"I Will Not Call Her Servant":

Ambiguity and Power in Master-Servant Relationships in the Eighteenth-Century Novel

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation posits that domestic servants in domestic novels are primarily characterized by an ambiguous and varying identity. I argue that the servant's ambiguity and multiplicity blur, undermine, reverse, and alter the boundaries and even the hierarchy of the master-servant relationship, granting the servant an unrecognized form of power. The history of service and the family, and conduct books written for servants, reveal that servants exist on the cusp of boundaries: the master-servant relationship is intimate and yet distant and official; servants are in the family but not of the family; they are not of the master's class but exist within that social milieu. Moreover, in the long eighteenth century, changes in the family and in service were altering the cultural understanding of those already blurry boundaries. Using the historical and social background as lenses through which to begin reading servants in fiction, this dissertation explores how the necessity and availability of multiple roles gives these figures the ability to usurp the master's power.

This function of the servant is especially important in novels of the late long eighteenth century (1794-1814), during the period of the French Revolution and the

Napoleonic era when the servant becomes a real, rather than an imagined threat. The family, and attacking or protecting its traditional hierarchy, becomes particularly important during this period. Pairing radical and conservative authors who portray servants similarly, my project implicitly questions the usefulness of these categories to describe works and authors. This dissertation investigates various subversive uses of servant ambiguity in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800); Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Women: or, Maria* (1798) and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1805); and Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). Both Bruce Robbins in *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (1986) and Julie Nash in *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (2007) suggest that the central servant characters seen in eighteenth-century novels disappear or become gentrified and indistinguishable from their masters in nineteenth-century novels. The trajectory of this project, which finds increasingly successful uses of the servant's social ambiguity, suggests that servants remain present and central in the novel, and that the servant position is a source of power even for a heroine of a higher class.

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Introduction

Silence and Subterfuge: Defining the Servant Position

> The life of Lily Wilson is extremely obscure and cries aloud for the services of a biographer, ... she was typical of the great army of her kind—the inscrutable, the all-but-silent, the all-but-invisible servant maids of history.[1]
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *Flush*

This project is driven by the conviction that the use of silence and invisibility is a form of power. Scholars who write about servants are trying to fulfill the call in the epigraph of giving voice to these invisible and silent figures. Ultimately this dissertation is about locating the servant figure and giving a voice to those normally denied one, but I am also concerned with showing that the peripheral and obscured position imposed on servants, which creates the need for a "biographer," is also a stratagem. As. James C. Scott explains, there can be multiple meanings to a subordinate's performance of the role prescribed by those in power:

> we get the wrong impression, I think, if we visualize actors perpetually wearing fake smiles and moving with the reluctance of a chain gang. To do so is to see the performance as totally determined from above and to miss the agency of the actor in appropriating the performance for his own ends. What may look from above like the extraction of a required performance can easily look from below like the artful manipulation of deference and flattery to achieve its own ends.[2]

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[1] Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (NY, 1928), 229.
[2] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 34.

"I will not call her servant": Ambiguity and Power in Master-Servant Relationships in the Eighteenth Century Novel focuses on representations of master-servant relationships in fiction during the late long eighteenth century (1720-1815). This study claims: that the servant's role in the family and relationship to the master creates a particular position; that the position, which permits the servant to permeate the boundaries of the family, is primarily characterized by its ambiguity and varying nature because the servant is both inside and outside the family; and that in novels about servants this ambiguity gives domestics and those that embrace it agency to resist, subvert, and usurp authority.

In its inception, the study was envisioned as an exploration of the way the servant uses his or her ambiguous nature to rise, assimilate, and usurp the authority that comes with social class, but I now realize that the servant possesses a different form of power. The research and writing process revealed that the ambiguous and in-between identity of the servant allows the shifting of positions and the ability to assume multiple roles, and that the strength possessed by the servant lies therein. Servants can utilize the master's authority without necessarily giving up their own form of agency. Social mobility and the acquisition of an upper-class status seem empowering, but there are limitations in rising; this is seen as early as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela,* when Pamela loses her voice and ability to write as she becomes a wife and adapts to Mr. B's social group. Social ambiguity, or the ability to convincingly pass for a person of a different class, allows mimicking of the master's class, but is not necessarily tied to socially rising. In fact, once servants rise they are bound to the upper-class role, and this fixed situation is disempowering because it is limiting; it forces servants to follow a particular class role,

as exemplified by the titular characters in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.

Rather than assimilating and becoming like their masters, replacement leads servants to incorporate their different class status into the family and the master's position. Servants have a hold on the family's class while also being different from the family. Their ability to occupy multiple positions allows servants to blur, question, alter, and even level the boundaries and the hierarchy of the master-servant relationship and more generally of the class structure. I am not suggesting that the servant role was not an oppressive position and that the hierarchy of the master-servant relationship did not exist to the detriment of the servant, but implicit in the position occupied by servants there was a paradoxical power derived from the ambiguous and thus fluid servant role;[3] the servant's power of shape-shifting requires exploration because historically it was feared and this is represented repeatedly in literature.

My focus on novels at the turn of the eighteenth century explores how relationships that cross the boundaries of the master-servant relationship are used and developed by William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Amelia Opie, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen. These authors all situate the servant in the family with the servant functioning as a friend or alternative to a family member in some novels, while representing a threat in other texts. Godwin's Caleb, in *Caleb Williams*, and Thady, in Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, attempt to replace deficient and missing masters. Jemima, in Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Women: or, Maria,* is a daughter and mother to the isolated heroine;

[3] In this dissertation I will often use the word "ambiguous," and variations of this word, to describe the way in which the servant's class is hard to identify. The word "fluid" and its variations will be used to describe the way the servant can participate in multiple social roles, understanding and using different class personas.

Savanna becomes a mother and husband to the abandoned Adeline in Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*; Belinda, the titular heroine in Edgeworth's novel, moves into the Delacour family which is characterized by a missing daughter and spouses that are unavailable to each other; and in *Mansfield Park,* Fanny substitutes for family members who are either really or figuratively absent.

For my purposes the term "servants" include domestic servants, companions, and characters with marginal positions in the family such as orphans, unmarried women, and dependent family members. But it can also include those that are dependent and have an ambiguous place in a household and/or family. Most commonly the word "servant" identifies those who wait on a master/mistress or do household work; but in the eighteenth-century vernacular the word and/or title servant, and the nature of service, are difficult to define because they were central to many areas of life and relationships. Humans were servants of God, as were the clergy who also attended their parish; citizens served the king; a wife waited on her husband; and children submitted to their parents. The label "servant" could also be more generally applied to "one who is under the obligation to render certain services to, and to obey the orders of, a person or a body of persons, esp. in return for wages or salary."[4] Everyday expressions also utilized the word "servant" as in, "your (humble, obedient) servant: one of the customary modes of subscribing a letter, or of addressing a patron in the dedication of a book"; or the phrase "(your) servant: a mode of expressing submission to another's opinion, often equivalent to 'there is nothing more to be said upon the subject'; a form of greeting or leave-taking.[5]" These meanings are connected by ideas of social order, hiearchy, humility,

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[4] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "servant" http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/
[5] Ibid.

power, authority, and the idea of giving one person primacy over another. The expansive use of the word "servant" highlights its fluidity, and this understanding is central to my study.

I am interested in the very vagueness and fluidity of the servant role and the difficulties in identifying servants. William Godwin's Caleb, Maria Edgeworth's Thady, Mary Wollstonecraft's Jemima and Maria, Amelia Opie's Savanna and Adeline, Maria Edgeworth's Belinda and Jane Austen's Fanny are characters who come from a wide range of social, economic, racial and educational backgrounds. They perform different jobs (some of their functions are not even properly classified as jobs). And yet their servant or servant-like positions in the family gives them access to the same form of power. Leonore Davidoff finds that "the qualities of the good servant extolled by masters were humility, lowliness, meekness and gentleness, fearfulness, respectfulness, loyalty and good temper. Many of these characteristics were equally part of the service ethic."[6] The service ethic and ideas of dependence expand my definition of the servant to those who share the servant's characteristics, allowing me to include other figures in my discussion. It becomes possible to read *Mansfield Park* in terms of the servant, and to identify not only Fanny, but also Edmund, as a servant. As a son and clergyman he follows the service ethic, and as a younger son his status is less stable than that of the first-born son who will inherit the estate.

This dissertation is interested in telling the story of how a silent and invisible group infuses their difference into society and the family. Searching for the power of the servant I use these particular novels written in this short period of time to look at the way the

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[6] Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 27.

servant is ultimately able to usurp authority and invade the family. The account this project conveys about the servant is not the only story about this diverse and large group. Another study of the servant, using a different group of novels with very distinct servants, would reveal a different servant story.

Bruce Robbins in *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (1986) and Julie Nash in *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (2007) suggest that in nineteenth-century novels the central servant characters seen in eighteenth-century novels disappear or become gentrified and indistinguishable from their masters: "Titular servant protagonists like Pamela disappear or are gentrified into governesses. Verbal confrontations diminish in length, frequency, animation, and centrality."[7] For Robbins and Nash, studying servant figures requires piecing them together from hints and glimpses in fiction, what Nash calls "reductive or even absent literary depictions."[8] Relying on the extended definition of servant, I claim that in fact Pamela never disappears; rather, the servant position is available to the upper-class heroine. Deliberately choosing texts in which the "servant" is the protagonist allows me to emphasize the continued allegiance between the servant and the heroine. I argue that Fanny and Belinda, despite their gentrification, remain, in essence, below stairs. The servant protagonists in Chapter Three of this dissertation are no longer servants but companions, from a social class closer to the master; however, they retain a very important link to the lower-class servant. The service connection is empowering for characters like Fanny and Belinda because of the opportunities it creates within the

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[7] Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 79.

[8] Julie Nash, *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 12.

family. This project focuses on the characteristics inherent in the servant role and considers the way in which these allow the servant to replace the master and/or the family. Charting increasingly successful uses of the servant's power, through the trajectory I implicitly challenge the critical view of the politics of the authors explored here—making it difficult to use the terms "conservative" and "radical" in a definitive way. These restrictive political categorizations unnecessarily complicate and confuse the issues in these novels, and draw meaningless boundaries between authors.

Edgeworth is usually read as a conservative, a mild liberal, or as simply ambiguous. But her treatment of the servant's power is similar to that of her radical counterparts, the radicals William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft; and in *Belinda* she goes further than Godwin or Wollstonecraft in endorsing the servant's revolutionary use of her power. Similarly, Opie was a part of Godwin's circle and both a friend and rival of Wollstonecraft, although she is usually read as more moderate. Claire Tomalin suggests that her novels were "designed to make her own respectability absolutely clear"[9] in contrast to Wollstonecraft's tarnished reputation. Yet when her novel is paired with Wollstonecraft's it becomes evident that both support similar feminist and class agendas. Finally Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is read alternatively as radical or conservative when it comes to her views on the patriarchal family. I suggest that, when read in the context of Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Opie, and Edgeworth, and focusing on the servant, Austen goes further in allowing the servant to successfully usurp authority and invade the family. Austen's novel and her heroine exemplify that the terms "conservative" and "radical" complicate and limit the readings of the novel. Rather than seeing how Fanny is both mistress and servant, possessing multiple forms of power, critics are divided

[9] Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Meridian, 1974), 228.

between those that read her as a victim and those that read her as a conqueror. In either case there is a narrow understanding of the heroine.

Conduct Books, the Family, and Service: Formative Experiences

Paradoxically, service itself creates the servant's protean characteristics: servants are invited in to be part of the family at the same time that they are shut out. Domestics exist in two different social milieus, their own and that of their master. As a job requirement and job benefit, servants always occupy multiple roles. They are asked to be like the employers in order to serve and understand the family and the family's needs, but also different enough to allow masters to feel superior. These conflicting roles are evidenced in the many conduct books written for servants, including Jonathan Swift's *Directions to Servants* (1746). Swift's satirical conduct book recommends that servants behave the opposite of what was actually expected and reveals the chaos and anarchy servants could create in a household. The effect is to reveal the control servants possess, raising the question of who is really in charge.

Genuine directions for servants advised readers on both practical and moral matters, but recipes and guidance on how to best perform specific domestic duties were secondary to advice on proper behavior. Literature for servants was primarily concerned with creating an exemplary servant and service relationship.[10] Even books that focus on practical domestic advice connect quality performance with virtue. For instance, *The Footman's Guide* tells its readers, "The manner in which a lad sets about his work, is

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[10] This is similar to conduct books for women, which were instructions that "represented a specific configuration of sexual features as those of the only appropriate woman for men at all levels of society to want as a wife." Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 59.

often indicative of his real disposition."[11] Domestics are often warned about dressing above their stations. Eliza Haywood, in the same vein, tells maids not to think of marriage with upper-class men, especially their masters' sons, since "Such a Disparity of Birth, of Circumstances, and Education can produce no lasting Harmony."[12] Repeatedly, the conduct books have statements similar to the one in *A Friendly Gift*, which tells servants, "The Lord abhors deceitful persons. We are all his children. He appoints to all of us our proper places: and we ought to be satisfied, and pleased with what he appoints and say; 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'"[13] The emphasis on class boundaries, like all behaviors required of the household help, protects the master's property and status and binds servants to their place. But the manners recommended also reveal the cultural fears surrounding servants.

Tacitly acknowledging the servant's power, one of the agendas evidenced in conduct books during the eighteenth and nineteenth century is the attempt to control servants, and to solidify master-servant boundaries. Haywood writes, "Quick at Meat, quick at Work"[14] when telling servants not to take time to indulge in food because their time belongs to their masters, but rather to eat only so that they can live (and presumably continue to serve). The difference in diets already begins to delineate differences between employer and employee. Also touting the servant's submission to the master, servants are told that they, their time and their energy belong to their masters. The books attempt to account for all of the servant's time, attempting to prevent dangerous watching and gossiping. Servants should spend most of their time industriously employed on behalf of

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[11] James Williams, *The Footman's Guide* (London: Dean and Munday, n.d.), 21.
[12] Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant Maid* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1744), 49.
http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr
[13] *A Friendly Gift for Servants and Apprentices* (New York: Samuel Wood and Sons, 1821), 10.
[14] Haywood, *Present*, 10.

their master. Haywood says that a good maid will, “after the common Affairs of the Family are over, ask if she has any thing to employ her in.”[15] Of course, Haywood does say that a good master gives servants time off for church and visiting with family and friends; hence even free time is regulated and should be used in ways that follow the code of behavior set out by the conduct books.

According to these tracts servants are required to forfeit their individuality, life, and desires for those of the family they serve. Their voice, like all other efforts are required for the service of the master; yet in a paradoxical way this gives the servant’s voice authority. Although the servant is not supposed to speak about the master or in most cases to the master (except in submissive tones and responses), he or she is allowed to talk for the master’s benefit and in his defense. In a section entitled “Hearing any Thing said against your Master or Mistress,” Haywood tells her readers that when it comes to the master, servants “should always vindicate their Reputation from any open Aspersions, or malicious Insinuations: never mention their names in familiar Manner yourself, nor suffer others to treat them disrespectfully; magnify their Virtues, and what Failings they may have, shadow over as much as possibly you can.”[16] This protective use of the voice, advocated by Haywood, is seen in *Castle Rackrent*; Thady claims to speak in his master’s defense, but the effect is to reveal and discredit the family, revealing the danger posed by the informed servant’s voice. Following the tenets of the conduct literature could make the servant equally perilous. By speaking for their masters, servants could become the guardians of their masters’ identities, privacy and status, reversing and

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[15] Ibid., 41.
[16] Ibid., 33.

blurring the traditional dyad in which the master is the parental figure that provides for, protects, and spiritually nurtures the servant.

Similarly, the nature of service shifts power to the servant. The servant's job to produce for the master and replace him in a variety of capacities casts a servant in a position of consequence and infantilizes the master, creating a contradiction in the power structure that the conduct books have to deal with. To advocate proper distance and acquiescence conduct books often compare the master-servant relationship with man's bond to God, and the connection between parent and child. These analogies appear repeatedly, emphasizing the servant's dependence on the master, and the inability to question the superior—it is this pseudo-parental relationship Caleb and Thady threaten, and the mistress-servant dyads of *The Wrongs of Women: or, Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* make reciprocal. However, imagining the master-servant relationship as protective and nurturing emphasizes the intended hierarchy, but inadvertently creates the ambiguity surrounding servants, blurring the master and servant boundaries by suggesting the servant is family.

The servant literature also helps to create the servant's multiple perspectives because it provides them with the tools to fit into the master's class, but at the same time requires them to willingly adhere to their servant role. Incongruous agendas help to create the "problems" the books are meant to solve. For instance, the conduct books attempt to acculturate the servant to the master's ideology, a goal that gives the servant the dangerous ability to be like the master. The servant's class identity was a particular social concern in the eighteenth-century because servants "were conceived of as ignorant and superstitious like all lower-class persons, yet lacking the simple virtues of country people,

sharing, instead, in the vices of the upper classes, which they admired and attempted to emulate."[17] *A Friendly Gift* tells the serving class not to attend "races, or feasts, or fairs, or any plays or balls," and to "never spend[s] any time, nor money, on silly books or songs; nor in running after fortune tellers; nor in buying lottery tickets."[18] These activities are considered frivolous, wasteful, and associated with aristocratic culture and thus immoral; they are also considered dangerous because they were seen as encouraging and or facilitating the social aspirations of the lower-class. In novels these behaviors imitating the upper class and the ambitions of servants are often ridiculed, but they are also shown to destabilize upper-class authority and exclusivity. The conduct recommended to domestics is also like those established in conduct books for women, and thus part of the middle class values that Nancy Armstrong argues conduct books were working to propagate.[19] But this new middle-class version of servant identity is complicated by the contradictory agendas of the books that were trying to inculcate middle-class ideology while also urging servants to accept their lower-class status.

Davidoff highlights the domestic's necessity of walking a fine line between assimilating to the family and yet remaining different: "As household members, their appearance, behavior and language reflected on its image. However, too close imitation of middle-class lifestyle could threaten fragile middle-class status."[20] The threat was aggravated by the fact that often servants were of the same ranks from which the middle class had risen. A wide range of economic levels were encompassed in the middle-class;

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[17] Celestina Wroth, "'To Root the Old Woman out of Our Minds': Women Educationists and Plebian Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 2 (2006): 51.
[18] *A Friendly Gift*, 10.
[19] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 59.
[20] Leonore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 389.

even those closest to the bottom kept servants because they were necessary to everyday life and the functioning of any household, in which case the difference between servants and masters was small.[21] Having a servant was a luxury and a way of showing the economic ability to take on dependents, but through imitation a servant could threaten the important difference that the keeping of servants was meant to symbolize and thus diminish and alter the master's status. The imitating servant especially threatens the middle class because their social status was newly acquired, and thus was not as stable as that of the aristocracy. But servants could also threaten the aristocracy through credible performances of class, making it difficult to distinguish between the servant and the aristocratic master, questioning the innate and visible superiority that the aristocracy claimed to have.

Servants are dangerous because they are in a position to gain knowledge; as inhabitants of the master's home, they not only had access to the master's secrets, but to the secrets of rank. Living within the private space of the master gave servants access to their master's values and lifestyle. This is exemplified by *The Compleat Servant* (1825), which Nancy Armstrong describes as a conduct book written by an anonymous servant who "shows how the principles of domestic economy might be translated into a precise calculus for the good life that could be extended to people of various incomes."[22] Armstrong is interested in the way the book creates a domestic ideal centered on the woman and available to various levels of society, but the book also reveals how the servant becomes an expert on elevating class status and on the values of the master.

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[21] As Theresa M. McBride points out "the employment of servants helped to define the distinctiveness of the entire middle class despite tremendous disparity in income levels and social status." Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (New York: Homes & Meier, 1976), 18.

[22]Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 83.

Moreover, the suggestion that the ideal household is available to the lower classes challenges the privileged position of the master, a possibility that may have been inflammatory enough to explain the anonymity of the author. Ultimately, the idea of knowing one's place which is prescribed in conduct books is opposite to what the middle class had claimed for themselves, as well as contrary to the other agenda in conduct books of converting servants to the master class' ideology.

There is a dual purpose to the behavior conduct books recommended to servants. Instruction manuals urge the reader to share in the value system of their masters, presumably because a shared ideology would allow the servant to fit into the family without offending, as well as to understand the masters' desires and thus participate in, rather than hinder, the functioning of the family. The focus in conduct books on work, religion, and asceticism, or middle-class virtues, is meant to make servants fit to participate in their masters' households. Consequently, even as the writers of the conduct literature attempt to preserve the differences between served and server, keeping servants in their place, they teach servants to embrace the master's values and give them the tools to be like the master.

The capacity for service to alter the servant's identity and status is indicated by Davidoff when she points out that "some [servants] found their horizons widened by their experience of service, by having witnessed new ways of living, by having been introduced to new tastes,"[23] ideas that servants then tried to apply to their own lives. Striving to be like the master from their own location on the social ladder, the servant

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[23] Leonore, Davidoff, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract, and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (New York: Longman, 1999), 33.

class, as J. Jean Hecht notes, "linked the elite and the lower levels."[24] Observing this multiplicity, Hecht also writes, "consciously and unconsciously the servant tended to identify with his master," and yet servants also had their own social ties in other classes to which they returned to for visits and during periods of unemployment.[25] Further signaling their ability to exist in multiple spheres, Hecht calls servants "cultural intermediaries"[26] and describes them as conduits of values and behaviors between the upper and lower class and between the city and the country.

