thereby

undermining essentialist arguments about women's aptitude for nurturing and little else. Belinda finds the author encouraging fathers to become more responsible for the happiness and development of their children. In Helen, Lady Davenant acts as Helen's intellectual mentor and not simply as an arbiter of social decorum. Throughout her works, female mentors usurp the role traditionally allotted to male patriarchs by displaying comparable teaching skills in combination with superior judgment.

Practical Education is a visionary book portending contemporary theories of education. Science, mathematics, and the humanities are offered as standard curricula, and academic dilettantism is eschewed in favor of students' acquisition of in-depth knowledge. In this manual, education is seen commencing at an early age, with material being introduced in accordance with children's levels of comprehension. Although Essays on Professional Education (1808) was appropriated and signed by Richard, as Catherine Gallagher notes, this may have been necessary: the manual details the training requisite to males entering the clergy, the military, the law, and medicine. While Maria Edgeworth's authorship is eclipsed, her academic reforms as prescribed for young men allow for change from within. A mistress, not of "orthodoxy" but of pragmatism, Maria Edgeworth systematically used her stories, tales, novels, and treatises to create a comprehensive plan whose durability is evident in our own contemporary practices.

Steeped in dramatic rather than in polemical tradition, Inchbald wrote novels and plays overflowing with emotion. Heroines fall to their knees and experience

"convulsive sobs"; heroes tremble with anger and threaten to engage in duels. Sarah Fielding and Maria Edgeworth would have considered such behavior comical, if not unseemly. Mary Wollstonecraft regarded A Simple Story as cloyingly sentimental; in the Analytical Review (Nov. 1791) she attacked Inchbald for engaging in the "ridiculous and deleterious custom of spinning the most picturesque scenes out of fevers, swoons and tears" (The Works 7: 370). Yet while Inchbald's "feminine" theatricality embarrassed Wollstonecraft, the former had a valuable point to make about education. Her works demonstrate how a man's formal training could enable him to manipulate a woman's romantic feelings to unfair advantage and sometimes with fatal consequences. Fielding and Edgeworth dwell on the pain women felt when they were intellectually patronized; Inchbald, by contrast, shows that an actual loss of life could result from educational neglect. Hannah Primrose and Miss Milner become susceptible to male predators, the former because she is unworldly and the latter because she has never been trained to control her impulses. Inchbald appreciated education for the discipline and judgment it instilled in individuals, but went further by demanding that schooling be acknowledged as a tool for survival.

Given their sense of the importance of education, it might be supposed that Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Inchbald wanted to see public schools and universities opened to women. This does not appear to have been the case. Sarah Fielding, as did her brother, felt graduates of elite institutions were, by and large, "blockheads." They remained blockheads when Wollstonecraft wrote her essay, "On Poetry," denouncing the stultifying ways in which boys were trained to become

professionals but not taught how to think. Women writers never coveted this particular facet of patriarchal privilege. Rather, they attack the products of elite education. Male correspondents in Familiar Letters are hampered by narrowly conceived programs which encourage them to preen, but discourage intellectual inquiry. Such men have been taught to prefer wives who pose no threat to them. Belinda presents an Oxford-education Pygmalion figure as a deluded romanticist who must be told by the "natural" Virginia that she is not a suitable partner for him. Everyone else in the novel knows who Clarence Hervey should marry long before Hervey does: the guardian is too busy bolstering his ego by indulging in highly suspect pedagogical experiments. Similarly, A Simple Story finds the seminarian alienated from his emotional and sexual needs and, at times, from his common sense. Unlike the heroes of Inchbald's plays, Dorriforth never concedes the usefulness of compromise: control is more aphrodisiacal to him than is Miss Milner. Although Mary Wollstonecraft's heroine in The Wrongs of Woman reveres the celibate uncle who mentors her, the latter errs in judgment by encouraging Maria to marry an unscrupulous man. Despite the uncle's efforts to educate Maria and inculcate her with strength of character, he fails to protect his niece in the most important way possible. None of these male mentors are presented as admirable, although readers may feel sympathy for them. The younger women they deal with possess equal, if not superior intelligence; all they lack is a decent form of schooling.

Parents are critiqued in these many vehicles, unlike in conduct books, where authors such as the Marquis of Halifax, Dr. Gregory, and even Hester Chapone

urged girls to accede to parental wisdom. As an alternative, Sarah Fielding emphasizes peer relationships in Familiar Letters and The Governess; since parents are apt to betray their daughters for economic and social reasons, it therefore becomes advisable for females to form attachments with like-minded women; this is something which Fielding did during her own lifetime. Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth, acting as wise maternal surrogates, encourage girls to learn to mother themselves; Mitzi Myers observes this quality of Edgeworth's work in "Daddy's Girl as Motherless Child"; the emphasis on mothering one's own mind is also practiced by Wollstonecraft's most laudable heroines, who fend for themselves and attempt to take care of others. Inchbald creates stories involving two generations, the inference being that wrongs can be righted if children take the time to learn from their parents' successes and mistakes. In their narratives, some of which were presumably designed to support parental authority, mothers and fathers are presented as either misguided or flawed. Women writers coax readers, young and old, to develop self-sufficiency.

I would like to conclude my analysis with the finding that Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and Inchbald resolved the multifarious questions they raised, but, inevitably, their works exhibit a lack of resolution. Fielding's liberating tale of "benefico" in The Governess is contradicted by the poignant fairy-tale "Fragment" at the end of Familiar Letters, in which women are encouraged to forsake dreams which will leave them discontented. In Helen, Lady Davenant's expanded knowledge leads her to engage in scientific and political discourses surreptitiously. Wollstonecraft may have gone to her grave believing that most

women and men lacked character and no amount of schooling would have improved them. Inchbald's protagonists in Nature and Art and A Simple Story achieve egalitarian marriages by suppressing appetites which Inchbald respected and believed were intrinsic to humankind. These authors present readers with conundrums about human nature, the nature of desire, and the purpose and limits of education. I am grateful that they wrote about these problems, and see my authors as valorous women who allotted themselves a more difficult agenda than some readers have allowed. But I regret that they left such matters undecided, for now we must face them in this more enlightened century.

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