Ian Baucom, in his study of nationality, suggests that national identity is generated by place.[27] His concept can be applied to the changing boundaries of the family and the home because of the way living in the household creates the servant's characteristics. As servants are architecturally banished to the back corridors, stairs and cellar, they are stripped of their identity as family but still have access (via the back stairs, hallways, etc.) to it; they cannot be completely separated. Servants existed in marginal and in-between spaces, physically in the house and socially, in terms of class. They are part of the family, seen as children dependent on the master; but also on the outskirts of the family as they carry out their work, symbolized, for example, by standing behind chairs while serving dinner—at once in the room yet outside the social unit.

The two positions (the in-between of social categories and the periphery of the household) give different but related perspectives that allow the servant to observe, and to access multiple subject positions. Straddling two worlds, servants can go back and forth

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[24] J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), 206.
[25] Ibid., 206, 220.
[26] Ibid., 223.
[27] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 8.

between their lower-class status and the performance of an upper-class persona, as well as exist in the in-between ambiguous space, or also inhabit the outside and be invisible. In all cases the servant is elusive. Multiple points of view and access to the personal meant that servants not only threatened the social status of the master and family but also the social façade. Potentially servants could gossip and reveal secrets that destroyed a family's reputation, because they inhabit what Linda Charnes describes as the space between the agreed upon and reality.[28] Domestics, because of their ability to understand and observe, can report the difference between the agreed upon and the reality.

The separation of master and servant is also complicated because the definitions of family and of service are in flux[29] during the eighteenth century. The family is moving towards the nuclear family we recognize today as children became less likely to live with their parents and servants were banished to the nether regions of the home. Due to the ongoing changes in the form of the family, the servant is a fluid figure existing in, and in relation to, unfixed categories and groups. Naomi Tadmor stresses the plurality and flexibility of the concepts of family, and suggests that slow changes occurring in the family during the eighteenth century meant that various meanings of "family"

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[28] Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[29] It is accepted that the family in the eighteenth century was undergoing change, although critics disagree about exactly when and how those changes take place. For more information see, Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), and Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Academic Press, 1978). I rely heavily on Naomi Tadmor, *Family & Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). She takes both Stone and Trumbach into account and moves beyond the discussion of when and how the changes to the family occurred to look at how family was discussed historically and to understand how people in the eighteenth century would have understood and used the terms. She concludes that there were multiple meanings existing at the same time. Finally, for a discussion of the way changes in the family affect representations of the family in the novel see Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

coexisted.[30] Tadmor points out that the boundaries between family and non-family were unclear, a point that is manifested in the usage of terms like "relation," "kindred," and even "mother," "son," or "sister."[31] Ultimately, Tadmor concludes, the language of kinship was used "not only to identify existing kin, but also to enlarge considerably their reservoir of recognized kin," and also "used as a model for diffusing patterns of kinship, not only among relations by blood and marriage but in many areas of life."[32]

The language of family was applied to servants, when children were taught to call them "uncle or auntee." A familial relationship is also stressed by the way servants were viewed as children in the family and grouped with other dependents.[33] Moreover, Tadmor further suggests that a person could inhabit various roles within the same family. She discusses an example where the person in question was "both a relative, a boarder and probably also a child-servant."[34] Discussing the eighteenth-century family and household, Tadmor points out "the complex kinship relationships that could exist in families due to death and remarriage."[35] The constant shifting definition of the family and of ideas of who was encompassed in the family, as well as the use of surrogates, meant that family titles were ambiguous and loosely applied, and that the family and its various roles were open to a variety of household members. The malleable language of family as well as the mobility among roles within the family made the boundaries of the family permeable and

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[30] Naomi Tadmor, *Family & Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)
[31] Ibid., 10.
[32] Ibid., 274, 275.
[33] Ibid., 159. Davidoff also emphasizes the blurry lines between related and non-related dependents, saying that servants were grouped with other dependents, such as wives, children, and labourers. Davidoff, *Family Fortunes,* 21.
[34] Ibid., 38.
[35] Ibid., 6. Davidoff's discussion of the family also suggests that the idea of substitute family was a part of the family culture: because of late marriage, grandparent like figures would be found among "middle aged aunts and uncles,"[35] and older siblings would serve parental functions for the younger generation when parents died or became ill. Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, 329.

open to outsiders and meant that servants were either already seen as family, or could potentially usurp these roles; they were in the home, with knowledge of the family, and with the ability to perform those roles. The already varying servant exists in the porous family unit, thus the family adds to the servant's unstable characteristics. Conversely, the identification of some family with servant work also expanded and distorted the category of service and further confused the lines between servants and family.

Unclear census categories sometimes labeled female relatives as domestic servants, and might not note a familial relationship between the head of household and a relative that was also a servant. Also widening the category of service, the law allowed a father to sue for a daughter's loss of service as a way of "controlling a daughter's choice of marriage partner,"[36] blending family and servant. Unmarried women (whether single or widowed) without a home were expected to serve as housekeepers to their bachelor or widowed brothers and help care for nieces and nephews.[37] Also, older siblings took care of the younger generation when parents were ill or dead and provided a "pool of labour"; daughters became housekeepers for their widowed fathers; and "elder daughters and unmarried sisters were aides and deputies for mothers. In a few wealthy families poor relatives or paid dependents might perform some of these functions."[38] The way in which wives and daughters shared work with servants in some households meant that the

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[36] Davidoff, *Family Story*, 164-5. For further discussion of the blurring of family and service see Leonore Davidoff in *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960*. Davidoff is concerned with the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century but she similarly says of the nineteenth century in *Worlds Between*, "residential service was a twilight world; domestic servants were not really part of the family (as many employers would have liked to believe), but neither were they legally or traditionally seen as equivocally of the paid workforce." Davidoff, *Worlds Between,* 3.

[37] Davidoff, *Family Fortunes,* 350.

[38] Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, 329, 342. For a more detailed discussion of family relationship in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century see Leonore Davidoff's *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850,* particularly chapter seven: "'Our family is a little world': family structure and relationships"

difference between servant and family was not always clear. Just as family members, especially women, could officially and unofficially take on responsibilities that brought them into service roles, servants were sometimes brought into familial roles.

During the early modern period most youths spent time as servants. In this early form of service, referred to as life-cycle service, servants lived in close proximity with the family; its historical form makes the servant position of a familial nature. [39] Service was also closely tied to the family because it had been a way to find families for those displaced by the death of parents: "Life-cycle service provided 'a quasi-familial remedy' for nuclear hardships;"[40] moreover, servants sometimes took the place of children in childless homes.[41] Early modern service was itself tied to surrogacy. Households would take in relatives, poor and rich, as servants and apprentices;[42] those brought into the household were often meant to be substitute family, inherently making replacement a part of the service relationship. By the eighteenth century surrogacy is disappearing and no longer a function of service, but because servants and masters initially functioned as family and in place of family, the servant identity is defined by being able to replace family. This ability is present but dangerous in the novels studied in this project.

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[39] Sheila McIsaac Cooper, "Service to servitude? The decline and demise of life-cycle service in England." *The History of the Family* 10 (2005): 368. According to Cooper "most youth across the early-modern English social spectrum left their parents' homes to live with other families. They usually departed to enter service or apprenticeship, at times to board with a teacher or near a school, or to enter the King's service. Many did more than one of these things serially. Contemporaries, although well aware of the differences among young servants, apprentices, and parish apprentices, acknowledged their similarities, calling all of them servants." Ibid., 368.

[40] In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, because of late age of marriage and "correspondingly low fertility…. led to establishment of independent household upon marriage. They also resulted on average in a society of simple or nuclear household with older parents, fewer living grandparents, small sibling groups, and relatively few lateral relatives. This configuration produced not only nuclear households but what has been called nuclear hardship." Ibid., 370-1.

[41] Ibid., 371, 373.

[42] Ibid., 374-5

The surrogate nature of the service relationship also meant that servants were closely allied with their masters; this is also true because service was a common experience for many classes in early modern period England. In addition to providing family for those without parents or children, service provided education and training. According to Cooper, "service was the nearest England came to universal public education until virtually the industrial era."[43] Service was common among the middle-class, and indeed servants and masters were often from the same social strata; therefore, being a servant did not necessarily socially separate a person from their master, who had also been a servant at some point. However, during the eighteenth century there is a movement towards separation of classes, of the master and servant, and of the family and the household help.

Increasingly, as children of the middle and upper class no longer undertook periods of service as a way of acquiring education, being a servant became a job for those of lower birth, increasing the class differences between masters and servants.[44] Distinctions between family and domestic help also started to occur as life-cycle service declined with the decline in need for surrogate family, [45] leading to emotional and psychological divisions between masters and servants; these are reflected in architectural changes that also divided employer from employee. Davidoff points out that "by the 1770's servants had been banished to the back premises" and servants stopped sharing the domestic space together.[46] Cooper echoes the point by suggesting the increasing isolation of servants with changes in architecture. The changes that are occurring in the master-servant

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[43] Ibid., 373.
[44] Ibid., 381.
[45] Ibid., 377. The need for surrogates declined because "rising marriage and declining mortality rates in the 18th century, along with greater fertility of younger married women, reduced the proportion of households where servants had to some degree taken the place of children."
[46] Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, 377-8.

relationship actually help create the ambiguity about the servant's place in the home and family. Although the function of surrogacy and the intimate cohabitation of master and servant may have been eliminated, these delineations were never made clear. Servants remained in the home, and identified as family and the familial nature of the master-servant relationship was retained, at least in theory. As many of the servant manuals point out this was still viewed and constructed like a parental relationship.

The servant hierarchy is itself complicated, distinguishing rank according to responsibilities, indoor/outdoor jobs, country/city, type of household, and number of servants in a household. Boundaries between employer and employee are furthered blurred because servants encompassed many social categories and because these categories are themselves permeable; there was potential for rising within the service hierarchy, which adds to the ambiguity of the servant's identity. Although service was a "demeaning occupation," it was also a way of socially rising.[47] Servants could, over the course of a lifetime, move back and forth in terms of status (not only because of the job performed but also in terms of the family/master they served which affected the status of the servant), have the ability to enter another form of employment, or the ability to set a up a business. According to Hecht, "it was by no means uncommon for a servant who remained in the same family for a considerable time to rise gradually from a lowly office to one of the most exalted in the hierarchy."[48] She goes on to say that "Even the position of land steward … was frequently attained by servants who rose."[49] Yet if this is the case, a maid might rise during her career to become a housekeeper, but destitute gentry women also performed the housekeeper role, adding to the ambiguity of servants; one could not

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[47] Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class*, 177.
[48] Ibid., 183.
[49] Ibid., 184.

make assumptions about status based on the servant's station in the service hierarchy. The powerful servant position is created by the circumstances surrounding it, which gives rise to the ambiguous and fluid nature of the servant. As evidenced by conduct books for servants, the history of service, and the history of the family, the servant is a multiplicitous figure that is part of a changing family structure, is itself undergoing change, and is an agent of change both inside and outside the family.

Servants and the Novel: Readings of the Servant

Domestic novels replicate the social and cultural anxieties and instabilities surrounding servants, and locate the master-servant relationship as a place where issues of equality, social mobility, and hierarchy are revealed, questioned, and problematized. Though critics note the ambiguity surrounding the servant, it is often only in passing; here, the ambiguity is my focus. For instance, Judith Frank asserts that Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* reveals "the rupture of the service relationships that has made the affect of servants seem unreadable and threatening to gentlemen."[50] Frank identifies the anxiety over the imitating servant who possessed class mobility, the "increasing difficulty defining just who gentlemen were," and the social fluidity that "rendered older status categories unstable."[51] I make similar points but Frank addresses the servant as part of her larger study of the poor and laboring class, and I insist on the servant class as a group different from both the master class and the lower class (a point substantiated by historians of the servant) because of their unique position on the cusp of social categories.

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[50] Judith Frank, *Common Ground: Eighteenth-Century English Satiric Fiction and the Poor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 7.
[51] Ibid., 12, 14, 41.

Frank's book exploring eighteenth-century satiric novels looks at the "the ways in which the eighteenth-century poor shape them both thematically and formally." [52] Her study indicates that the figure of the servant and the service relationship is central to the study of the novel. It is important to remember that *Pamela* (which many consider the first novel) is about a servant. Bruce Robbins demonstrates that servants are a literary staple, "feudal vestiges" from medieval theatre that get carried over into novels. And Ian Watt sees servants as part of the reading population that helps to forge the new genre. Depicting servants is part of the domestic realism integral to the novel; just as most homes had domestic help, most domestic novels have servants in their households. Moreover, the servant takes up the instabilities of social categories that Michael McKeon tells us the novel formulates, explains, and mediates. In their fluidity domestics engage with McKeon's "questions of virtue": "a cultural crisis in attitudes toward how the external social order is related to the internal, moral state of its members."[53] I would argue that servants in particular confuse the connection between virtue and class because of their access to books and the master's clothes, and because of the ability to observe, learn and imitate the behavior and values of the masters. Unstable social categories can be used by the household help to assume multiple roles in the family: servants are agents of instability because of the way they blur those very categories. The ability to mimic the master defies the assumption that the exterior is an indicator of class because the upper class is innately and thus visibly different from the lower class.

While scholars note that the servant and the novel go hand in hand, they often read the servant as a metaphor. In one of the only full-length studies of servants in literature,

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[52] Ibid., 3.
[53] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 20.

Robbins starts from the idea "that the literary servant does not represent actual servants," and thus "is not to be conceived as a mirror held up to nature but as a signifying practice."[54] He contends that servants, in the absence of depictions of proletarians, functioned as representatives of the people. Like Robbins I am interested in understanding the literary function of servants and servant themes, but for me servants in literature are neither representative of one thing (i.e., the proletariat) nor unchanging theatrical devices; rather, they are products of the social and historical conditions surrounding service and the family that novels reflect and help to create. In his groundbreaking and still important study of the novel, Ian Watt notes that their location in a household gave them access to books and light and argues that servants would have been one of "two large and important groups of relatively poor people who probably did have time and opportunity to read."[55] But ultimately, like Robbins, Watt reads servants, and Pamela in particular, as a metaphor, in this case for the rise of the middle class.[56]

Watt and Robbins are entirely right that servants function as metaphors in literature, but they also represent a crucial part of everyday life understood by everyone. Emphasizing the historical as a lens for reading servants separates this contained study from Robbins's innovative and vast study on servants. Focusing on the historical helps elucidate this culturally important relationship that was an important part of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century life and thought. Servants were essential for maintaining a household and important symbols of status, and "in the eighteenth century probably

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[54] Robbins, *The Servant's Hand*, 11-2, 7.
[55] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 47.
[56] Ibid., 148.

constituted the largest single occupational group in the country."[57] Simultaneously their presence was considered a burden, especially since it threatened domestic privacy. Service was a complicated relationship that embodied issues of power; this project explores those power dynamics. I agree with Robbins that the servant has a special position in the text as commentator and critic of dominant ideology, but it is a culturally specific position created by ideas about service and servants. Reading servants through the culture of the eighteenth-century sheds light on the threat domestics pose to masters: servants' fluidity challenges and alters traditional social structures. In this dissertation I begin from a historical understanding of servants as a lens for comprehending the power wielded by servants in literature. I then analyze novels in which representations of the servant are connected to issues of gender and race. But to understand the significance of representing other power relationships through the servant, it is important to first understand servants within their historical context.

Betty Rizzo also explores the power dynamics in representations of the companion, a culturally important service relationship.[58] She argues that portrayals of the companionate relationship criticized tyranny in marriage or offered alternative models for marriage. In their concern with power, the representations of these relationships responded to the "intellectual and social climate" of the eighteenth century following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, as well as to the discourse on the nature of power and the French Revolution, by "[indicating] the moral corruption bred in both superior and inferior by hierarchically structured relationships" in order to indirectly discuss

[57] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 47.
[58] Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994).

"inequality between genders, classes, or races."[59] (23). Rizzo's study is an important point of departure for this project because it demonstrates the ways in which servants could exercise power. Locating myself with Rizzo, I expand her focus beyond the companionate relationship and look at the way master-servant dyads reflect and comment on ideas about power and equality. Surveying a variety of servants permits me to tie the power possessed by the companion with that of her lower-class counterparts. By replacing their masters, servants question class hegemony and privilege, while offering an alternative model of power.

Recently Julie Nash has begun the work of investigating the power possessed by the domestic in the works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell. She argues that that "domestic relations and domestic conflicts nearly always have broad cultural implications."[60] I expand the focus to include multiple authors and proceed to suggest the servant possesses greater agency then what Nash allows. Nash suggests that Edgeworth and Gaskell use the master-servant relationship to depict and explore social changes: "Their best works struggle to negotiate that space between anxiety and enthusiasm for social change and for the changing relations between master and servant."[61] Rather than "negotiate," I argue that the authors studied here use the servant figure to suggest and enact social change. Ultimately the servant in literature succeeds in usurping power and altering the categories of social class in the family.

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[59] Ibid., 23.
[60] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism,* 2.
[61] Ibid., 10.

Early Servants in Literature: Moll, Pamela, Shamela, and Joseph Andrews

A brief survey of a few early novels reveals the dangerous potential that was a foundation for the conduct books: namely a servant's ability to imitate masters. Looking at these earlier servants provides a framework for understanding the literary history of the later servants; it is also instructive for perceiving the dangerous and powerful role possessed by the servants that is the focus of this study. In novels of the first half of the century, servants threaten to invade their master's social milieu by joining rather than changing it because they rise and give up their servant identity. In the novels that are the focus of this project the servants attempt to change social categories, to replace the master and usurp power without altering their servant position.

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, another work that Ian Watt gives particular attention to, highlights the issue of the servant. As an orphan, a servant, a wife and mother many times over, a thief, a deported criminal, and eventually a lady, Moll participates in every social category imaginable. She calls one of her husbands, "this amphibious Creature, this Land-water-thing call'd a Gentleman-Tradesman" and says of him, "not a Beggar alive knew better how to be a Lord than my Husband,"[62] focusing on his ability to transcend class categories and to simultaneously inhabit multiple social roles. Importantly, Moll herself also has this ability. John Richetti writes that her aversion to service marks her as "a character worth writing about, a singular and individualized self, precisely because she can embark on a career that traverses normal social boundaries

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[62] Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. David Blewett (New York: Penguin Classics, 1989), 104, 105. Hereafter cited in text.

and thereby undermines the hierarchical inevitability summed up in 'service'."[63] I would contend that it is the servant's ambiguity, which results from service, that forms Moll and allows her to "traverse normal social boundaries," giving her a story to tell.

Initially, Moll does not want to go into service, and insists that her goal is to be a "gentlewoman." She says of her ambitions, "for they meant one Sort of thing, by the Word Gentlewoman, and I meant quite another; for alas, all I understood by being a Gentlewoman, was to be able to Work for myself, and get enough to keep me without that terrible Bug-bear going to Service, whereas they meant to live Great, Rich, and High, and I know not what" (Defoe, 50). Her model of a gentlewoman is a prostitute, a humorous mistake that shows the dangers of unclear and undefined class categories; her personal definition of a "gentlewoman" threatens to "pollute" and invert the upper-class identity. Later her concept of class shifts when for a week, she serves as companion to an upper-class woman's daughters; after her visit she says, "I had quite other Notions of a Gentlewoman now" (Defoe, 53), showing that the change in her concept of class comes as a result of her time in the home of the upper class. Being a domestic develops her social aspirations and gives her the ability to imitate; service also provides the education that makes her goals possible since as a companion she learns all the same skills as the daughters of the house:

> I had all the Advantages for my Education that could be imagin'd; the Lady had Masters home to the House to teach her Daughters to Dance, and to speak French, and to Write, and others to teach them Musick; and as I was always with them I learn'd as fast as they; and tho' the Masters were not appointed to teach me, yet I

[63] John Richetti, "Representing an Under Class: Servants and Proletarians in Fielding and Smollett," in The *New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Routledge, 1987), 85.

> lean'd by Imitation and enquiry, all that they learn'd by Instruction and Direction. (Defoe, 55-6)

The passage points out the unique position of the domestic discussed by Davidoff and Hecht; servants might be invisible but they were present and could learn by observation to imitate the master or mistress and to aspire to live a similar life. Moll learns the language, carriage, behavior and skills of a gentlewoman and yet she does not change class; rather, throughout her narrative she is able to use her knowledge at will, to belong, at different times, to different social groups. It is the access to education that makes Moll's performance of class convincing. Education increases ambiguity and the threat posed by the servant. Moll foreshadows *Castle Rackrent's* Jason, who takes over the castle, and *Caleb William's* Caleb who gains entrance into the home because of his education.

Moll Flanders' ability to pass as a gentlewoman is explicitly dangerous when she succeeds as a thief because she blends in. Discussing a pick-pocketing excursion, Moll says that when someone feels her pull on their watch she is able to elude arrest by pretending that she is also a victim: "for you are to observe, that on these Adventures we always went very well Dress'd, and I had very good Cloaths on, and a Gold Watch by my Side, as like a Lady as other Folks" (Defoe, 277). Thus there are two cries, hers and another woman's: "when she cried out a Pickpocket, some body cried Ay, and here has been another, this Gentlewoman has been attempted too" (Defoe, 278). Moll remains undetected because by all appearances she is another gentlewoman and attempted victim. In discussing her days as a thief, Moll is specifically referring to dress, but she also discusses her ability to blend in by her behavior; at Oxford she and her husband pretend

to be nobility: "The Servants all call'd him my Lord, and the Inn-Keepers you may be sure did the like, and I was her Honour, the Countess" (Defoe, 105). In this instance in the novel, Moll once again refers to dress and material possessions such as a "Coach and Six," but her education also comes into play in this farce of class. Passing as upper-class requires that Moll and her husband be able to imitate genteel conversation. Ronald Paulson notes Moll's emulation of the upper class and suggests that it takes two forms, the visual, which is characterized by "upward-dressing" and the verbal, with "her constant use of euphemisms, circumlocutions, and genteelisms."[64] About her Oxford trip, Moll says, "We saw all the Rareties at Oxford, talk'd with two or three Fellows of Colleges, about putting out a young Nephew, that was left to his Lordship's Care, to University, and of their being his Tutors; we diverted our selves with bantering several other poor Scholars, with hopes of being at least his Lordship's Chaplains" (Defoe, 105). The adventure is comical, but also dangerous. According to Nash, servants threaten to reveal "the potential for dehumanization and corruption in the paternalist philosophy."[65] I would add that when they usurp the master's roles servants are upsetting the social structure and the idea of the paternalistic responsibility of the upper-class by making it meaningless. Moreover, when servants pass for a higher class without belonging, as in the farce carried out by Moll, they threaten to redefine the categories they are imitating by showing they are capable of participating in a milieu they are barred from, and interrogating exclusionary practices developed by the dominant social group.

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[64] Ronald Paulson, "Emulative consumption and literacy: The Harlot, Moll Flanders, and Mrs. Slipslop" in *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 387

[65] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism,* 17.

In their games, Moll and her husband ridicule the system of patronage, when trifling with the hopes and aspirations of a possible dependent that at the very least will experience disappointment. Fielding in *Joseph Andrews* also derides patronage when Joseph, Fanny and Parson Adams meet a Gentleman who guarantees Adams a position as an incumbent of a living when the current incumbent dies. He also offers the group a place to stay and assistance in traveling back home. The Gentleman has a reputation of making empty promises, but because they do not see through his offers of patronage, all that the group gains is a bill they cannot pay. As in *Moll Flanders*, authority, in the forms of patronage and charity, is prone to abuse, tyranny, and oppression. But in *Moll Flanders* and *Joseph Andrews* there is a comical satiric tone and those that naively believe promises of patronage are also being ridiculed. In the later novels the tone is more serious and the criticism is only extended to those on the top of the social ladder. Wollstonecraft and Opie take up this issue of charity and its problems in their novels. The communities of women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* show charity to be inefficient and insufficient and offer an alternative, replacing charity with a utopian version of the master-servant relationship.

The fluidity that makes Moll a good thief and permits her to have many personalities and roles is also evident in Pamela's ability to change classes. Pamela is a servant who has been groomed and educated by her mistress; after her mistress's death, Pamela serves her mistress's son, Mr. B. Attracted by the genteel and virtuous waiting maid and her witty language, he pursues and tries to seduce and rape her. After multiple unsuccessful attempts that include abducting and imprisoning Pamela, Mr. B marries her, elevating her to the aristocracy. As the novel opens, Pamela points out her ambiguous position. The

education and skills that make Pamela acceptable to her lady and fit "to wait upon her person"[66] make her unfit for general domestic service, a point that worries her when she thinks of going home to live with her parents. Preparing to return to her parents, Pamela hopes that she can get work that does not spoil her fingers and that allows her "a little time for reading" (Richardson, 109).

Like Moll, Pamela as a servant in a higher-class home gets an education and the desire to live like her betters. But this opening letter also points out the weakness of being like the family since Pamela does not have official wages and is dependent on her mistress's and now her master's good will. The second letter, a response from Pamela's father, further highlights the ambiguity of class surrounding Pamela, who looks like a gentlewoman because of her clothes. Furthermore, although her parents are poor, they say, "it was once better with us" (Richardson, 45), suggesting that they have roots in a better social class. This mysterious social background is again emphasized later when the reader is informed that her father is educated and has tried to set up a school that failed.

Pamela uses her adaptable status to distinguish herself from servants she considers too low for her. She points out that she takes all her meals with Mrs. Jervis rather than the other servants and says, "I seldom go down into the kitchen" (Richardson, 75), and repeatedly insists on her relationship with Mrs. Jervis, who is "a gentlewoman born, though she has had misfortunes" (Richardson, 49). As the novel progresses and as she is more clearly identified by Mr. B and other characters as belonging to the upper class, Pamela switches to insisting on her servant identity: "He shall always be my master; and I shall think myself more and more his servant" (Richardson, 337). On one level this is

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[66] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, ed. Peter Sabor (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), 43. Hereafter cited in text.

part of being a wife who has to be both servant and mistress, but the familiarity that Pamela seeks suggests that she does not want to abandon her servant community: "But I charge you, my dear Mrs. Jervis, whatever you call me before strangers, that when we are by ourselves, you call me nothing but your Pamela" (Richardson, 479). She further aligns herself with Mrs. Jervis by referring to Mr. B. as "our dear master" (478). Again insisting on identifying with Mrs. Jervis, Pamela suggests that depending on the situation, their relationship will shift between that of mistress and house-keeper and between that of two equal servants.

Whereas earlier in the novel Pamela associates with Mrs. Jervis to claim superiority and to rise in the servant hierarchy, at the end, this association is a way of preventing the complete loss of her allegiance with servants; in both cases it is an attempt to retain her power to shift roles. But Pamela leaves the social structure intact because she is completely absorbed into her new role. If she had retained her ability to marry up while reverting to her lower-class identity at will, then she would have threatened to change the mistress role by altering who had access to that status. This implementation of change is accomplished by the women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* and by the heroines of *Belinda* and *Mansfield Park*.

Pamela is aware of the advantages to her fluidity and tries to negotiate two identities, to retain the ability to belong to both the servant community and to Mr. B's upper-class community. Like her use of dress in the novel (which Richardson makes so much of), Pamela wants to be able to change her class status at will and to her advantage. Of Pamela's alteration in her dress, Patricia C. Bruckmann writes, "In the responses of viewers and self viewer, the importance of clothes is underscored as a creator of

identity."[67] While Bruckmann reads Pamela's decision to change her dress as the way in which she forms her own unique identity, Christopher Flint writes that "Pamela experiences the distressing feeling of not belonging entirely to either social sphere for which she has been trained. She spends the rest of her novelistic time seeking to establish an identity which synthesizes these two powerful cultural models of behavior."[68] I would suggest that Pamela's identity building is not quite as concrete as the forming of a unique identity; instead, she can perform various roles. Her use of clothing replicates the shifting of identity that the servant is capable of. As Clair Hughes points out, "dress is disturbingly, dangerously protean because it "both reveals and conceals social position."[69] In the novel Pamela goes back and forth between her upper-class identity indicated in the use of her mistress's clothes, and the "invented dress" that Bruckmann usefully explains as one that "encodes her ambiguous and individual situation."[70] Furthermore, Pamela often says she would rather wear rags than be dishonest, referring to and longing for the clothes she first wore when entering service. Through her use of clothes, she is constantly invoking a different class status in order to protect herself; but Pamela loses this class fluidity when she marries.

Janet Todd discusses Pamela's "pride of servitude" and the way embracing the hierarchy enables her to protect herself and undermine Mr. B, "to keep him in his place and sever his social and sexual powers."[71] Subservience and servitude assist Pamela,

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[67] Patricia C. Bruckmann, "Clothes of Pamela's Own: Shopping at B-Hall," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25 (Spring 2001): 208.
[68] Christopher Flint, "The Anxiety of Affluence: Family and Class (Dis)order in *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 29, no. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer 1989): 490.
[69] Clair Hughes, *Dressed in Fiction* (Oxford, England: Berg Publishers, 2006), 2.
[70] Bruckmann, "Clothes of Pamela's Own," 208.
[71] Janet Todd, "Pamela; or the bliss of servitude," *The British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 6 no. 2 (Autumn 1983): 137.

allowing her to rise, but also to remain a servant. Importantly Pamela is aware of the way her deferential behavior can be used: “But to shew my compliance in all I can comply with [for you know, my dear parents, I might as well make a merit of complying, when my refusal would stand me in no stead]” (Richardson, 245). Here she is being a perfectly submissive servant in an attempt to gain a modicum of freedom and be less observed by Mr. B and his accomplice Mrs. Jewkes. She again suggests using her acquiescence to appease, this time with Lady Davers: “I will not scruple on my knees, to beg her ladyships favour to me…. if my deepest humility will gratify her, allow me to shew it” (Richardson, 436). However, Pamela is equally able to protect herself by claiming her upper-class persona, as seen when she is fighting with Lady Davers. In this instance, Pamela refuses her servant role because it would weaken her and she insists on her new place as mistress and on equality with Lady Davers. In the midst of Pamela’s and Lady Davers’s argument about Pamela’s right to be in the family, Lady Davers’ woman invites Pamela to sit and eat a meal with her and Mrs. Jewkes; Pamela replies, “times, as you said, are much altered with me. I have been of late so much honoured by better company, that I can’t stoop to your’s” (Richardson, 415). Yet soon after, Pamela seeks out the company of the same two servants and says, “notwithstanding they would have excused themselves, I made [them] sit by me” (Richardson, 457). In the second quotation, she reverts and creates community with the servants. Discussing and evaluating her behavior soon after she becomes engaged to Mr. B., Pamela says that all the servants “seem to be highly pleased with me, and with my conduct to them: and as my master, hitherto, finds no fault, that I go too low, nor they that I carry it too high, I hope I shall continue to have every body’s good-will” (363).

Flint writes, “One of the things that characterize Pamela, and triggered the desire and fear of many eighteenth-century readers, is her ability to transcend categories…. Indeed much of Pamela’s power over Mr. B (and other members of his class) derives from the ease with which she adapts to various family roles.”[72] He later goes on to say, “Her final acquisition of a place in the social hierarchy consists in knowing that what allowed her ascent—the fluidity of her social identity—can just as easily revoke her newly attained status.”[73] Flint indicates that Pamela is afraid of her fluidity but I would instead say that she recognizes changeability as a power and not a danger to her status and that she attempts to keep her multiplicity. However Flint is correct in his assertion that once Pamela is absorbed into the upper class her “subversive potential is defused”;[74] she is subdued when she loses her ability to shift. When servants relinquish the goal of rising and instead welcome their servant identity, they are able to retain multiple subject positions, as this dissertation will demonstrate.

Pamela loses her servant identity, and the agency that is part of that role as her relationship with Mr. B progresses and she has to mold herself to an upper-class identity. Terry Eagleton writes, “*Pamela* tells the story of a woman snatched into the ruling class and tamed to its sexist disciplines.”[75] Similarly, Flint argues that as the novel develops, Pamela’s class identity is subdued by making her a unique example rather than a representative of her class; furthermore, her family background is “modified in such a way that the original class conflict is silently erased.”[76] Flint also writes, “Richardson retreats from the revolutionary implications of his story the closer it arrives at a

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[72] Flint, “The Anxiety of Affluence,” 493.
[73] Ibid., 510.
[74] Ibid., 497.
[75] Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 37.
[76] Flint, “The Anxiety of Affluence,” 506.

destination that potentially erases difference."[77] After marriage Mr. B's rules for Pamela's behavior try to pin down her identity, and she becomes progressively more limited in what she can say and do. Although Pamela ultimately relinquishes her servant alignment and rises, her story already suggests that there is a danger and power in the servant position, a danger evident to readers of *Pamela* that needs to be diminished by firmly fastening her to a class status.

Fielding's *Shamela*, a reaction to *Pamela*, seems to share the same discomfort shown by many of Richardson's contemporary readers.[78] In his discussion of responses to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Richard Gooding points out, "Whereas the anti-Pamelists negate the subversive potential of Richardson's novel by attacking Pamela's motives, the Pamelists achieve the same end by depriving Pamela of her humble background."[79] (130). I would add that in either case the responders are trying to clearly tie Pamela's identity to a class category and to eliminate her ability to ally herself with multiple positions. In this satirical re-writing of Richardson's novel, Fielding retells *Pamela*, but turns its heroine into a crass, uneducated, and manipulative servant who is determined to socially rise. He tries to pin down the heroine's identity, revealing a discomfort with the multiplicity of roles that she inhabits. Immediately highlighting a discomfort with the shifting of

[77] Ibid., 507.
[78] The discomfort or fear felt by early readers of *Pamela* novel is pointed out by many critics including, Christopher Flint, "The Anxiety of Affluence: Family and Class (Dis)order in *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 29, no. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer 1989): 489-514 and Helene Dachez, "Crossing Borders in Samuel Richardson's Clarissa; or, The 'Ladder of Dependence' Revisited," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36, no. 2 (2003): 25. For an in depth discussion of reactions to *Pamela* and of the subsequent literary productions that arouse as a result of these reactions see .Richard Gooding, "*Pamela*, *Shamela*, and the Politics of the *Pamela* Vogue," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 7, no.2 (January 1995): 109-30.
[79] Richard Gooding, "*Pamela*, *Shamela*, and the Politics of the *Pamela* Vogue," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 7, no.2 (January 1995): 130.

identity, Shamela says of the name, Pamela, "for so I am called here."[80] Fielding divests her of the power her name has assumed through the success of the novel, and takes away her name because Pamela was not a name usually assigned to servants.**[81]**

Despite her pretensions, Shamela's voice, writing and behavior, are clearly described as those of a stereotypical servant and lower-class figure. Fielding's novel opens with the suggestion that *Pamela*, the novel*,* is commissioned by Shamela as a substitute for her real life story, which the reader is about to receive: "though we do not imagine her the Author of the Narrative itself, yet we must suppose the Instructions were given by her, as well as the Reward, to the Composer" (Fielding, 278). Fielding takes away Pamela's ability to have written such an influential novel. Unlike Richardson's Pamela (and even Moll Flanders), Shamela does not understand the master class enough to imitate and participate in it convincingly. She can consume the same novels, clothes, and books but she cannot put them to correct use.

What Shamela's lack of education contributes to this study is the understanding that educating the servant is perceived as dangerous. But it is also a danger if the servant is not educated at all, a fact realized by the plethora of conduct literature that attempted to educate the servant as a way of controlling them. Ian Watt points out the concern over how literacy and novel reading in particular was affecting the lower-classes in the eighteenth century; he says of circulating libraries, "These 'slop-shops in literature' were said to have debauched the minds of schoolboys, ploughboys, 'servant women of the better sort', and even of 'every butcher and baker, cobbler, and tinker, throughout the

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[80] Henry Fielding, *Shamela*, ed. Homer Goldbery (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1987), 281. Hereafter cited in text.
[81] For instance in discussing the choices of names by novelists, Ian Watt points out "the romance-connotations of Pamela." Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 19.

three kingdoms'."[82] Education leads Pamela to want to be a virtuous heroine, but it takes a dangerous turn with Caleb Williams who wants to be a hero. Both servant characters narrate in order to create themselves and provide a counter narrative to the one that is culturally assigned to servants, but Caleb persecutes his master in an effort to find a story.

Shamela's class is clearly marked by her dialect, which makes her voice a joke and suspect, but an easily detected threat. Her speech and writing lack the gentility that is ultimately Pamela's most powerful tool. Fielding repeats the trope with Mrs. Slipslop's malapropisms in *Joseph Andrews*, another satirical attack on Richardson's *Pamela*. Both Robbins and Nash point out the narrative function of servants and the way in which it "proves, in fiction at least, to be one of the few sources of servant power."[83] This power is especially threatening because of what they could divulge about the home and family they resided with. But narrative ability is also a threat because it permits servants, like Moll, Pamela, and later Thady and Caleb, to tell their own story, to create themselves through narrative and assume an upper class persona, and/or to present a counter point of view that empowers the servant. Thady's vernacular, like Shamela's, weakens him, whereas the language used by Moll, Pamela, and Caleb makes them like the master.[84]

Bodies like language are also part of class identity. In *Joseph Andrews*, Fanny's and Joseph's bodies are clearly marked by class. Fanny is illiterate and has red hands from working. As for Joseph, several times throughout the text, other characters suspect he belongs to the upper class because of the appearance of his body and skin: "she believed

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[82] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 43.
[83] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism,* 28
[84]Paulson "Emulative consumption and literacy," 387.

he was a Gentleman for she never saw a finer Skin in her Life."[85] On the one hand Fielding mocks class pretensions and ridicules characters for the assumptions they make about one another based on class. For instance, Joseph's genteel beauty is often the reason he receives charity. But despite his satire, Fielding sustains and gives import to class boundaries. The revelation of Joseph's genteel parentage validates his superior abilities and physical appearance. Appropriately for his background, Joseph is intelligent and learns quickly but as a servant he knows his place and has no desire to move beyond it. His abilities, like his body, are clearly marked by class, making it impossible to have an ambiguous class identity. As Dachez points out, "For Fielding, the unjustified crossing of borders is the gateway to chaos and anarchy."[86] Christopher Parkes demonstrates that in *Joseph Andrews* Fielding argues "for the elimination of liminal spaces," which "represent an alternative to the dominant society."[87] He argues that Fanny and Joseph "have been elevated to settled laborers by remaining inside the boundaries of the settled world…. Their settlement does not disrupt the local community."[88] As in *Shamela*, in *Joseph Andrews* Fielding is concerned with the servant's access to education and ability to cross social ranks. Even as he makes fun of the idea that class can be read on a person and the idea that an upper-class status is synonymous with virtue his agenda is once again to firmly fix all identities, to make them clear and concrete. Fanny and Joseph know their place and therefore are virtuous characters, while those with social aspirations, like Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby, Squire Booby, and Pamela are all problematic and ridiculous.

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[85] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, ed. Homer Goldbery (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1987), 48. Hereafter cited in text.
[86] Helene Dachez, "Crossing Borders in Samuel Richardson's Clarissa; or, The 'Ladder of Dependence' Revisited," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36, no. 2 (2003): 26
[87] Christopher Parkes, "Joseph Andrews and the Control of the Poor," *Studies in the Novel*, 39, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 22, 20.
[88] Ibid., 28.

Central to all these novels is the concern with servants' location in the home. The texts represent the opportunities domestics have to gain education, to have the master's clothing, and to observe and listen, all of which allow the possibility of mimicking and of passing as a member of a higher social group. Servants in novels, just as they do historically, create instabilities in the family and its hierarchy. Hilary Teynor argues that the master-servant relationship reveals "the tension between tradition and modernity that particularly characterized social relations in eighteenth-century fiction."[89] She "exposes the clash in the law between individual volition and freedom in the 'lower orders' and paternalistic authority."[90] I will argue similarly that by replacing members of a family, and often emerging as better masters, members of the family, and friends, servant figures test, cross, change, and replicate hierarchical boundaries. This is especially true in novels of the late long eighteenth century (1794-1814), during the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era when the servant becomes a real, rather than an imagined threat. Addressing the issue of servants at this moment in time, Nash writes, "The notion of reciprocal obligations between classes was violently challenged during the French Revolution, an event that impacted the writings of both Edgeworth and Gaskell."[91] According to Nash social changes like the French Revolution resulted in contradictory servant representations and contradictory positions on social paternalism. Indeed there is increased ambiguity surrounding the master-servant relationship;[92] the danger of servants replacing their masters was the nightmare of the Revolution. Attacking

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[89] Hilary Teynor, "A Partridge in the Family Tree: Fixity, Mobility, and Community in *Tom Jones,*" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 17, no.3 (April 2005): 372.
[90] Ibid., 352.
[91] Nash, *Servants and Paternalism*, 15.
[92] Nash defines paternalism as a belief that "every individual is obligated to serve the social order, but individuals serve in different and pre-ordained ways, depending upon their social position," a way of thinking that "justified and sustained patriarchal power by tempering its harshest features (the domination of the weak by the strong) with protection and kindness." Ibid., 12, 15.

or protecting the traditional hierarchy of the family becomes especially important during this period. The servant's presence in the family brings revolutionary ideas about social mobility and individual rights, and the anxieties surrounding these ideas, into direct conflict with the family. This is exemplified in the servant character of Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro* (1784), which gives "some insight into the prevailing political atmosphere" before the French Revolution.[93] The play was considered dangerous because it was unflattering to male aristocrats and showed servants disrespecting and bettering their masters while justifying their actions.[94] Louis XVI objected to the play, and "Napoleon Bonaparte himself is said to have called it the 'first shot' of the French Revolution."[95] Margaret A. Doody writes of *Pamela* that it "presages the era of the French Revolution."[96] I would similarly argue that the threat Pamela poses, of taking over and of altering the social structure, becomes increasingly dangerous and revolutionary in novels with servants that replace the master and/or family during and after the period of the French Revolution.

Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, and Henry Fielding's *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* suggest that servants in the home and with the ability to rise present a threat to the master's power; but in novels of the first half of the eighteenth century, servants rise or find their true class identity. Joseph Andrews finds out his true class identity when he finds his father, an identity so clear it is visible to others even while Joseph remains ignorant of the truth. Even Pamela is presented as finding her

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[93] Milton E. Brener, *Opera Offstage: Passion and Politics Behind the Great Operas* (New York: Walker & Company, 1996), 7.
[94] William Mann, *The Operas of Mozart* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 366.
[95] Brener, *Opera Offstage,* 8.
[96] Margaret A. Doody, introduction to *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), 8.

rightful place in the social order because of her uniqueness. After all, Pamela rises precisely because she possesses the values required of genteel women and wives. The inclusion of the servant in the upper class extends equality, and questions who has a right to belong or to possess power, but it leaves the value assigned to the upper-class category intact. For servants in novels, rising and assimilating, or claiming their rightful place in the upper echelons, requires taking on the master class identity. Later servants understand and perform the role of the upper class without necessarily altering their servant position; they embrace their servant role, threatening the social hierarchy.

From Pamela to Fanny: Literary Sisters

Looking at *Moll Flanders*, *Pamela*, *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, and focusing on the servant's position and their relationship with and to the family underscores the power possessed by the servant in literature. In William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, there is a shift from rising servants that join the upper echelons along with their masters to those servants that replace the masters. The difference between Pamela and the later servants is that as she rises, she assimilates and becomes more and more clearly of the upper-class; the servants in the novels I discuss here claim their servant function even as they seek to enter the family. Caleb struggles to reconcile his desires to be like the master and to remain a servant; Thady refuses to relinquish his servant role, which leaves him at a loss at the novel's conclusion. In the novels I discuss in Chapter Two, mistresses and servants embrace their status and each other, forming a community that recreates the mistress-servant relationship in order to challenge and alter patriarchal power. In the cases of Thady and Caleb, as well as in the

mistress-servant dyads of Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Women: or, Maria* and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, the servant challenges and threatens to change the existing authority by replacing an established order. Unlike rising, replacement calls into question the social structure—offering an alternative to traditional social roles and relationships. In the novels discussed in Chapter Three the power possessed by Thady and Caleb, and used to create alternatives for women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* is neither a nightmare nor a utopia, but it still presents a threat,

The trajectory of this project begins with Caleb, who is educated, and a secretary, but who (by his own admission) is "of humble parents" whose "occupations were such as usually fall to the lot of peasants" (3). He is in many ways similar to Thady, an illiterate steward, because his servant role allows him to usurp the master's persona. Ultimately, he fails because he turns away from his servant identity in an effort to be like the master. Male servants are few and turn out to be genteel by birth in the early novels; such is the case with Joseph Andrews and the titular protagonist of Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771). Caleb and Thady, the only male servants studied here, suggest that male servants present a greater danger to the established order because they cannot be absorbed by the upper-class family through marriage.[97] But female servants can marry in and up. In the cases of *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*, its notable that the mistress-servant pairs must create separate and isolated communities in order to function. If Caleb and Thady present the most explicit danger to the established social structure, the female servants studied in Chapter Two and Chapter Three are only apparently less of a threat.

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[97] As I will suggest later, there is an alignment between the wife and servant role that makes the servant less threatening to the mistress and allows the sharing of power.

In Chapter Two, the servant can fill the mistress's position but the mistress is servant-like. In an inverted usurping, the servant's mobility and ambiguity gives both women greater independence and freedom in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*. The female communities established by mistress and servant offer women an alternative to traditional women's lives. Chapter Three looks at the continuing ambiguity of Belinda and Fanny, upper-class figures that occupy the servant's position. This trajectory would seem to support Robbins's and Nash's suggestions about the disappearing servant but I would argue that both Belinda and Fanny purposely associate with and replace servants in the novels because the servant position remains a source of power for the heroine. It is from taking on the servant identity that both Fanny and Belinda are able to enter and recreate the family; servants seem to reconstitute the traditional middle-class family they appear to threaten in the earlier novels, but they actually alter it and usurp authority. This last chapter recalls *Caleb Williams* and shows that to rise and replace successfully, a servant must first embrace the servant identity.

Increasingly, with each novel explored here, the master-servant boundary becomes less distinct and the servant's ambiguity and fluidity is more successfully used. The chapters move from antagonistic master and servant to a communal relationship where mistress and servant share and exchange identity so that the servant alternatively replaces the mistress, the mother, and the daughter and yet retains her identity. Finally in Chapter Three the servant and mistress are unified in Fanny and Belinda who bring the two identities together. Thady insists on his servant identity but is unable to simultaneously inhabit the master's role because he is obviously of the lower-class, and does not completely have the servant's ambiguity. Caleb is both servant and master, but he loses

his servant connection by trying to rise. The mistress-servant dyads of *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* successfully use the servant's ambiguity but they can only do so in separate utopian communities. Belinda and Fanny fully realize the servant's power; while remaining servants they successfully replace and usurp the master's place and take over the family. Fanny is the most successful example of replacement; Edgeworth's *Belinda* ends ambiguously. Pamela loses the ability to write and create herself; it is this loss of agency that Fanny finally evades when she becomes family but retains her servant status.[98] Fanny in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* remains an ambiguous figure and therefore does not lose her agency.

The in-between position occupied by these characters and the multiple roles this gives them access to are the crux of this dissertation; it is the power possessed by the servant. It is not just about rising (which the servant's class ambiguity allows): the objective is to be able to go back and forth. Caleb tries to make use of dual identities but the fact that his goal is to rise makes him less capable of accomplishing this because he must give up his servant role. But the women in Chapter Two are aware of the power that fluid class identity provides and this allows them to create an alternative space. Belinda and Fanny (discussed in Chapter Three) embody this fluid class identity in one heroine character and this allows the heroines to replace family members, and not only to recreate the families in which they live but also to become the center and ideal of the family, making the servant of the margins no longer a marginal character.

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[98] There are earlier figures that like Fanny and Belinda are servant-like family, as in Frances Burney's *Evelina;* but, again, the difference is that at the end of the novel Evelina turns out to be of the master-class and loses her agency.

Chapter One

"Why should my reflections perpetually centre upon myself?": Narrating from Below in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*

In a letter from Brussels dated 15th October, 1802, Maria Edgeworth writes,

> At another post house we met with a woman calling herself a *servante* to whom we took not only an aversion, but a *horror*. Charlotte said that if she was to sleep in the room alone with this woman she should be afraid, not that she would cut her throat, but that she would take a mallet and hammer her head flat at one stroke. Do you remember the woman described in Caleb Williams—he wakens and sees her standing over him with an uplifted hatchet. Our *Servante* might have stood for this picture.[1]

The image of the malicious and maniacal servant, waiting silently and unseen to murder the unsuspecting and helpless master or mistress, is terrifying. It is an image that suggests physical vulnerability and questions the safety and sanctity of the private, domestic space.[2] Edgeworth's imagined scenario of being brutally pummeled to death, instead of a clandestine cutting of the throat where physical strength is unnecessary, ascribes a masculine physicality to the lower-class servant. The violence of the image illustrates a class bias and emphasizes the difference between the "servante" physically capable of such an act and the timid travelers. The episode detailed in the letter also highlights the servant's difference by using the word "servante," implying ethnic or national differences, making her foreign, unknown, and questionable. It suggests that a fear of the

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[1] Christina Colin, *Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland: Selections From the Edgeworth Family Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 5. This letter was written by Maria Edgeworth to Sophy Ruxton.

[2] Although the women are in a hotel, they are worried about the sharing of an intimate domestic-like space.

unknown is connected to the fear of the servant: unknown in the sense that one does not ever know another individual, unknown in the sense that the servant is an outsider to the family, and unknown because the servant comes from a different and unfamiliar social background with different beliefs, education, and values. Moreover, in this portrait, the servant is a physical threat because of her intimacy that allows her to watch unseen and gives her access to the young women, a point stressed through the image of the diabolical servant standing over the two unsuspecting women.

Fear of proximity between servants and masters highlights a deeper concern over the level of intimacy that such a relationship develops. While the employer sleeps, the domestic can commit murder. Less dramatically and yet as dangerously, the sharing of a private space gives the servant access to private information. A servant could potentially repeat or use such knowledge, rendering the master and his family vulnerable—physically at risk from outsiders such as robbers after material property, or publicly open to attack by an antagonist who could harm the social status of the family. Furthermore, proximity and intimacy also make the servant fluid and allows him or her to become ambiguous by giving him or her access to the social code of the family. The ability to imitate the master's class and behavior makes the servant a social threat to the family and master.[3] William Godwin in *Caleb Williams* (1794) and Maria Edgeworth in *Castle Rackrent* (1800) depict the servant's privileged position within a family, which allows him to witness and have access to information and secrets. Both show the way that the servant's situation allows him to gather and use information to his advantage, usurping a master-like authority through narration. The possession of a narrative creates a space for the servant's voice and the servant's own story, a space where the servant is central.

[3] See the introduction of this dissertation for a discussion of the social fluidity available to servants.

In these texts the servant's ambiguity and fluidity is achieved through the narration, which is made possible because the servant is in the family but not of the family, by the servant's in-between position. This chapter will show that the servant position is indeed fluid, powerful and dangerous during the late eighteenth century. Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams* are political novels. The servant figures, Thady and Caleb, are menacing because the identity they create for themselves destabilizes and threatens their master's position. Comparing Thady, an illiterate steward, and Caleb, an educated peasant who becomes a secretary, reveals that education increases ambiguity and demonstrates the paradox that rising socially may be disempowering because it requires the relinquishment of the ambiguity and fluidity of the servant position. Finally, the chapter notes that Edgeworth and Godwin similarly represent dangerous servants. The similarities to the work of a conservative novelist support the argument that *Caleb Williams* is an ambiguous novel and not the radical statement that Godwin seems to have intended.

According to Godwin, *Caleb Williams* was meant to be didactic, "a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism, by which man becomes the destroyer of man."[4] The novel was the author's response to the French Revolution and to the political environment of the 1790's. Gary Kelly highlights the preface and argues that Godwin's aim was "'to expose the evils which arise out of the present system of civilized society; and, having exposed them, to lead the enquiring reader to examine whether they are, or are not, as has commonly been supposed, irremediable'."[5] Robert Kiely likewise

[4] William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. David McCracken (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 1. Hereafter cited in text.
[5] William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, quoted in Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 181.

suggests that the fictional world of the novel was meant to show the need for reform.[6] Yet there is a sense among many Godwin scholars that the novel does not accomplish the author's stated purpose. One line of argument focusing on the disparity between Godwin's intention and the actual result suggests that the novel was affected by Godwin's disappointment with the revolution because of developing events in France and the increasing chaos and bloodshed, as well as by English reaction to those events including the treason trials, which involved Godwin's immediate circle.[7] *Caleb Williams* was written "from the spring of 1793 until the end of the year." After an interruption in writing "from 2 January 1794 until 1 April" the book was completed "30 April"; and the ending was revised "between 4 and 8 May."[8] Composition of the novel followed the increasing violence in France, the execution of the king, and coincided with the years of terror. In England the reaction and concern over the events in France were escalating and causing many early supporters of the revolution to hesitate and alter or hide their enthusiasm.[9] Critics who refer to the social and political atmosphere suggest that the novel reveals disillusionment or guilt over earlier whole-hearted support of the revolution. According to William St. Clair, the writing of *Caleb Williams* was interrupted and "his [Godwin's] ideas thrown into turmoil by the sedition trials."[10] For instance, Kelly writes, "Godwin recognized the subconscious roots of his own social protest and

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[6] Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 86.
[7] For a discussion of the treason trials see Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805,* 10-11; and see Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 36-38.
[8] William St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 118-121. In his preface St. Clair notes that his primary source for the lives of the authors he is exploring is "the Abinger archive of manuscripts now in the Bodleian Library. This consists of Godwin's papers together with those of Wollstonecraft, Shelley, Mary Shelley and others."
[9] For a concise summary of the events surrounding and influencing the writing and publication of *Caleb Williams* see Gary Kelly *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805,* especially pages 8-12.
[10] St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 118.

passed judgment on the activities of the English Jacobins in the national crisis of 1793 and 1794" (190). Similarly Gary Handwerk argues, "Both political and personal events in the 1790's led Godwin to doubt his easy faith in ethical absolutes."[11] James Thompson proposes that Godwin was affected by the chaotic social environment and expressing the atmosphere of fear that was prevalent during the politically turbulent 1790s: "Thus it is not so much that the political climate of England in the early 1790s explains *Caleb Williams*, but rather that these conditions create a climate of fear and suspicion which Godwin recreates in his novel."[12]

While *Castle Rackrent* is not an overtly political text in the same manner as *Caleb Williams*, or a direct response to the French Revolution, Edgeworth wrote her novel during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, an extended period of conflict "from 1793 to 1815, with only a brief and phoney truce in the middle."[13] This period of time was of particular anxiety to Britons because of its duration and the threat of invasion. *Castle Rackrent* is about Ireland, but associations between the French and the Irish exists both in the imagination because both are Catholic nations, and in reality since France tried to weaken Britain by attempting to invade and liberate Ireland. Various French attempts to enter Ireland were made between 1796 and 1798, culminating in the ultimately unsuccessful but bloody 1798 rebellion.[14] As R.B. McDowell points out, "the rising displayed in stark relief the fissures in Irish society and made it difficult [for the

[11] Gary Handwerk, "Of Caleb's Guilt and Godwin's Truth: Ideology and Ethics in *Caleb Williams*," *ELH* 60, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 951.

[12] James Thompson, "Surveillance in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," in *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression*, ed. Kenneth W. Graham (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 178.

[13] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 150.

[14] For a detailed discussion of French attempts to invade Ireland and of the 1798 rebellion, see McDowell, "The Age of The United Irishmen: Revolution and the Union, 1794-1800," in *The New History of Ireland,* 349-362.

Anglo-Irish] to view the future with optimism."[15] Although Edgeworth's Anglo-Irish father was on the side of Catholic emancipation, the situation was dangerous and the family had to flee their home there during the social unrest preceding the Rebellion of 1798.[16] A fear of the Irish peasantry coexisted with their support of emancipation. Susan B. Egenolf notes a corresponding conflict in *Castle Rackrent*, between support and fear of the lower class when she compares Edgeworth's narrative voice to blackface. She says that the text "attempt[s] to contain the power of the muted group and provide a forum for a provocative display of the group's power"[17] (862). The Edgeworths' participation in the general anxiety surrounding the rebellion is suggested by Brian Hollingworth when he notes Richard Edgeworth's change of feelings about the union between Ireland and England: "after the rebellion of 1798, he had changed his mind. He now believed that, given current political instability, Irish economic interest would be best furthered by Union. No doubt the Edgeworths' personal experiences during the rebellion were a factor in this change of view."[18] Although one cannot equate Edgeworth's opinions with her father's, the Edgeworths were in the middle of these political instabilities and there was a resulting anxiety in the family. Moreover, with the impending union of 1801,"the Irish lost their parliament in Dublin, but in theory gained access to the growing prosperity of Scotland and England."[19] The Union threatened the Edgeworths' social identity by submerging the authority of the Anglo-Irish within England and the United Kingdom.

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[15] R.B McDowell, "The Age of The United Irishmen: Revolution And the Union, 1794-1800," in *The New History of Ireland* : *Volume IV, Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800*, ed. T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 362.
[16] Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 137.
[17] Susan B. Egenolf, "Maria Edgeworth in Blackface: Castle Rackrent and the Irish Rebellion of 1798," *ElH* 72, no. 4 (2005):862.
[18] Brian Hollingworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing: Language, History, Politics* (Houndsmills: MacMillian Press LTD, 1997), 39.
[19] Ibid., 3.

It is at this moment of anxiety that *Castle Rackrent* is completed and published. According to Marilyn Butler, the first part of *Castle Rackrent* was composed 1794-5 and the "Condy part and the complete written version were composed in the years 1796-8, when Ireland's endemic local unrest became politicized, and far more threatening to an England at war with revolutionary France."[20] Hollingworth goes on to suggest that critics need to note "the intellectual and psychological turmoil" experienced by the Edgeworths "between 1798 and 1801.[21] The Edgeworths' daily existence was unstable because of the threat of violence, and their social existence was unstable because as part of the Protestant ascendency their social position was threatened by the possibility of an Irish Catholic revival.[22] Egenolf claims that Edgeworth's use of the servant voice "reveals hidden fears of a destabilizing force."[23]

Written during turbulent times, both *Castle Rackrent* and *Caleb Williams* have to do with instability. It makes sense that the servant is a focus of these texts, since servants are fluctuating figures that incite fear and anxiety because of their adaptable nature. The concerns and anxieties raised by revolution and social unrest are pertinent to my discussion of the servant since all are connected to issues of power and oppression, hierarchy and the leveling or destabilization of the social structure, the rights of the ruling and the ruled, and equality. Servants naturally invoke these topics. They are lower-class or at least different-class figures in the home of their masters, existing within a power relationship that is hierarchically structured and can be potentially leveled, as well as figures that can be abused and oppressed. But they can also abuse and oppress in their

[20] Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, 5.
[21] Hollingworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing*, 43.
[22] McDowell, "The Age of The United Irishmen: Revolution and the Union, 1794-1800," 106.
[23] Egenolf, "Maria Edgeworth in Blackface," 847.

own manner. Thady and Caleb as servants and as servants drawn from the lower class represent the danger of social upset or anarchy. The anxiety surrounding servants is connected to, and increased by, historical social changes, such as the 1798 Rebellion and the French Revolution.

Larger political the servant since the nation was often discussed in terms of family relationships, and the servant is a figure within the family. Famous examples include John Locke's *The Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1690) written after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), written in response to the French Revolution. Similar to the family, the master-servant relationship is also a metaphor for social relationships. For instance Pamela Clemit writes of Godwin's novel: "Stripping away the external documentation of Fielding and the naturalistic social detail of Richardson, he exposes the power relations at the heart of late eighteenth-century society."[24] And Robert Tracey sees Edgeworth's master and servant as representing the relationship between colonizers and colonized.[25] Bearing in mind that the master-servant contract is a metaphor for larger social and even religious issues, my discussion here will focus on what is often referred to as "the servant problem" and the cultural and historical ideas about servants in the eighteenth century.

An examination of conduct books written for servants in the eighteenth century reveals the desire to control servant voices. These texts recommend verbal loyalty and

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[24] Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 69.

[25] Robert Tracy, "'The Cracked Lookingglass of a Servant': Inventing the Colonial Novel," in *Rereading Texts/Rethinking Critical Presuppositions Essays in Honour of H.M. Daleski*, ed. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Leona Toker, and Shuli Barzilai (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 1997), 197-212.

submission to sanction the master class's power and self-image. The ideal servant is quiet and humble, speaking only to show acquiescence, submission, gratitude, and loyalty. Ironically, by definition conduct books encourage servants to read, and therefore to become educated, and to develop an independent voice, even while they attempt to dictate the servant's voice and limit any kind of speech that undermines the employer's authority. In Eliza Haywood's *A Present for a Servant Maid* (1744), sections entitled "Telling Family Affairs," "Secrets among Fellow-Servants," "Tale-bearing," "Lying," "Giving Saucy Answers," and "Giving Advice too freely," suggest the way in which these books attempt control the voice by dictating who the servant speaks to, how the servant speaks, and what the servant speaks about.[26] Servants are required to limit their voices, not only as to how much is spoken, but also in tone and the expression of individual opinions. The *Footman's Guide*, written in the 1800s, imposes silence as well as invisibility. Servants are told to respectfully acknowledge but not speak to their masters in public, to work in silence, and to consider themselves absent when they inevitably observe private family interactions.[27]

Concerned with the servant's capacity to witness and repeat information, Haywood's *A Present for a Servant-Maid* explains:

> The smallest and most trivial action there should never escape your lips, because you cannot be a judge what are really such, and what are the contrary. Things that may seem to you matters of perfect indifference, may happen to prove of great importance to those concerned in them, and sometimes a single word, inadvertently let fall, may so coincide with what was said by others, as to give

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[26] Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant Maid* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1744). http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr
[27] James Williams, *The Footman's Guide* (London: Dean and Munday, n.d.), 167.

> room to prying people for conjectures, which you are not aware of.[28]

Haywood's *Present* describes an ignorant servant who means to keep the secrets she is told to keep but says too much. The suggestion is that the servant can be dangerous—but certainly not purposely so, and far from the diabolical servant of Edgeworth's letter. *A Friendly Gift for Servants and Apprentices,* written in 1821, similarly takes up the issue of servant storytelling:

> Never pry into the affairs of the family in which you live. Especially, never read any person's letters, or written papers, without their leave; nor listen at doors, or any where else, to overhear private conversations. Resolve never to speak any ill of your master and mistress, and their family.[29]

There is a shift in the tone and indeed the subject in these two conduct books written seventy-seven years apart as the servant becomes a self-interested and possibly treacherous spy. *A Friendly Gift* was written after the publication of *Caleb Williams*, which "was one of the literary sensations of the 1790s," and which appeared in "Irish and American editions in 1795," and was then turned into a play in 1796.[30] According to Gary Handwerk and A.A. Markley, the play, *The Iron Chest* by George Colman, "had to transform the confessional format of Caleb's narration into dramatic dialogue,"[31] suggesting an increased focus on the master-servant conflict. Perhaps suggesting the influence of *Caleb Williams* and the expansion of the cultural anxiety about servants, *A Friendly Gift* suggests an increased paranoia about servants who might be intentionally seeking information and maliciously speaking ill rather than accidentally revealing family

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[28] Haywood, *Present*, 13.
[29] *A Friendly Gift for Servants and Apprentices* (New York: Samuel Wood and Sons, 1821), 18.
[30] Gary Handwerk and A.A. Markley, introduction to *Caleb Williams* by William Godwin (Canada: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2000), 37.
[31] Ibid., 37.

secrets. Godwin and Edgeworth, chronologically in the middle between these two conduct books, already begin to show the increased paranoia of the latter conduct book. *Castle Rackrent* and *Caleb Williams* reveal a greater anxiety over the servant's narrative capacity then is visible in the text of Richardson's *Pamela* (published in 1740 and thus near the time of Haywood's conduct book). Pamela's narrative capacity may have been offensive to the upper classes and even possibly dangerous because of the value it gives the lower-class Pamela, but she is supposed to be an admirable character, a virtuous heroine, and a paragon among women. Neither Thady nor Caleb can make a similar claim.

The perspectives that Edgeworth and Godwin may have brought to their novels can be conjectured through their pedagogical writing since as Mitzi Myers observed, texts on education embodied "changing ideas about servants and their training."[32] Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (1798) includes a section on servants that opens with an example of a servant-child interaction. In the short illustrative anecdote, the maid gives the child sugar, asks for a kiss, and tells the child to lie about the sugar when his mother asks about his supper.[33] The scene sketched demonstrates Edgeworth's concerns: about children learning immoral behavior from servants; about servants gaining the affections properly belonging to parents, destabilizing authority and proper household order; about servants affecting the physical well being of children; and about the undermining of middle-class ideas concerning self-restraint. Also implied is the fear that children will learn to love indulgence, rather than discipline and restraint. To avoid such anarchy, Edgeworth

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[32] Mitzi Myers, "'Servants as They are Now Educated': Women Writers and Georgian Pedagogy," *Essays in Literature* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 51.
[33] Maria Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London, 1798), 119.
http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr

stresses the need for complete separation of children and servants. In *Practical Education* she goes on to say that children should not even read about servant-child contact because it would suggest a relationship that they should not be aware exists.[34] Her suggestions serve to silence and erase the servant. Parents are told to control the activities of both servants and children to avoid any interactions (verbal or physical), and advised that an authority figure always be present when a servant must be seen by a child. In fact, followed correctly, her system would assure that for a child, "a servant's speaking to them would be an extraordinary event to be recorded in the history of the day."[35] The paranoia surrounding the servant's presence is often concerned with lower-class speech, and reveals the fear that the servant's voice would contaminate children by communicating different class values. Celestina Wroth says that the fear of contact was focused on the stories servants, especially women, told. These folktales and fairytales about "fairies, ghost, goblins and witches" were derived from "older narrative forms of widespread popularity that reform-minded spokespersons of the middle classes were now beginning to censure."[36] The narrative tradition of servants represented a counterculture embodying the "beliefs" and "worldviews" of the lower class. The voice and the ability to inform and shape the employer's children blur the clear boundaries of class. This ability to influence young masters is one of the ways that Thady seizes authority.

Godwin's *The Enquirer; Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (1797), a tract on education, also begins with complaints about servants corrupting children, but quickly shifts. Godwin focuses on the servant's condition, the social

[34] Ibid., 319.
[35] Ibid., 133.
[36] Celestina Wroth, "'To Root the Old Woman out of Our Minds': Women Educationists and Plebian Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 2 (2006):59

structure that oppressed the servant; and he directly criticizes the behavior conduct books required of servants. He condemns the idea that the servant's situation may be ameliorated by kindness or by treating him or her as a child. For Godwin, the real problem is the subjective position of the servant: "Yet, not withstanding these things, the rich pretend to wonder at the depravity and vices of their servants. They are astonished that they should enter into a confederacy of robbers, and strip the houses of their masters, even at the risk of the gallows."[37] Almost as if in conversation with Edgeworth, Godwin argues that separation of servants from children teaches children to view servants as inferior and themselves as superior. He goes on to argue that corrupt servants are created by masters who keep servants uneducated and in terrible living conditions below stairs while the family enjoys wealth. Moreover, Godwin highlights a disparity between the idea of servants as family members and the actual treatment of servants.

Rather than advocating the concerns of the master as Edgeworth's writings do, Godwin's essay gives voice to the servant. He reverses conduct books by taking up the lessons of the directions and reflecting how servants might view the behavior expected of them. Projecting the servant's feelings, he writes,

> they must blunt every finer feeling of the mind, and sit down in their obscure retreat, having for the constant habits of their reflections, slavery and contentment. They can scarcely expect to emerge from their depression. They must look to spend the best years of their existence in a miserable dependence.[38]

He further echoes conduct books and responds for the servant:

> He has nothing to do, but obey; you have nothing to do, but command. At every

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[37] William Godwin, *Enquirer; Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (London, 1797), 209. http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr

[38] Ibid., 209.

> Moment he is to be called this way, to be sent that, to run, to ride, to be the vehicle and conduit-pipe to affairs, of which he has neither participation nor knowledge. His great standing rule is to conform himself to the will of his master. His finishing perfection is to change himself into a mere machine.[39]

Godwin notes that the obedient unquestioning nature of their jobs strips servants of their humanity, identities and souls because they are expected to work and produce with silent and invisible efficiency, like a "mere machine." In his tract, he calls for a more human relationship between the served and the serving. Godwin wants to alter the master-servant relationship to one of equality where servants have voices and can be "companion[s]," "partakers of our counsel," and "coadvisers"; and instead censors masters' voices by suggesting that commands be "few, simple and unoppressive."[40] Ironically, Falkland extends this humane treatment and sense of equality to Caleb Williams, but in the novel it becomes a catalyst that encourages Caleb's tyrannical behavior.

In his tract, Godwin reflects on the disparity between servants and masters, noting the abuses the household help endure as they are excluded from the family circle. He writes about the servant: "His finishing perfection is to change himself into a mere machine. He has no plan of life, adding the improvement of today to the progress of the day before."[41] Going even further in his sympathies with the servant, Godwin justifies the motivations of dangerous servants as he blames the employing class for their misbehavior: "They are astonished that they should enter into a confederacy of robbers, and strip the houses of their masters, even at the risk of the gallows."[42] Just as in *The*

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[39] Ibid., 210.
[40] Ibid., 211.
[41] Ibid., 210.
[42] Ibid., 209.

Enquirer, in *Caleb Williams* Godwin tries to show how the limitations and the discrepancies between themselves and the family corrupt servants and encourage tyrannical behavior. Indeed, *Caleb Williams* ends with the idea that Falkland and Caleb were both mistaken because they were not more sincere with each other.

These brief examples of Edgeworth's and Godwin's discussions of servants suggest that their depictions of the master-servant relationship, of servants, and of servant voices would be very different. But in many ways Godwin's Caleb is in line with Edgeworth's pedagogical writing. Thady is dangerous, morally questionable, naive, and in need of benevolent patriarchal guidance. Similarly, Caleb's voice, the importance of his thoughts and psychology, and the equality with which Falkland treats him also concur with the politics Godwin voices in *The Enquirer*. And yet the similarities between the effects these two voices have as well as the threat of rising that Thady represents, which is also visible in Caleb, suggests an anxiety in the text of Godwin's novel that conflicts with his apparent radical politics and writing on servants.

These novels both have servant narrators but Thady and Caleb are different kinds of servants with very different voices and purposes for narrating. Thady is illiterate and speaks with humility, real or feigned; he is clearly a lower-class figure, as indicated by his dialect; because of the "rhythm and syntax…it seems possible to 'hear' an Irish inflection"[43] in Thady's speech. He figures in the narrative but he never presents himself as the subject. The reader must gather his story from the background, piecing together the information revealed in the tale he narrates about the Rackrent masters. He claims to be

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[43] Marilyn Butler, introduction to *Castle Rackrent* by Maria Edgeworth (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992), 12.

narrating "the Memoirs of the Rackrent Family" "for 'the honour of the family,'"[44] telling the story of the various masters of Castle Rackrent: Sir Patrick and his indulgent liberal lifestyle; Sir Murtagh and his unsuccessful lawsuits pursued at the expense of the estate; Sir Kit and his sequestered wife and his many dinners; and Sir Condy, another indulgent and liberal master in the style of Sir Patrick. Thady praises his masters and professes loyalty but as he tells his story he reveals, purposefully or inadvertently, the many faults of these landlords; what emerges is a picture of wasteful and irresponsible masters that have destroyed the estate, which raises the question of his motivations that so many critics have attempted to untangle.

In Edgeworth's novel the servant is illiterate, superstitious, seemingly conniving and manipulative but simultaneously apparently naïve as he gossips about the family and the family's affairs. In contrast, Caleb is educated, which allows him to become a secretary, a high-ranking position within the household and the servant hierarchy; moreover, his master treats him like an equal. Unlike Thady, who uses "the 'equivocating, exculpatory or supplicatory' language of the lifelong inferior," Caleb speaks with command and confidence about himself.[45] He places himself at the center of the text, as the protagonist of the tale that is about to begin. Caleb assertively tells his account and defends himself against the story and accusations circulated by his master, a narrative in which Caleb is portrayed as a dishonest, disloyal, and ungrateful servant and as a thief. Caleb's counter-narrative tells of how he becomes Falkland's secretary, which brings him into the home where he notices his master's peculiar behavior. To answer his questions, the steward, Mr. Collins, tells him the story of their master's early life and hostility to a neighboring

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[44] Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, ed. Marilyn Butler (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992), 63. Hereafter cited in text.
[45] Butler, introduction to *Castle Rackrent*, 9.

squire, Mr. Tyrell, a tale that further increases Caleb's curiosity about Falkland. To satisfy his curiosity, Caleb begins to observe his master; consequently he discovers the truth of Falkland's role in Tyrell's death. Asserting as well as defending himself, Caleb explains his thought process and justifies his behavior throughout the story, to prove his virtue and innocence despite his schemes for discovering the secret. Caleb's illicitly acquired private knowledge makes him a danger to Falkland and traps him in the master-servant relationship, making the two men adversaries.

By using a servant's voice as the narrative voice of these novels, Godwin and Edgeworth similarly subvert cultural constructs and empower the servant, claiming and allowing a space and identity for the lower-class figure. While authorizing the servant's voice, both novels also depict the ruling class anxiety about the challenge posed by the speaking servant. Both texts fail to reconcile the upper-class point of view with the lower-class voice. Both novels finally suggest that the freedom gained by the servant results in a dangerous authority for the servant.

The problem of servant intimacy and the power of observation, which give the servant agency, are clearly visible in both *Castle Rackrent* and *Caleb Williams*. Through surveillance Thady and Caleb escape their subjugated position, blur the master-servant hierarchy, and become a threat to their masters. By possessing the power to observe the servant begins to possess the authority of the upper class and to confuse the boundaries of authority in the family. Leonore Davidoff writes of the power belonging to dominant groups that, "it has been increasingly recognized that one of the most potent of these advantages is having power to observe, to pronounce, and to gaze on other human beings

as subjects."[46] Edward Said similarly associates the power of observation, interpretation, and judging with the colonizer.[47] And yet it is a power often usurped from the ruling class. In contrast to Davidoff and Said, Diana Fuss claims that "the privilege of the Imperial Subject— [is] to see without being seen."[48] But this privilege also belongs to servants. In both texts observing and being in the family informs the servant's voice. Knowledge of the family leads to a narrative act, opening up a space for the servant to tell his own story, to shift between authority and servility, and thus to use the ambiguity and fluidity that empowers him at the expense of the master. Thady does not have the class ambiguity of Pamela or Caleb but his position in the family and the fact that he is more attached to the estate than the masters (absentee landlords), put him in a central authoritative position within both the text and the Rackrent family. Watching the master and being a servant gives Caleb too, a voice: without his experience in the Falkland household, he would not have a reason to tell his story or a story to tell. Both Caleb and Thady, on the plot level, author the texts that we are reading. In doing so, they become important and central to the texts because they are the source of the narratives and because they become individuals with personal stories. Being a narrator frees Thady and Caleb (at least temporarily) from the subjugated servant position.

Discussing the ambiguity that the colonization process creates in the colonized, Fuss writes: "The colonizer projects what we might call identification's 'alienation effect' onto the colonized who is enjoined to identify and to disidentify simultaneously with the same

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[46] Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995), *2.*
[47] Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no.2 (Winter 1989): 205-225.
[48] Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 145.

object, to assimilate but not to incorporate, to approximate but not to displace."[49] Similarly, existing both in and outside the family, identifying with the employing class while also being a stranger, makes the servant indecipherable. Both Godwin's and Edgeworth's novels show the servant's ability to be on both sides of two social worlds, destroying the apparent safety of the difference the master wants to believe exists between himself and the servant. The servant sees all because of his intimacy in the family and the nature of his job, usurping the upper-class privilege of seeing, and inverting social prerogative. This capacity to replace and become the master is exactly the fear that Godwin and Edgeworth represent in their novels. Caleb and Thady reject the silent and submissive model of servant behavior. Their voices are immediately unsettling because of the way they demand to be noticed; they defy the boundaries delineated in conduct books.

In *Caleb Williams* and *Castle Rackrent*, servants' voices wield two kinds of power. The first is the threat posed by the capacity to talk about the employer. Using information accessed through their position in the family, these narrators expose their masters' secrets, as well as control their masters' stories and their masters' images. The second form of power is the ability to assert themselves as subjects of the narratives, displacing and replacing the masters as central to the texts. In both instances the servants obscure class and family boundaries (as well as altering the master-servant relationship). They obscure their subjugated position as they distort the masters' unquestioned superiority through the destructive stories they tell. The blurring created through narration creates ambiguity and leads, in the plot, to a kind of replacement. Both Thady and Caleb, to different degrees, assume the master's power and position. Thady tells the Rackrent

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[49] Ibid., 146.

family history, but simultaneously and surreptitiously narrates his and his family's story, in which they rise at the expense of his master. Caleb's voice is immediately much more powerful as a counter-narrative: Caleb is challenging Falkland's veracity. In entering into an argument over the truth of his master's story, Caleb is able to portray himself as a hero and transform the traditional hero (the master) into a villain.

By narrating, both Thady and Caleb create a space for the usually silent and invisible servant, just as Pamela does when she narrates her story through letters. Unlike Pamela, however, these narrators are a threat to the master. While Mr.B often complains that Pamela is sending stories out of the family, ultimately her actions have little effect on him. As a paragon Pamela is the epitome of what an upper-class woman should be. She does not alter the requirements of the genteel woman, and she upholds the idea that women with social status are virtuous. Thady and Caleb are questionable characters that gain authority. Their ability to have power and the stories they tell about their flawed masters challenge the traditional notions of class and family by revealing the insignificance of those categories. By assuming authority Caleb and Thady question social boundaries. The narratives also disturb the national domestic ideal by revealing private truths that contradict the family's ideal public façade, challenging the connection between rank and virtue and destabilizing the master status.[50] Thady exposes the lack of virtue in the Rackrent masters, just as Caleb shows Falkland's moral failings; but Caleb goes even further and tries to show that he is in fact the virtuous one. In Edgeworth's and

[50] See Michael McKeon for a discussion on virtue and class. According to McKeon the novel grew out of a need to "mediate" instabilities of social categories and its relation to the "moral state of its members"; and grew due to a "change in attitudes about how truth and virtue are most authentically signified." Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). Falkland and the Rackrents are aristocracy and not from the middle-class but Edgeworth and Godwin were both middle-class writers and the ideals of their novels are those of the middle-class. Moreover, as Ian Watt, Michael McKeon and Nancy Armstrong point out, middle-class ideas and values were at the center of the novel, which itself was a vehicle for middle-class ideology.

Godwin's novels, the servant's co-existence in the master's private space, the stories Thady and Caleb can tell, and the information they can utilize in interacting with their employers jeopardize the master's status.

"Honest Thady," "old Thady," "poor Thady": Claiming a Submissive Authority

Thady repeatedly claims his servant identity. He opens his narrative by saying, "My real name is Thady Quirk, though in the family I have always been known by no other than 'honest Thady', — afterwards, in the time of Sir Murtagh, deceased, I remember to hear them calling me 'old Thady', and now I'm come to 'poor Thady'" (Edgeworth, 65). Thady emphasizes his submissive, humble and weak status by calling the reader's attention to the epithets: "honest Thady," "old Thady," and "poor Thady." In talking about himself after saying that he is going to tell the Rackrent history, Thady replaces his master as the true subject of the narrative. Yet with the humble persona he depicts, he retains his subservient status. Similarly, throughout the novel, he controls without changing his subjugated role.

Thady claims his authority from a position of helplessness and weaknesses, creating a contradiction that many critics have spent a great deal of time trying to solve. For instance, Elizabeth Harden writes of Thady that "his freshness, his innocence spring from the uniformity of his temperament and an incomparable disposition to be happy with his lot in life."[51] In contrast, James Newcomer considers Thady "artful rather than artless, unsentimental rather than sentimental, shrewd rather than obtuse, clear-headed

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[51] Elizabeth Harden, "Transparent Thady Quirk," in *Family Chronicles: Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent,* ed. Coilin Owens (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1987), 88.

rather than confused, calculating rather than trusting."[52] Harden and Newcomer represent the two opposing critical views of Thady: as a naïve and loyal servant who does not recognize the implications of the tale that he is telling, or as a savvy and conniving servant with his own interests at heart. I would combine the two views and argue that Thady's attachment to his role in life has to do with the authority he derives from being a servant. Thady sees the advantages available to the loyal servant (different from the ones the conduct books promise) and he does not want to change his position, rather, he embraces the opportunities it offers him to narrate, telling his story and creating the master, making himself master or master-like. At times Thady uses his position to manipulate his master, but loyalty is not a façade behind which Thady hides and secretly plots against his master—the tactic used by his son Jason.

Embracing the incongruity in Thady's persona, I suggest that focusing on the servant identity helps to move beyond the question of Thady's complicity in the downfall of the Rackrents. The focus becomes instead the ambiguity surrounding Thady, and the ambiguity from which he finds power—intentionally or not. Robert Tracy describes *Castle Rackrent* as "a consistently ambiguous novel, both in subject and in technique";[53] he points out that "Thady Quirk, the servant-narrator of *Castle Rackrent*, tells a story which we must simultaneously read in two different ways: as the account of a deferential servant and as the account of a servant who is actually master."[54] I agree that Thady must always be read in two ways: as "deferential" and as dominating, not necessarily as a master but certainly master-like. Being a loyal servant brings Thady into the family and

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[52] James Newcomer, "The Disingenuous Thady Quirk," in *Family Chronicles: Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent*, ed. Coilin Owens (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1987), 85.
[53] Tracy "'The Cracked Lookingglass of a Servant'," 198.
[54] Ibid., 200.

gives him authority. Thady is never openly hostile to his master although he is often a threat; rather he stays with the family until the death of the last Rackrent. For Tracy such a reading suggests that Thady is purposefully subversive and threatening; but I would argue that Thady is threatening regardless of whether he is a schemer or truly loyal. Regardless of intention, intimacy and knowledge give the servant the ability to destabilize the family, because knowledge and information about the family blur the master-servant boundaries. The ability to see, hear, possess and use knowledge about the family is an alternative form of power available to the servant. Whereas Jason seeks the master's position, Thady adamantly holds on to the servant's position and the servant's form of power that allows him to be master-like while not becoming the master. In this text, the servant's power is a more potent form of authority. Although Thady never relinquishes, or shifts from, his servant role he is able to access authority and reverse the master-servant relationship. The Rackrent masters are weak, pathetic and at the mercy of Thady. In contrast, despite Thady' claim of being "poor Thady," he is neither weak nor pathetic. Instead, Thady seems to always be in control and fully aware of what is occurring in connection to the estate, a stark contrast to the unaware masters. It is not until the end of the novel, when Thady loses his servant position, that he seems an isolated and vulnerable figure.

Thady is different from other servants to be examined in this project because he does not possess class ambiguity. Exactly the opposite is true; because of his dialect and insistence on being a servant Thady draws clear boundaries between himself and the master. But as a long time servant that has been with the various masters of the Rackrent estate, Thady and the story that only he can tell is a central part of the family. Thady's

allegiance makes him part of the family (ironically what the conduct books promise, but with a different outcome). Given that the Rackrent family is problematic, lacking structure and a responsible, patriarchal center, Thady becomes the center. As the family historian and the only one left who remembers or cares about the Rackrents, Thady is the family. Thady seizes power by speaking when he should remain silent, and by speaking about the family, a subject explicitly prohibited to servants. The need for an editor to try and contain Thady's voice is itself a sign of the power implicit in Thady's storytelling. David W. Ullrich writes, "*Castle Rackrent* configures language as difference and narrative as contested space."[55] Like the conduct books, the editorial voice and the documents it creates paradoxically empower Thady not only because the voice calls attention to itself but also because as Hollingworth argues, "Thady's voice is given status by the critical apparatus which surrounds it."[56] Hollingworth goes on to say, "The Notes and Glossary transform Thady's narrative from 'tale' to social document." [57] Also noting the importance of Thady's voice, Susan Glover points out, a "narrative tension arising from the competition and 'contra-dicting' of two voices, Thady's and that of the

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[55] David W. Ullrich. "'Did the Warwickshire militia…teach the Irish to drink beer, or did they learn from the Irish to drink whiskey?': A Reading of Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent,*" in *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*, ed. Laura Dabundo (Lanham, MD: UP of America, 2000), 84.
[56] Hollingworth*, Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing*, 105
[57] Ibid., 105. Also, I would add that "regional novels" or historical novels, like Edgeworth's, Sydney Owenson's (Lady Morgan) and Sir Walter Scott's, were read as realistic social depictions of a nation, as anthropological-like documents. Marilyn Butler calls Owenson and Scott Edgeworth's successors and claims: "With *Castle Rackrent, '*Tales and Sketches' of the life of a particular locality became an important nineteenth-century form" (Introduction to *Castle Rackrent*, 2). This ethnographic-like element of the novel is also emphasized by the often referred to reaction of King George who reportedly reacted to the novel by saying, "what what—I know something now of my Irish subjects" (quoted in Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, 359). Thady's narrative voice, which could be read as socially real, could also potentially disturb real hierarchies by suggesting that figures like Thady did or could possess his verbal and domestic power. This would explain Edgeworth's decision to attempt to contain his voice with an editorial voice. Similar to the conduct books for servants, which invest masters with all the power, the editorial voice is an attempt to deny the existence of an alternative voice and to retain authority for the educated, upper-class male voice.

Editor";[58] she describes the effect of the two voices as "a struggle for control and authority between the two narrative male voices."[59] This tension mimics the master-servant conflict. The editorial voice tries to create boundaries to control Thady's voice; similarly, the agenda of the conduct books was to create boundaries for the servant. But Thady distorts household boundaries—because of his family-like position, which gives him the proximity to see and hear the family; and because his lengthy term of service has allowed him to accumulate all the fragments that add up to the history of the Rackrent family. Both intimacy with the family and his long-term service inform Thady's voice and allow him to narrate, giving him the final words on the Rackrent family.

"I heard all that was saying within": Informing and Using the Servant's Voice

Thady himself points out the advantages to the servant's position and notes how it informs his voice. Thady can see and hear the comings and goings of the family, which provide the material for his narrative. He says of information he has gained, "All this the butler told me, who was going backwards and forwards unnoticed with the jug, and hot water, and sugar, and all he thought wanting" (Edgeworth, 92). Thady uses his job, his need to be in the house to perform his duties, and his invisibility to gather information. By "pry[ing] into the affairs of the family,"[60] Thady is able to give the exact contents of the letter that leads to the agent's dismissal after he refuses to fill Sir Kit's constant desire for money. As proof of its authenticity, Thady says, "I saw the letter before it was even sealed, when my son copied it" (Edgeworth, 75). He is using his and his son's proximity

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[58] Susan Glover "Glossing the Unvarnished Tale: Contra-dicting Possession in *Castle Rackrent*," *Studies in Philology* 99, no. 3 (2002): 296.
[59] Ibid., 297.
[60] *Friendly Gift*, 18

to the family to keep informed. Later a servant, Mrs. Jane, interrupts Thady when he is about to secretly look at a letter responding to Sir Condy's request for money. Nonetheless, following Mrs. Jane and the letter, he says, "I follows with a slate to make up the window…. And when I went up with the slate, the door having no lock, and the bolt spoilt, was a-jar after Mrs. Jane, and as I was busy with the window, I heard all that was saying within" (Edgeworth 102). A few pages earlier Thady observes and comments on the decrepit conditions of Castle Rackrent, but he does not fix anything, nor does he intend to do so, as his conversation with Mrs. Jane reveals. The episode illustrates the way Thady can use the ruin of the home, just as he uses the dysfunction of the family, to reposition himself as an authority. It is only so he can listen in on the conversation that he takes this moment to mend the window. Ann Gaylin points out, "Servants and other individuals lacking social, economic, or political power often eavesdrop to acquire knowledge."[61] In Thady's case eavesdropping at this particular moment allows him to continue gathering information about the family and to continue narrating. Speaking allows Thady to destabilize the master and to blur his servant position even as he insists on it.

Thady has the ability to understand and use the discourses of both the lower class and the master class. While the editor cannot translate Thady's voice, Thady seems capable of using and easily translating the master class's voice, as when he discusses the law. Glover points out, Thady's voice "does not require translation; his discourse includes very little brogue and shows a surprising facility with legal and technical

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[61] Ann Gaylin, *Eavesdropping in the Novel: From Austen to Proust* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

terminology."[62] In fact, like a good servant, Thady is a part of his master's sphere and can verbally participate. This ability to exist in his and his master's sphere of knowledge is seen when he combines the language of medicine and superstition. Thady says of Sir Kit:

> Though a learned man in the law, he was a little too incredulous in other matters. I warned him that I heard the very Banshee that my grandfather heard under Sir Patrick's window a few days before his death. But Sir Murtagh thought nothing of the Banshee, nor of his cough with a spitting of blood, brought on. (Edgeworth, 71)

In the quotation, and specifically in the last line referring to both the "Banshee" and the "spitting of blood," Thady uses two forms of knowledge, showing he understand both. His dialect and reasoning is full of the language of superstition that educational writers wanted to keep away from children, but as the narrator, he shows that if he is silly for his superstitions, he is nonetheless correct; thus he implies that Sir Kit is intellectually weaker for ignoring the obvious physical and medical evidence. Thady claims validity for himself and his belief system.

The passage quoted above also illustrates how Thady uses his narrative to shift the balance of power by representing himself as wiser or paternal in relation to his "too incredulous" master. This way of altering his relationship to the master is practiced throughout the tale. Although traditionally servants were viewed and treated as children, Thady calls Sir Condy "my white-headed boy," talks about putting him on his knee while telling him stories (invoking the fear seen in the scenario from Edgeworth's *Practical Education* that the servant's voice might transmit the servant's ideas and behaviors to

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[62] Glover, "Glossing the Unvarnished Tale," 304.

children); and he often compares Sir Condy to his own son Jason (Edgeworth 85). These paternal images, just like being wiser than Sir Kit, allow Thady to position himself as an authoritative father-like figure, permitting him to re-imagine the mater-servant relationship. Moreover, his own son's superiority questions the traditional hierarchy set up in conduct books where the lower classes are viewed as ignorant and the upper classes as intellectually superior. Thady corrupts the family and challenges the ideology of the master with a counter discourse; but the use of superstition and fairytales can also be read as dangerous because "Irish folklore terms such as 'fairies,' 'sprites,' and 'brownies' had entered into native parlance as terms loaded with the weight of insurgent and militia activity."[63] Thady's storytelling is a threat on various levels, but it is always indicative of his ability to replace the master, of subverting rules and rulers.

While it foregrounds the power of Thady's voice, *Castle Rackrent* stresses the power of servant gossip and storytelling. Throughout the text there is the sense that a network of servants is creating this story about the family. Thady's final words are: "As for all I have here set down from memory and hearsay of the family, there's nothing but truth in it from beginning to end: that you may depend upon; for where's the use of telling lies about the things which every body knows as well as I do?" (Edgeworth, 121) The "everybody" he is referring to are servants, who, like himself, are observing and telling tales. Their accounts get incorporated into Thady's narrative. The first information

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[63] Susan Egenolf, "Maria Edgeworth in Blackface," 856. Egenolf focuses on the Edgeworth's editorial notes on "fairy-mounts and "Banshees," both of which are part of "Thady's tale of Sir Murtagh's downfall, attributed by Thady to the bad luck incurred by Sir Murtagh for disturbing a fairy-mount." Noting that the fairy-mounts were surrounded by superstition, Egenolf also notes that historical fairy-mounts were of military significance, these functioned as lookouts and were connected to insurgent activity. She suggests that there is a connection between the military function and the superstition surrounding these pieces of land. She further explores this connection by looking at the journal of "the Irish Quaker author Mary Leadbeater" and at a letter from Edgeworth to Mrs. Ruxton written in August 1794. Quoting an example from each of these documents, Egenolf notes the use of folklore terminology to discuss rebel activity.

that we receive about Sir Patrick (the first irresponsible Rackrent Master in Thady's history of the family) is information Thady heard as a boy from his grandfather. Many times Thady turns to his fellow servants for information—for example, in the case of Sir Kit's wife (the wife locked up in the castle by the third generation master in Thady's tale) he says, "I couldn't tell what to make of her; so I left her to herself, and went straight down to the servant's hall to learn something for certain about her…. Sir Kit's own man was tired, but the groom set him a talking at last, and we had it all out before ever I closed my eyes that night" (Edgeworth, 76). He thus learns that Jessica is Jewish. Later the same servant informs him about Sir Kit's hypocritical courting of his wife for her money, and about Sir Kit's and Jessica's fight over a diamond cross that she will not hand over. Similarly, through servants in other homes Thady knows more than Sir Condy about the negative way Sir Condy is perceived by his friends. In his revelations about Sir Kit, Thady undermines the master, especially since the point made is that he cannot get his wife to serve her economic purpose. Thady's information calls into question Sir Kit's economic and social position by revealing the truth of what is going on inside the house. By revealing that the economic power in the household belongs to the wife, the servants destroy the structure of authority in the home both publicly and in the servants' minds. The gossiping shows a deterioration of Sir Kit's authority and is damaging to the master because a man who cannot control his wife cannot control his servants since both (here) are economic relationships for the master's advantage and comfort. Moreover, the information Thady possesses also diminishes the masters because it allows Thady to pity them. For instance, Thady pities Sir Condy for the way he is viewed by outsiders and for his money trouble. Traditionally the master takes pity on the servant and thus brings him

into his home (as in Caleb's case) or benefits him in some other manner because the "poor" servant is somehow deprived. Pity on the servant's part reveals the master as disadvantaged and reverses the master-servant relationship.

Continuing to exert the kind of right belonging to the master class, Thady shapes the master's identity, just as conduct books tried to mold the servant's characteristics. He represents a threat because he has a lot of verbal freedom with, and access to, the masters. Thady uses the proximity to his master and the intimate knowledge he possesses to influence and manipulate his master. He can control Sir Condy's behavior and decisions, another ability that makes Thady feel like the true authority in the family. Through his father-like relationship to, and education of Condy, Thady manages to control the family and the estate, inserting his values and methods. Knowing Sir Condy's habits, Thady approaches him when he's drunk in order to ask him about his "promise of marriage" to Judy, a relative of his: "'It's all over with our poor Judy!' said I, with a heavy sigh, making bold to speak to him one night when he was a little cheerful, and standing in the servant's hall all alone with me, as was often his custom" (Edgeworth, 88). Thady can affect Sir Condy by using what he knows about his tendency to drink and his superstitions to create a situation in which Sir Condy finds himself committed to marrying Judy. Encouraged by his conversation with Thady, Sir Condy flips a halfpenny to decide between Judy and Isabella. Although Thady fails to achieve his goal, since Isabella wins, it is evident that he is able to influence his master: his move accelerates Sir Condy's decision. The method of determining itself has apparently also been Thady's teaching, another way in which Thady constructs the master's identity. He writes, "there was no such thing as making him unsay one of these sort of vows which he had learned to

reverence when young, as I well remember teaching him to toss up for bog-berries on my knee" (Edgeworth, 90).

By teaching Condy to flip a coin to make a decision rather than using rational thought, Thady is spreading his servant culture of superstition to the Rackrent family and imposing his values on Sir Condy, making the master like him. Conduct books perform a reverse indoctrination by teaching servants religious and rational thinking. The teaching of "fairy practices" by old women servants to young children was a way of gaining power. "What better way for a country servant, especially an old woman servant, to gain psychological power over her master's children than to impress them with the powers of magical forces within the household, known to her in a way unavailable to more educated members of the household?", writes Mary Ellen Lamb.[64] She points out that "by 1800 popular culture was for the 'lower classes'"; the superstition and "fairy practices" that are part of Thady's repertoire are by the time of the novel specifically associated with the lower class.[65] Lamb specifically points out the way servants could use storytelling to replace the ideology of the family with their own point of view, as Thady does with Sir Condy, gaining the "psychological power" discussed by Lamb.[66] The servant's ability to corrupt the family and master class is further exemplified when Thady tells Sir Condy "stories of the family, and the blood from which he was sprung, and how he might look forward, if the *then* present man should die without childer, to being at the head of the Castle Rackrent estate" (85). Of course Thady as a servant is well aware that Sir Kit and his wife (who is locked up in Castle Rackrent) will never have children. Thady's

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[64] Mary Ellen Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in A Midsummer Night's Dream," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 282.
[65] Ibid., 278.
[66] Ibid., 282.

relationship with Sir Condy recalls the anxiety about servants' ability to corrupt children by teaching them vulgar and immoral behavior, frightening them with superstitions, or contaminating their minds with irrational tales and ideas. Thady's influence on the final Rackrent master fulfills the fears described in Edgeworth's educational writing. Thady's voice with his dialect and his naiveté (whether feigned or real), displaying elements of folktales and superstitions which seems a relic of the past, is a representation of this older servant culture that would have been considered dangerous. Thady's voice is saturated with the knowledge of the "other" (the lower-class superstition associated with servants). Thady is threatening because he can claim superiority for his knowledge and ways.

The novel illustrates the danger posed by a story like *Castle Rackrent* (spoken by a servant) when Thady shapes parts of the plot by repeating what he knows about his master. He tells of meeting and talking with a stranger at the celebration for Sir Condy's election to parliament. It is Thady's information and introduction to Jason that allows the man to buy all of Sir Condy's debts. Thady claims that drinking has made him forget what occurred in his meeting with the "suspicious" stranger and this silence in the text leaves the reader wondering if Sir Condy's final downfall is the servant's inadvertent or deliberate work: "of what passed after this I'm not sensible, for we drank Sir Condy's good health and the downfall of his enemies till we could stand no longer ourselves" (Edgeworth, 98). However, the passage is full of insinuations and an aggressive metaphor that compares Sir Condy's reprieve from debt collectors to "ducks in the chicken-yard, just after their heads are cut off by the cook, running round and round faster than when alive" (Edgeworth, 97). This moment makes Thady appear particularly menacing and sneaky because he is very well aware of the fact that his master's situation is dire. He is

sharing that information and he is possibly using it to make a deal for his son's economic maneuverings. Regardless of intention, the servant's intimacy makes the master vulnerable.

The decline of the family and what Thady learns through access to information allows his son Jason to take the first step towards acquiring the Rackrent estate and replacing Sir Condy. Discussing the acquisition of Jason's first land, which he buys from Sir Kit, Thady says, "…with this the agent gave me a hint, and I spoke a good word for my son, and gave out in the country that nobody need bid against us" (Edgeworth, 74). Through another servant Thady is able to get privileged information from private correspondence about the amount of money his master was in need of and to manipulate the situation so as to help his son. Thady prevents other offers on the land and speaks to the master or the appropriate person (whom he can presumably access because of his position in the household) so that Jason's low bid, which fulfills Sir Kit's immediate need, is accepted. That is not to say that a partnership between Thady and Jason has been the case throughout the book, information that cannot be ascertained because Thady is the only source of information available to the reader. Thady helps Jason to become a tenant, a position that is still in many ways in the service of the estate, a point that is made in the era of Sir Murtagh Rackrent. As the reader is told, with this mistress the tenants are required to provide the linen and food for the estate, and like good servants, to put their own needs second to that of the masters. At this particular moment of father-son collusion, Thady's goal is different from the one that Jason reveals as the novel progresses.

"As I have lived so will I die, true and loyal to the family": Clinging to Loyalty

Thady does not want to lose or exchange his form of power for the kind of social rising that Jason envisions, which is achieved through education and similarities with the master. Thady's problem with Jason is that they see different ways of achieving importance. While Thady poses a threat, Thady and Jason do not seem as closely tied as Newcomer suggests.[67] Jason's ambiguity and proximity to the family are similar to Thady's but Jason's purposes threaten Thady's authority by removing him from his central, powerful position, a point made particularly clear at the end of the novel. David Richter argues: "Thady cannot envision himself as anything else, so that his son's claim to the Rackrent lands carries with it not a triumph over his class oppressors but the irreparable betrayal of the only social system he has known."[68] Similarly, David O'Shaughnessy suggests that Thady's loyalty results from a fear of losing his identity: "He cannot comprehend the reversal of the master/servant relationship and, in the upheaval this will result in, fears exclusion from the new order or even total loss of self."[69] I would go further and suggest that indeed there is a fear of losing identity but that it is precisely the fear of no longer being able to reverse the master-servant relationship that Thady also fears—of reversing it in the manner in which he, unlike Jason, has done up until the end of the novel.

Jason also relies on and utilizes his servant identity—in fact by becoming the Rackrent agent (an employee and servant of the Rackrent masters). Thady suggests the new position is attained because Jason has privately corresponded with Sir Kit. Jason

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[67] Newcomer, "The Disingenuous Thady," 82.
[68] David Richter, "Speaking Subalterns and Scribbling Colonists: Narrative Voice in *Castle Rackrent*," http://qcpages.qc.edu/ENGLISH/Staff/richter/rackrent.html (accessed May 4, 2006).
[69] David O'Shaughnessy, "Ambivalence in *Castle Rackrent*," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 25, no. 1-2 (1999): 432.

possesses Thady's ambiguity because of his personal knowledge of the family and, in addition, his education. Throughout the novel we receive hints of Jason's scheming to increase his access and status in the Rackrent household. By the end, Jason has bought the Lodge and manages the affairs of the estate, and is Sir Condy's principle creditor, which allows him to force Sir Condy into selling him the Rackrent estate. This particular moment in the novel is significant in differentiating between Thady's and Jason's agendas. Like his father, Jason takes advantage of Sir Condy's weakness for drink, but he uses this advantage to force Sir Condy into signing over the estate. In contrast, Thady wanted Condy to marry Judy, raising his family and accessing the Rackrent status without altering his own position.[70]

Several times throughout the text Thady complains about Jason and disconnects himself from Jason's actions; ultimately Thady's voice and values are also at odds with Jason. Thady wants to enjoy the economic perquisites of service and the servant's ability to take control of the family and household from below, while Jason, like Caleb

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[70] Like Jason's rise, the wives threaten his control of the house and therefore this is one of the places where Thady tends to be critical. Although he praises Sir Murtagh Rackrent while pointing out all his faults and ineffectiveness as a lawyer, he only complains, "that the new man did not take after the old gentleman" (68). But he transfers this criticism to the wife and openly criticizes her saying, "I made the best of a bad case and laid it all at my lady's door, for I did not like her any how" (68). His complaints about Sir Murtagh's wife reveal that she is economical and business-like, putting an end to the wasteful lifestyle that gave the servant and tenants access to wine, whiskey, and fun; instead, she lives cheaply at the expense of the tenants. Yet it is clear from Thady's narrative that she does not deserve all of Thady's criticism. As Thady tells us, she imposes the same kind of strictness on herself as on the servants, and her management is an attempt to make up for her husband's waste. Thady himself has to admit, "I must say for her, she made him the best of wives, being a very notable stirring woman, and looking close to everything" (68). In contrast, of the third wife, Isabella, he says "she was, when we came to know her better, very liberal in her housekeeping, nothing at all of the skin-flint in her; she left everything to the housekeeper; and her own maid, Mrs Jane…. " (91). His compliment about her liberality and the servants' roles in running the house emphasize that Thady dislikes the wives because he loses control with their entrance into the family. As the ones in charge of the households, women/wives would have dealt with the servants and it is their management of the household that would have allowed or prohibited the servant from benefiting from the family's wealth. There is self-interest in Thady's love of the family that stresses the servant's otherness to the family that the conduct books are often trying to control—after all Thady benefits from the Master's reckless use of the estate. Thus Thady is not dangerous because he is trying to replace the master and literally take over the house, but because he wants to control from below and live a leisured lifestyle using the estate as a source for these luxuries.

Williams, is interested in social mobility. In fact, in the opening of the narrative Thady says of Jason, "he is a high gentleman, and never minds what poor Thady says, and having better than fifteen hundred a year, landed estate, looks down upon honest Thady," giving a sense that what Thady regrets is precisely his loss of control of the head of the family (Edgeworth, 66). In the final scenes of the novel Thady emerges as a servant attached to and protective of his master. Thady stays with Sir Condy and tries to make him feel better by telling him stories. Thady clings to his servant position, and even attempts to collect funds to help Sir Condy after he has lost the estate. With Jason in place Thady loses his servant identity and his paternal, patriarchal position in the household. At the end of the novel, Thady is a servant without a place or a master, and the image that we are left with is of a tired, weak and disconnected old man. As the Rackrent family begins its final and quick descent, Thady becomes less ambiguous and less powerful—and it becomes hard to read him as dangerous. With the loss of the family there is a loss of information, of voice, and of narrative ability. The only other moment in the text when Thady seems weakened occurs when the house is empty. In those moments Thady is described as "moping" and he says: "I took myself to the servants' hall in the evening to smoke my pipe as usual, but missed the bit of talk we used to have there sadly, and ever after was content to stay in the kitchen and boil my little potatoes, and put up my bed there" (Edgeworth, 99). Thady loses his servant "talk" and the source of his narrative, suggesting that a loss of the family is connected to a loss of narrative and thus a loss of power. Yet he is still a servant and a letter from the butler allows the narrative to continue. With the death of the final Rackrent, Thady loses his central position.

In *Castle Rackrent*, there are two ways of using ambiguity. Like Jason the servant can strive to own and become the master. Or, like Thady, the servant can reverse the dynamics of the relationship and control without rising. This dissertation argues that Thady's desire to achieve authority from below, to maintain his ambiguity, is more powerful than rising—a point that we start to see in *Caleb Williams*. When Caleb becomes like his master at the conclusion of the novel, he loses his connection to power. Caleb, like Thady, is ambiguous, but he is also like Jason because he is educated. Furthermore, like Jason, Caleb tries to rise socially, but he does so by showing he possesses the virtue and honor associated with the upper-class male rather than by owning the house. In Godwin's fictional servant we see the same kind of gained or claimed authority and possession of a story that is contingent on his relationship with the master. For Caleb as for Thady, service and the servant position is a path to authority. Becoming a servant raises Caleb's status when he becomes Falkland's secretary. Like Thady his position also gives him knowledge about the family that allows him to be central and authoritative—he possesses the true story. His education also makes him more like Falkland. While Thady is illiterate and narrates orally, Caleb can read and write. This translates into a greater ability to rise socially but paradoxically it can also translate to a loss of power.

"My improvement was greater than my condition in life afforded room to expect": Hero, Victim, or Tyrant

As he introduces himself to the reader and discusses the circumstances that have affected his history, Caleb says, "My improvement was greater than my condition in life

afforded room to expect" (Godwin, 4). In complete contrast to the opening of Thady's narrative, Caleb begins his tale by distinguishing himself from those of his class and insisting that he is special. He emphasizes his education and ability to transcend a lower-class status. Recalling Samuel Richardson's Pamela, it is his education, specifically his reading that allows him, and gives him the necessary paradigm, to construct himself as a hero. He writes of the other domestics, "None of them, except myself from the nature of my functions, and Mr. Collins from the antiquity of his service and the respectableness of his character, approached Mr. Falkland" (Godwin, 7). Caleb claims mental superiority because he recognizes what other servants do not comprehend; seeing, understanding and interpreting are available to him because of his perception. His learning gives him greater intimacy with the master. Education brings Caleb closer to Falkland both in the sense that he can more easily watch the private actions of his master, since it lets him attain the position in the household, and closer in the sense of class, which is equally threatening because it makes him feel equal with Falkland and gives him the desire to be the hero of his own narrative. These two kinds of closeness threaten Falkland's status; the conduct books discourage both to protect social hegemony. Both kinds of proximity, location in the home and similarity to the master, blur the master-servant boundaries and give Caleb the power to narrate, allowing him to centralize himself, and to re-imagine his master. Unlike Thady, who clings to his allegedly humble and ignorant servant identity, Caleb has an education that gives him the ability and the desire to elevate himself. The threat that Caleb presents to Falkland and his status are in many ways similar to the ones that Thady presents to the Rackrents. Like Thady, he can reveal the immorality that is behind the façade of honor, he can directly and dangerously influence the master, and he can

take over the master's position of authority. Like Thady's, Caleb's motivations are unclear because of the power he has in relation to the master. Going further than Thady, Caleb is more ambiguous in terms of social status because he uses his reading to portray himself as heroic. As Rachel Brownstein argues about the heroine, "To want to be a heroine is to want to be something special, something else, to want to change, to be changed, and also to want to stay the same."[71] Brownstein goes on to say that the desire to be a heroine "liberates a woman from feeling (and therefore perhaps from being) a victim or a dependent or a drudge, someone of no account."[72] Caleb's heroic self-portrait is a wish to be better, to raise his status.

Caleb Williams opens with the words "My life," Caleb's voice immediately seems authoritative and powerful as he begins to tell his story and insists on his identity with the continuous repetition of the words "I" and "My." The first paragraph of the novel reads:

> My life has for several years been a theatre of calamity. I have been a mark for the vigilance of tyranny, and I could not escape. My fairest prospects have been blasted. My enemy has shown himself inaccessible to intreaties and untired in persecution. My fame, as well as my happiness, has become his victim. Every one, as far as my story has been known, has refused to assist me in my distress, and has execrated my name. I have not deserved this treatment. My own conscience witnesses in behalf of that innocence my pretensions to which are regarded in the world as incredible. There is now however little hope that I shall escape the toils that universally beset me. I am incited to the penning of

[71] Rachel Brownstein, *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). Brownstein herself points the applicability of these ideas to males: " I don't think mine a strictly feminine subject" (xx).
[72] Ibid., xix.

> these memoirs, only by a desire to divert my mind from the deplorableness of my situation, and a faint idea that posterity may by their means be induced to render me a justice which my contemporaries refuse. My story will at least appear to have the consistency, which is seldom attendant but upon truth. (Godwin, 3)

Describing himself as an innocent victim of Falkland's cruelty, Caleb claims his own importance by demanding justice for his "name" and "fame." This insistence on individuality and reputation is subversive for a person from the serving class since "name" and "fame" are things denied to them, as the conduct books illustrate. Caleb is claiming a kind of status that is inconsistent with his station in life. His sense of grandeur continues throughout the novel in the presentation of himself as the lone hero, endlessly pursued, abandoned and abused by everyone else. The individuality and independence he is claiming also imply that his loyalties (unlike a good servant's) are not dedicated to someone else. At the start Caleb does not even name Falkland, but merely refers to him as his enemy, thereby reducing the status of his master, avoiding any possible competition for the role of protagonist, and making sure that his own identity is the main focus. His hope that posterity will render him justice reveals that he views himself as a hero worthy of a history, as it announces the defensive nature of his narrative. Asserting more authority then Thady, Caleb is moving further into the social fluidity characteristic of the servant's identity. Thady becomes central in that sense that he is an authority on the Rackrents; his expertise allow him to shift from his subjugated position, but his persona always remains humble. In contrast, Caleb, in this paragraph as in the novel, shifts back and forth between a position of weakness and of authority. By referring to his

life as a "theatre" he calls attention to the idea that his identity is unfixed, a performance of multiple roles that he can assume at will. Even as Caleb presents himself as the hero of the story that is about to begin, he simultaneously insists on his oppressed state by emphasizing his suffering and his victimized state with strong words like "calamity," "blasted," execrated," and "distress." The heroic role aligns him with the master and the upper class while the victim role suggests his dependent servant status. Nicolle Jordan similarly notes a dual class identity: "Caleb identifies with both his humble compeers and his refined and erudite master."[73] The double identity that he is trying to claim creates an inconsistency between the role of active hero and humble, passive victim. The resulting ambiguity makes him unreadable and thus threatening to Falkland, who fears him; and it makes him threatening because it lets him cross class boundaries. His opposing characteristics and the resulting inconsistencies also undermine his narrative power by suggesting that Caleb's identity, both for Falkland and the reader, is a disingenuous and manipulative performance of roles that he assumes at will. But the diverging roles simultaneously give him a unique perspective. Caleb is the only one who cares to find out the truth of what happens to the Hawkinses and the only one who doesn't assume they must be guilty. It is his lower-class point of view and affinities with the Hawkinses that give him a story and it his upper-class affinities that allow him to tell it.

Although Caleb emphasizes his educational status above his class, he also describes himself as unique and potentially heroic in other ways. Caleb points out his physical strength and describes himself as "somewhat above the middle stature. Without being particularly athletic in appearance or large in my dimensions, I was uncommonly

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[73] Nicolle Jordan, "The Promise and Frustration of Plebian Public Opinion in *Caleb Williams*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 246.

vigorous and active" (Godwin, 4). He creates a physical image that is not intimidating and does not sound dangerous, of agility instead of brute force; like his scholarly accomplishments, Caleb's physical strength is part of his heroic self-depiction and allows him to surpass Falkland as the hero of the novel. The narrative is an attempt to construct an identity that is honest, valiant, strong, educated and intelligent. The image he creates is the opposite of what was dictated to servants in conduct literature, where they are practically asked to forgo a personality in order to adapt themselves to their masters and to be content in the background supporting their master's image. His self-construction combines a good education with unique personal traits and separates him from the typical servant.

Caleb alters the master-servant relationship through the persona he imagines for himself and also by telling his story. He represents himself as physically strong and rational and Falkland as weak, nervous and occasionally, psychologically impaired. The education that Caleb boasts of as the narrative opens, in particular his reading of adventure novels, gives him the knowledge of what it means to be a hero and creates in him the desire to be a literary hero, and a paradigm with which to create himself. Caleb represents himself as a hero by insisting on his uniqueness and intelligence in comparison to other servants and thus his equality with the master, but in an effort to find a story for himself his unique qualities also lead him to persecute his master. To emerge a hero Caleb must diminish the traditional hero, the master. Indeed in seeking out his story, Caleb weakens Falkland in the way he represents him; pursues him to find out his master's secret for the purposes of his own story; and finally forces him to confess to his crimes. Eric Daffron notes that spying and "'familiarity'" with Falkland "subverts social

hierarchy."[74] Jordan also notes Caleb's surveillance: "With his overweening curiosity and relentless inspection of Falkland's demeanour, this ambitious upstart participates in the pursuit of social status."[75] And Pamela Clemit points out that Caleb's search for knowledge is connected to the "destabilization of authority."[76] But, importantly, the destabilization of authority becomes a despotic act. Caleb does indeed blur the master-servant boundaries though the proximity and intimacy he achieves as a servant. In spying and addressing the master as an equal to pry information, Caleb is trying to raise his status while he subjugates the master. He has power over Falkland because of the intimacy provided by his servant role, and he uses it without mercy.

Thompson notes the importance of spying in Godwin's novel and attributes it to the historical moment: "in the 1790's the feeling of being spied upon was not necessarily a paranoid fantasy."[77] Thompson goes on to note Ian Ousby's discussion of the connection between spying and the political trials of the 1790's. Ousby attributes Godwin's portrayal of Caleb as a spy to the government's use of spies, posing as servants, to persecute English radicals. According to Ousby, Godwin's concern over servant spies is seen in "one of his *Letters of Mucius*," where he reflects that the offering of rewards for the conviction of radicals would encourage [his] very footman from behind [his] chair to turn informer."[78] Thompson rightly claims that the "horror of surveillance runs throughout

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[74] Eric Daffron, "'Magnetical sympathy': Strategies of Power and Resistance in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," *Criticism* 37,no.2 (Spring 1995), http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/ps/aboutEbook.do?pubDate=119950322&actionString=DO_DISPLAY_ABOUT_PAGE&inPS=true&prodId=LitRG&userGroupName=cuny_gradctr&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=GALE%7C2220
[75] Jordan, "The Promise and Frustration of Plebian Public Opinion," 254.
[76] Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 55.
[77] Thompson, "Surveillance in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," 176.
[78] Ian Ousby, "'My Servant Caleb': Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and the political trials of the 1790's," *University of Toronto Quarterly: A Canadian Journal of the Humanities* 44 (1974): 50. I would add that the

Caleb Williams."[79] He notes Falkland's tyrannical surveillance and sees it as a form of power, but he does not consider that Caleb, too, is a tyrant in his role as a spy; that he is the first to exert the power of surveillance on Falkland. In fact, many critics insist on seeing Caleb as a victim. Marilyn Butler writes of the published ending: "Caleb breaks Falkland, with intense regret sees him carried off to die, and knows that at last he has done what all along he has sworn not to do—played the role of tyrant."[80] Readings of Caleb as a victim ignore that Caleb is a tyrant because he takes advantage of the power his servant role gives him. And he is a tyrant in light of Falkland's kindness——he's the kind of master that Godwin advocates in *The Enquirer*, who humanizes his servant and is affable. Kenneth W. Graham does observe that as a servant spying on his master "Caleb plays contradictory roles: he is detective and spy, an agent of justice and an intruder into his master's privacy despite an obligation of loyalty";[81] but he also writes of Caleb, "we recognize that any evil he has done is small in comparison with the evil done to him."[82] Caleb is a victim of Falkland in the second half of the novel; from the start he is a victim of the system that creates the relationship of power, but he is simultaneously an oppressor because of the surveillance he utilizes to create his own story.

Caleb's desire to be a hero echoes the eighteenth-century concern that educating the lower classes would give them the desire to be like the upper classes. Jan Fergus discusses servant reading and points out that in the records she studies, servants were the highest proportion of customers "prepared to spend their money on useful works,

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connection to the servant is important both because servants were used in the political trials as Ousby notes and because servant spying was a cultural concern.

[79] Thompson, "Surveillance in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*,"181.

[80] Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 68.

[81] Kenneth W. Graham, "Narrative and Ideology in Godwin's Caleb Williams," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2, no. 3 (April 1990): 226.

[82] Ibid., 224.

designed to improve their positions in the world."[83] She goes on to say that the servant tendency (in comparison to other customers) to buy conduct books "may support common perceptions that servants during this period were attempting to be upwardly mobile."[84] Caleb's education gives him the desire as well as the tools with which to alter the master-servant power dynamic, and gains him entrance into the household. Once Caleb is part of the household, his knowledge of history, in conjunction with knowledge of his master's peculiarities, permits him to speak to Falkland and manipulate and torment him. The education that he receives as a child also allows him to speak to his master as an equal in conversations about history that are full of insinuations, which he uses to pry into his master's privacy. These conversations create the dangerous master-servant dynamics in the novel. Just as conversations with Forester make Caleb feel that he exceeds his class and that he can be an equal, talking to Falkland blurs the class boundaries and encourages Caleb in his behavior.

Describing his process of seeking out information, Caleb writes:

> My remarks were therefore perpetually unexpected, at one time implying extreme ignorance, and at another some portion of acuteness, but at all times having an air of innocence, frankness and courage. There was still an apparent want of design in the manner, even after I was excited accurately to compare my observations and study the inferences to which they led. (Godwin, 108)

Here we see how Caleb is playing with an identity that is both powerful and submissive. Like Thady he is taking advantage of what conduct books say servants should be

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[83] Jan Fergus, "Provincial Servants' Reading in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 214. Fergus is looking at the late eighteenth century. The records she studies cover the years 1746-84.
[84] Ibid., 216.

(dependent, child-like, inoffensive and unaware), as well as taking advantage of the proximity servants have to their masters. The words "implying," "air of," and "apparent," call attention to the fact that his demeanor is a façade he performs and uses to control Falkland. Less then a sentence later he says, "By my manner he was in a certain degree encouraged to lay aside his usual reserve and relax his stateliness." And then after another few lines he again says, "But again at our next interview the simple vivacity of my manner restored his tranquility, obliterated the emotion of which I had been the cause, and placed things afresh in their former situation" (Godwin, 109). In both quotations Caleb emphasizes his skill in maneuvering Falkland like a puppet whose feelings and reactions he controls, reversing the norm where the master is the one with the right to direct the servant. It is also important to note that these quotations reiterate that his means of controlling Falkland are connected to his own convincing façade of innocence and simplicity; he performs the servant role prescribed by the conduct book, as well as the master-like role that he has accessed through his education and location in the household. In other words, Caleb alternates between playing the properly submissive and loyal servant and assuming an authoritative and controlling position. This shifting between these multiple subjectivities that make the servant ambiguous are the power available to servants. His tactics are unexpected and aggressive because they trap Falkland and make him insecure and weak, giving Caleb the upper hand. The uncertainty caused in Falkland also reveals that not knowing how Caleb perceives him destabilizes his identity as master, revealing a frightening dependence on the servant. This interdependence that conduct books try to deny by giving the master all the power is also denied by both Falkland and Caleb in their effort to assert authority and independence. Moreover, the repercussion of

the servant's point of view returns us to the threat that the servant's voice presents. Caleb uses his narrative to re-create his master's identity and exert his viewpoint. Writing becomes a form of exerting authority and voice.

Caleb's literacy allows him to use the printed word against his master, making him more dangerous and giving his voice an even more destructive potential than the capacity to tell, because it leaves a record, which is in fact one of Caleb's stated goals in the novel's opening paragraph. He portrays Falkland as an immoral villain, insane and weak. In contrast, Thady's diminishment of the Rackrents is never stated but rather depicted even as he praises them. Although the narrative is offered to the reader in self-defense, to show that he is a victim of Falkland, narration also allows Caleb to weaken the master's identity, while asserting his own importance. Caleb narrates his master into a subjected position even in the second half of the novel. As he tells of how Falkland pursues him, he retains the ability to interpret, and has the authority to shape the story by portraying himself as the hero combating evil. He compares Falkland to historical tyrants such as "Nero and Caligula" whom he describes as "bloody rulers," and to "Thule" a "barbarian" and "gore-drenched foe." In an apostrophe to Falkland Caleb says, "Falkland! art thou the offspring in whom the lineaments of these tyrants are faithfully preserved?" In this tirade he calls Falkland a "dark, mysterious, unfeeling, unrelenting tyrant!" (Godwin, 314), and refers to historical tyrants and their victims, who like him were not allowed to rest. But through his spying and prying he has pursued Falkland in the way that he is now being tormented, suggesting that he too is a tyrant and making him a dubious character.

The heroic and master-like identity and voice that Caleb wants to create is contrary to the victimized stance he is simultaneously using, creating an ambivalent reading of himself. According to Robert Kiely, Godwin's novel asks the questions: "Who is really the possessor and who the possessed?"[85] Kiely argues: "there are moments when he is master and…he senses and takes advantage of them. But rather than leaving us with this fairly simple view of Caleb as outwardly innocent, inwardly sadistic servant who enjoys taking advantage of his master during unguarded moments, Godwin creates one more ambiguity. Throughout all of his apparently nasty and devious behavior, Caleb loves and admires Falkland."[86] I agree that Caleb's position in the text is ambiguous and varied that he is both master and victim and that it is not an issue of a false façade of loyalty. Rather, Caleb, as it suits him, is attempting to occupy each position alternately. He needs to be authoritative in order to successfully become a hero and be socially elevated. And to be innocent and successfully defend himself, he must be the victim and powerless. But in his attempt to be a submissive servant that is not subverting his master, even as he spies on Falkland and continuously judges and implicitly threatens him, Caleb runs into an irresolvable paradox. It is precisely from this ability to be both hero and victim, or master-like and servant, that Caleb draws his strength and can attempt to rise and develop a higher-class identity, but ironically his ability to rise weakens him. In rising he loses the fluidity that is the domain of the servant because he also takes on the master-class's point of view.

The point that service is a social relationship that oppresses and corrupts is certainly part of Godwin's agenda and it's exactly what he says in *The Enquirer*. The

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[85] Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*, 89.
[86] Ibid., 91.

corrupting element of service is emphasized as an issue in the novel through the storyline of Hawkins and his adamant refusal, in fact aversion, to Tyrell's offer of making his son a servant: "He had feared to have his son contaminated and debased by a servile station" (Godwin, 75). This view of service fits in with Godwin's general stance and with his agenda as an English Jacobin novelist. According to Gary Kelly, this group of writers "tried to show how their characters and incidents had been formed by circumstances";[87] and was a group of thinkers that "opposed tyranny and oppression, be it domestic, national or international, spiritual or temporal; they were against all distinctions between men which were not based on moral qualities."[88] And Robert Kiely suggests that for Godwin "No man could benefit from placing himself at the disposal of another and no man had the 'right" to act as the owner or protector of another."[89] Yet at the end of the novel Godwin reconstitutes the service relationship even as he suggests openness and equality between individuals. Moreover, in the novel Falkland's destabilized relationship with Caleb is part of what permits Caleb to become a tyrant. I would suggest that Godwin fails in his agenda. Pamela Clemit points out that one of Godwin's interests is to explore "what happens when individuals break out of their prescribed social roles."[90] And what Godwin seems to show is that no one wins. It may have been unconscious and unintentional but in many ways *Caleb Williams* supports the fears in the conduct books and the critics that advocated for a rigorously hierarchical service relationship.

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[87] Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, 16.
[88] Ibid., 7.
[89] Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England,* 85.
[90] Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 55.

"I determined to place myself as a watch upon my Patron": Proximity and Surveillance

Like Thady, Caleb watches his master. Just as in Edgeworth's text, observation and the information procured allows the servant to assume a position of authority because it gives him a story to tell and a voice and a space to create his identity. In Godwin's novel, the gaze is powerful because it is a form of tyranny and because it is itself the power usurped from the master. Access to see and assess a person's life is a privilege that belongs to the upper classes, a point made immediately by the way in which Caleb enters Falkland's service. As Caleb is growing up, Falkland's steward brings Caleb to Falkland's attention by giving "favorable reports to his master" (Godwin, 5). Immediately the upper-class gaze is given permission to observe and decide Caleb's lower-class identity. After Caleb's parents die, Falkland calls Caleb to him and proceeds to question him and evaluate him: "Mr. Falkland questioned me respecting my learning, and my conceptions of men and things, and listened to my answers with condescension and approbation…. When Mr. Falkland had satisfied his curiosity, he proceeded to inform me that he was in want of a secretary, that I appeared to him sufficiently qualified for that office" (Godwin, 5). The job is a contract that affects both master and servant and yet while Falkland has the right to question Caleb and decide if he is fit, Caleb does not have the same opportunity until he becomes a servant.

According to Edward Said, the power of observation is that of the colonizer, who comes with Western values into non-western cultures to judge and impose meaning.[91] In the novel and historically, the servant is the observer, again showing that by virtue of his position the domestic is in a place to usurp power and fill the master's role. The use of

[91] Said, "Representing the Colonized," 212.

the gaze is a way of reversing the master-servant relationship as presented in the conduct books. The directions are list of behaviors and requirements used to judge and label servants as *good* or *bad*, *worthy* or *unworthy* and to decide which servants qualify for kind treatment or dismissal. Imitating the prerogative of judgment, Caleb is observing Falkland to determine his moral and social worth. Surveillance becomes the primary form of power as Caleb and Falkland vie for control. Caleb sees Falkland in his room as he is going through his trunk, he watches his face for signs of agitation and reactions of guilt during their conversations, and he has physical access to his master's things, finding the letter from Hawkins that no one else has ever seen. Caleb's mission of observing Mr. Falkland, almost like the anthropologist in Said's discussion, allows him to take on the imperial position of superiority, "the epistemological privilege of somehow judging, evaluating, and interpreting."[92] In his narrative, Caleb imposes meaning on Falkland's unguarded expressions; he uses his power of observation to undermine Falkland's confidence in his authority.

When Falkland is called to judge a criminal case, Caleb carefully chooses his vantage point for the proceeding. The position allows him to watch Falkland and reveals the master's secret to the observing servant. This moment of viewing from the periphery parallels the way that the location in the home allows Caleb to uncover the truth about Falkland—in both cases he is able to see what no one else can see. In the trial scene Caleb is able to finally find out his master's secret by watching him. He says that he places himself "in a manner most favorable to the object" and that "the examination had not proceeded far before he chanced to turn his eye to the part of the room where I was…. we exchanged a silent look by which we told volumes to each other" (Godwin,

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[92] Ibid., 216..

126). In the exchange that takes place Caleb is determined to penetrate the secret with his eyes and Falkland is determined to be impenetrable. As he proceeds in his description of the event, Caleb details every twitch, look, and emotion that he sees, and he emerges the winner of this looking contest when Falkland runs from the room to escape the gaze, but too late because Caleb has determined the meaning of all he sees and feels victorious.

Caleb feels free, exuberant, and in control—not just equal but superior. In contrast, Falkland is at his weakest because Caleb is certain he has found out the truth; and in his loss of power and the invisibility he seeks by hiding, Falkland is in the servant's position. The loss of authority paradoxically allows Falkland to surreptitiously watch Caleb and take back control. Caleb runs into the garden to revel in his victory unwatched, "removed from all observation" (Godwin, 129). Importantly, at the height of his power Caleb is weakest. He seeks privacy and feels that he has achieved it, much as eighteenth-century masters wanted to think that they had privacy and could prevent the servant from seeing. Caleb's behavior connects an elevated status with blindness to the control servants have, represented here by surveillance. Caleb goes on to say, "when I thought myself most alone, the shadow of a man as avoiding me passed transiently by me at a small distance" (Godwin, 130). This someone is Mr. Falkland. Caleb loses the control he has gained and Mr. Falkland regains the authoritative position of observer and thus persecutor.

Caleb's surveillance and intimacy make his master go insane by causing him to question himself and the reality that is around him. Caleb uses his knowledge about his master to make insinuations during their conversations, making Falkland uncertain as to the manner in which he should react to Caleb's questioning. Also, Caleb purposely leaves

out the letter from Hawkins so that his employer will see it, be reminded of his guilt, and wonder if Caleb has seen it, manipulating his position within the household to torment Falkland and purposely playing with his master's emotions. Caleb's narrative further reveals his role in Falkland's insanity when after his behavior causes Falkland to confront him, Caleb says, "For some time after the explanation which had thus taken place between me and Mr. Falkland, his melancholy, instead of being in the slightest degree diminished by the lenient hand of time, went on perpetually to increase" (Godwin, 124). As proof he tells us that Falkland "would sometimes without any previous notice absent himself from his house for two or three days" (Godwin, 124). Caleb has made Falkland's home unbearable: he has literally pushed him out of his own home and usurped that space for himself. The loss of the master's home once again recalls the fears about a servant's capacity to take over the master's home—both literally, in terms of social rising, but also in the anarchy servants could cause, breaking down the functioning of a home and family.

The servant's capacity to control the house because the master is absent is seen in the text when Falkland's house is on fire. Of the fire, Caleb writes, "The confusion was the greater in consequence of the absence of the master, as well as of Mr. Collins, the steward…. I took some command in the affair, to which indeed my station in the family seemed to entitle me, and for which I was judged qualified by my understanding and mental resources" (Godwin, 131). Caleb has created the turmoil that drives Falkland from the house; having created a space for himself, he is able to take over. He has the ability to possess Falkland's property; in particular Caleb finally gains access to the mysterious trunk. Falkland's need to flee the house, which gives Caleb access to Falkland's property and secret, recalls the fear of servant surveillance seen in conduct books. In this scene it

is not just the material property and home that Caleb assumes but also the social prerogative. Although Collins would have been second in line of authority, the steward's status has been qualified for the reader and attributed to his "grey hairs and long services" (Godwin, 124), which recall Thady's authority in the Rackrent household. In contrast Caleb argues for his prerogative to take over and give directions from both a station and an individual ability that matches the master's. Importantly, Caleb claims to believe in an existing hierarchy and does not want to destroy that structure, but in such a structure there is no room for two masters. Only one of the two men can have authority and the other one must be subjugated in order to confirm and assure the other's supremacy, creating the hostile relationship. Caleb sees himself as belonging to the top of a hierarchy and thus as a potential replacement for the master. Yet the fact that he believes in a hierarchy becomes a problem because it forces Caleb to see himself as a faulty and immoral servant.

"And yet what was my fault?": The Paradox of Authority

Even as he challenges the limitations of class, Caleb is not questioning the existence of a class system; rather, he believes in it, and as he tries to prove his equality with Falkland, he attempts to mold himself into a virtuous hero. Consequently, his necessary investment in the value and rights of status makes Caleb uncomfortable and judgmental of his own behavior and he perceives his conduct as dangerous. To combat the tyrannical image that emerges from his self-judging, his voice is also trying to defend himself—against Falkland but also against himself and the way he must see himself if he takes on the master's identity. He does so by arguing that he is a victimized servant. But in order to establish himself as a victim, Caleb must critique the system of class and service,

showing that it does not work and that it is oppressive. The simultaneous desire to be part of the system and thus uphold it, and to reject it as required by his social aspirations, cause him to employ a double voice. This dual character makes him appear disingenuous, an unreliable narrator with two visible agendas. Throughout the novel contradictions emerge in Caleb's self-portrayal, leaving an undecipherable and dangerous character to Falkland and to himself, as he can never truly vindicate his actions.

When first describing his personality, Caleb attempts to portray himself as more sophisticated than his class and at the beginning claims, "My curiosity however was not entirely ignoble: village anecdotes and scandal had no charms for me" (Godwin, 4). Yet the action that creates the novel is Caleb's curiosity about the scandal in Falkland's past, which has been reported to him by the steward. Caleb is contradicting himself and inadvertently calling his own behavior "ignoble." Moreover, the novel and the story of Caleb's persecutions are also an unsubstantiated narrative, directly contradicted by Falkland's version of the events. Caleb criticizes his own behavior as he shows himself to be the gossip he condemns in others. Caleb's class snobbery affirms the legitimacy of the system that associates servants with uninformed prattle and malicious gossip. The attempt to qualify himself as above such temptation, while basing his treatment of Falkland on conjecture and rumor, makes it impossible for the reader to view him as innocent. After being told the story of Falkland's past Caleb decides to spy on Falkland because "the story I had heard was for ever in my thoughts" (Godwin, 107) and he tells us that despite the danger, he proceeds to spy because "the story I had heard, and the curiosity it excited, restored to me activity, eagerness and courage" (Godwin, 108). His imagination has been ignited by gossip and he becomes obsessed, but he later says, "Though I was curious, it

must not be supposed that I had the object of my enquiry for ever in my mind, or that my questions and innuendos were perpetually regulated with the cunning of a grey-headed inquisitor" (Godwin, 109). Yet two pages earlier, he reveals the appeal idle chatter has for him, and this story leads him to spend his time viewing and prodding Falkland like an inquisitor, using the servant's position to reverse roles. Later he again emphasizes his obsession with his patron's story when he describes the quest for Falkland's secret as "the great enquiry which drank up all the currents of my soul" (Godwin, 126). Caleb condemns, even as he practices, the surveillance that empowers the servant with information.

Caleb similarly reveals inconsistency that weakens his narrative and his self defense, because he wants to prove his acumen by suggesting he can see what others cannot; yet we can only view him as a victim if we believe Falkland is actually as terrible as Caleb suggests. When it comes to the insanity that Caleb himself is possibly causing, he says, "It must not be supposed that the whole of what I am describing was visible to the persons about him" (Godwin, 7). Caleb is suggesting that he has privileged information because of his role in the household, but also claiming his own intelligence and capacity to understand (distinguishing himself from other servants). While signaling his exceptional abilities, raising the possibility of interpreting Falkland in varying ways also undermines Caleb's depiction of Falkland as a crazed villain. He comments on his own bias: "These appearances I too frequently interpreted into grounds of suspicion, though I might with equal probability and more liberality have ascribed them to the cruel mortifications he had encountered in the objects of his darling ambition" (Godwin, 109). Later, he once again points out that others would not have seen Falkland as he did: "The

reader however must not imagine, though I have employed the word insanity in describing Mr. Falkland's symptoms, that he was by any means reckoned for a madman by the generality of those who had occasion to observe him." (Godwin, 126). Sprinkled throughout the text, this kind of wavering serves to damage Caleb's case and the reader's perception of his honesty. Since no one else seems to perceive Falkland as he does, the reader has to wonder if the master is truly crazy or if Caleb has ulterior motives for his representation, such as diminishing the master in order to make room for himself as a morally ideal and valiant hero.

It is also apparent that Caleb delights in the incomprehensibility of his words and demeanor, his appearance of innocence, and his ability to convince Falkland of the honesty that he is feigning. His indecipherable façade is another instance in which he can feel superior to Falkland since he finds his employer easy to read, while he is illegible. Caleb highlights the dishonesty of his voice when detailing the way he persecutes Falkland, further compromising the credibility of his narrative. His capacity to manipulate Falkland alerts the reader to Caleb's duplicity and calls his story into question since the same appearance of "innocence, frankness and courage" that he performs for Falkland, and that contributes to causing Falkland's insanity, is what he claims for the narrative. The problem faced by Caleb is that rather than embracing his servant role and the forms of power that come with it, he is using the servant's power to empower himself, but in an attempt to be like the master he is judging. Gossip gives Caleb his ability to narrate; but as someone aspiring to an upper-class status through the virtue and values associated with that group, he must judge this source of power immoral. The

contradictory perspectives in the narrator make him appear unreliable and eventually cause his crisis at the novel's resolution.

There is a break between the story he wants to tell of himself as a virtuous hero or victimized servant and what he has to do to make the story happen, which lead to a self-critical view of himself as a predator. At one point in the narrative, Caleb reflects on his behavior and says,

> And yet what was my fault? It proceeded from none of those errors which are justly held up to the aversion of mankind; my object had been neither wealth, nor the means of indulgence, nor the usurpation of power. No spark of malignity had harboured in my soul. I had always reverenced the sublime mind of Mr. Falkland; I reverenced it still. My offence had merely been a mistaken thirst of knowledge. (Godwin, 133)

But these are exactly the things he has been doing. He has been indulging his curiosity, is proud of the way he maneuvers his master, and his behavior allows him to usurp his master's authority, reversing the usual master-servant power dynamic. Furthermore, his "malignity" becomes visible in the desire to torture his master by keeping Falkland on edge and insecure. Finally, his goal may not have been wealth but it is a desire to change classes, which has economic implications. His claim of innocence seems empty since Caleb is the first to play the tyrant in this relationship and describes himself as a kind of hunter: "Mr. Falkland's situation was like that of a fish that plays with the bait employed to entrap him" (109). But it is Caleb who becomes like the tyrants he associates with Falkland, which makes his self-justification unconvincing.

When the tables are turned and Falkland becomes the pursuer Caleb begins to occupy Falkland's role. Like Falkland, Caleb is persecuted, he becomes the victim of the servant's power (surveillance and gossip), and he is concerned with his reputation. From this new Falkland-like perspective, Caleb says, "I was his prisoner: and what a prisoner! All my actions observed; all my gestures marked. I could move neither to the right nor the left, but the eye of my keeper was upon me. He watched me; and his vigilance was a sickness to my heart" (Godwin, 143). Ironically, this is the same kind of tyranny that he has practiced on Falkland. Although when reflecting on his own actions he calls it innocent curiosity, Caleb, now in the master's place, is characterizing his behavior as oppressive and despotic.

Caleb continues to give us grounds for judging his behavior by judging the actions of others. He criticizes in Gines the kind of ruling passion that he displays over Falkland's story. Gines goes from town to town pursuing Caleb and asking for information in an attempt to find him with the same intensity that Caleb sought Falkland's story. Just as Caleb did for Falkland, Gines holds the secret to Caleb's identity and uses it to reveal Caleb's status as a runaway convict wherever he goes. When Caleb details the malicious intent that Gines has in searching for him, Caleb says that Gines "hovered about my goings, and perpetually menaced me with the poison of his sting" (Godwin, 261). Yet Gines's tireless quest for information regarding Caleb repeats Caleb's own fanatical search for information about Falkland. In his complaints Caleb ends up comparing himself to one of the novel's tyrants and labeling himself and his behavior as tyrannical. Particularly important is Gines's use of writing to stalk and torment Caleb. Writing and storytelling are characterized as forms of persecution several

times throughout the novel: when a printed version of his story threatens Caleb with the robbers; when Caleb comes across his story on a handbill and it makes him a fugitive again; at the end of the text when the family he has befriended ends the friendship because they find a narrative of his life story; and even as he hears his story repeated by others on his journey. Caleb calls this publicizing of his story vicious and dangerous, in effect commenting on his own counter-narrative, which reveals Falkland's life and guilt in much the same way. Furthermore, his judgment of Gines parallels his own eventual decision to accuse Falkland of Tyrell's murder.

His narrative is also undermined when he wakes up to find the thieves' servant "standing over [him] with a butcher's cleaver" (Godwin, 231), the textual moment that Edgeworth recalls in her letter. Caleb says she is "impelled by inveterate malice" and describes her behavior as violent, unexpected, and crazed, all of which can be applied by the reader to his own actions. Just as Caleb does to Falkland, the maid drives him from the house; and the physical harm that the maid is capable of because of her proximity is similar to the danger Caleb presents to his master's reputation and sanity. In both cases, nearness to the servant threatens the master. The comparison that emerges between Caleb and the murdering servant suggests a parallel between his actions and those of the lurking homicidal servant. The errors Caleb points out in others reveal a tension between his actions and what he says. Godwin, here and throughout the novel, shows a discomfort with allowing Caleb freedom and equality, and continuously draws attention to the dangers that emerge when servants lack the necessary restraint. Like the conduct books, Caleb's transgressions highlight an anxiety over the servant's capacity for class mobility. Godwin's hero reflects the fears implicit in the conduct books and brings to the forefront

the dangers that can threaten the master class when a servant transgresses class boundaries, through the way that Caleb exposes Falkland's moral decay to weaken him, and through the despotic authority Caleb exerts over Falkland.

"Why should my reflections perpetually centre upon myself?": The Loss of Narrative

Caleb is most self-critical at the end of the novel when he sees himself as a guilty tyrant who has been a victim of his own vanity and caused the premature death of his master. In the original ending that Godwin changed before publication, Falkland lives and Caleb is a victim who goes crazy because of his master's persecution. In the published ending, Caleb goes before a magistrate where he reveals Falkland's past and his history in such a moving manner that Falkland is moved to confess. According to Kelly, in the original ending, "Caleb has failed to escape from Falkland's persecutions—he is a victim of 'things as they are', and Falkland remains a complete villain."[93] Kelly goes on to say of the published ending, "the import of the revised ending is optimistic: Truth can prevail, even against the combined forces of those who support 'things as they are'; the chain of necessity can be broken by one determined individual."[94] Similarly, Marilyn Butler sees the end of the novel and the pity Caleb feels for his enemy as "an act of feeling for his fellow-man which carries in it a germ of hope for the future, a possible way out of the continuous cycle of tyranny and submission."[95] (67). I would argue for a much more bleak reading of the published ending and of Godwin's politics. The ending seems to suggest that neither the established system nor equality between individuals works.

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[93] Kelly*, The English Jacobin Novel*, 184-5.
[94] Ibid., 185.
[95] Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, 67.

Kelly further says of the ending that it reveals Godwin's self-judgment and judgment of the English Jacobins: "by mitigating Caleb's triumph with remorse and sympathy for his persecutor, Godwin recognized the subconscious roots of his own social protest and passed judgment on the activities of the English Jacobins in the national crisis of 1793 and 1794."[96] He reads Caleb's impetuous search for truth as an analogy to Godwin and the Jacobins: "By impulsively welcoming the French Revolution and raising the clamour for reform in Britain the English Jacobins had destroyed the reasonableness of public debate, and handed their enemies a weapon with which to delay political justice even longer."[97] Also focusing on the self-judgment of Caleb, I would suggest that this could also be read as a sign of Godwin's discomfort with the servant's power and the equality available to the servant.

It has become customary to read Godwin as politically moderate. Gary Kelly points out that Godwin was not revolutionary but rather an advocate of gradual reform, and that although he supported the French Revolution he was against violence and more interested in theorizing and arguing than in becoming involved in political action.[98] Clemit suggests that Godwin was detached from both sides of the Revolution debate.[99] Godwin's *Caleb Williams* especially is read as less radical or at least more tentative than *Political Justice*.[100] These readings assume a shift in thought resulting from the political events (Jordan) or from the process of writing (Walsh). Others note a contradiction within the novel itself. Although interested in the novel's role in defining the public sphere,

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[96] Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, 190.
[97] Ibid., 205.
[98] Ibid., 4-5.
[99] Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 39.
[100] For examples of these discussions see Jordan, "The Promise and Frustration of Plebian Opinion," and Cheryl Walsh, "Truth, Prejudice, and the Power of Narrative in *Caleb Williams*," *English Language Notes* 35, no. 4 (June 1998): 22-38.

Nicolle Jordan also notes the importance of class in the novel and notes Godwin's ambivalence: "the people—that is, the non-elite—loom large in the novel both as a source of a character's reputation and as the potential agent of social change."[101] She goes on to say, "the foreclosure of the novel's political promises implies that including the people in the operations of public opinion was an endeavour that the political culture of the 1790's could not yet accommodate."[102] Also focusing on class and ambiguity, I would argue for ambivalence throughout the novel, and especially in the conclusion. Despite Godwin's success in showing that servants are corrupted by the oppressive and hierarchical nature of service (the argument he makes in *The Enquire*r, and a possible reading of the novel) the text simultaneously supports the agenda of the conduct books.

By publicly telling Falkland's story, Caleb becomes the dangerous servant of the conduct books. Just as he is about to face off with Falkland in the courtroom, he says, "I will use no daggers! I will unfold a tale—!" And then he again repeats the threat and says, "Didst thou believe me impotent, imbecil and idiot-like, with no understanding to contrive thy ruin, and no energy to perpetrate it? I will tell a tale—!" (Godwin, 314). The narrative becomes a treacherous tool rather than a defense or an adventure story; importantly it becomes such a tool in Caleb's perception and he comes to see himself as a treacherous servant. Having become like the master, Caleb must speak for the master class and think that Caleb the servant is morally reprehensible. Yet in defending Falkland and speaking for the master Caleb once again becomes a servant—in fact, a perfect, powerless servant who speaks for the master and defends his honor. In speaking for Falkland, Caleb re-inscribes and supports the hierarchy and the boundaries advocated by

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[101] Jordon, "The Promise and Frustration of Plebian Opinion," 244.
[102] Ibid., 244.

the conduct books. As Gary Handwerk says, Caleb "reverts to the role of servant."[103] As Peter Melville Logan writes, "Because it is redefined as a vindication of Falkland, Caleb's narrative finally comes to occupy the position of another imaginary narrative described in the novel, the narrative that he imagines is hidden within Falkland's trunk."[104] Redirecting the purpose of his story, Caleb says, "Falkland, I will think only of thee" and goes on to remind us of his master's virtues. Caleb becomes like the master because of his guilt about being a murderer, and the new purpose of his story (which is now about Falkland), but in rising he is weakened —a repetition of the earlier trial scene when he feels superior but is disempowered.

The paradox of Caleb's voice, which is made particularly obvious in the end, is that although it begins powerfully and tries to depict a strong persona, it has no substance and no personal story to tell. Daffron writes, "Having begun as his story, his memoirs become Falkland's. Since as confessional literature memoirs inscribe the self, Caleb ostensibly gives up that self for service to another, one that will apparently confirm Falkland's socially sanctioned character."[105] Similarly, Kiely writes of the turn of events at the end of the novel, "Finally released from the grip of his master and therefore relieved of the necessity of further pretense, Caleb Williams loses all distinctness of identity and strength of character. The struggle against a clearly defined antithesis had kept alive in him a firm concept of a 'real' self."[106] Clemit argues that "although Caleb predicts that he will supplant Falkland's narrative with his own, in the end he can only present himself in the character that Falkland has constructed for him, and he tells

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[103] Handwerk, "Of Caleb's Guild and Godwin's Truth," 950.
[104] Peter Melville Logan, "Narrating Hysteria: Caleb Williams and the Cultural History of Nerves," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 29, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 219.
[105] Daffron, "'Magnetical sympathy'," under "Public Opinion and the Theatre of Sympathy."
[106] Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*, 95.

Falkland's story instead of his own."[107] While Kiely suggests that Caleb loses all identity, Clemit suggests he embraces the guilt and criminal identity Falkland accuses him of having. Like these critics, I would also argue that there is a shift of identity in the novel's conclusion. In the end Caleb becomes the master, achieving the equality and superiority he has wanted from the beginning. But this leads to a crisis and to his downfall because he sees himself as a tyrant.

At the end of the novel Falkland confesses to the court:

> Williams, said he, you have conquered! I see too late the greatness and elevation of your mind…. I see that the artless and manly story you have told, has carried conviction to every hearer…. My name will be consecrated to infamy, while your heroism, your patience and your virtues will be for ever admired. (Godwin, 324)

Falkland acknowledges Caleb as the virtuous hero he wants to be. Within the text the master is stepping aside for Caleb by acknowledging the servant's superiority and his position as hero. Ironically it is at this moment that Caleb recognizes himself as a murderer, and develops feelings of guilt that parallel his master's. The guilt Caleb perceives in himself is caused by his revelation of Falkland's secret to the courts and by Falkland's and the legal system's recognition of his virtue. This scene is a social validation of his voice and his defense narrative, but it is precisely at this moment, when he has achieved equality with his master, when he has mastered Falkland, that his voice stops being authoritative, because Caleb loses his servant identity. As a result of his guilt, Caleb subsumes his narrative and individuality into his master's story and refocuses his story so that Falkland is once again the center. This ending admonishes Caleb for his

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[107] Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 67.

liberties by taking away any claim to virtue and returning him to a subjugated position. Caleb closes the story by saying,

> I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate: but I will finish them that thy story may be fully understood; and that if those errors of thy life be know which thou so ardently desiredst to conceal, the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale. (Godwin, 326)

This final paragraph is the complete opposite of the first paragraph. He can barely comment on himself, he is weakened and his purpose is changed. In contrast to the repetition of the "I" and "My" he now repeats the word "thy." Early in the novel, Caleb justifies the telling of his master's story by saying, "To the reader it may appear at first sight as if this detail of the preceding life of Mr. Falkland were foreign to my history. Alas, I know from bitter experience that it is otherwise" (Godwin, 10). Although he means Falkland's story to become secondary, he is never able to separate his identity, returning us to the fact that there is a fracture between the novel and the ideas of rights and equality for servants that Godwin sets out in *The Enquirer; Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature*.

When at the end of his narrative, Caleb asks, "Why should my reflections perpetually centre upon myself?" the answer is that they cannot and they do not. Caleb is unable to become the hero or the victim, or to create an identity for himself, because just as the conduct books would suggest, a servant without a master has no character (i.e., no personal story, no recommendation, and no self). Caleb is repeating the end of *Castle Rackrent*, where Thady loses narrative power with the loss of his servant position. In

becoming like the master Caleb also loses his servant role. Caleb and Thady lose the power available to the servant because they no longer have a story to tell; the loss of voice is therefore the loss of the ability to create and shift identity. The connection between the loss of power and assuming the master's position is seen earlier in the novel at the trial scene, and again when Caleb becomes concerned with his reputation and returns to face Forester and Falkland's accusations. There again, the tables are turned and he becomes the one on the run. And yet at that point in the text he is still technically a servant, he is most certainly still connected to Falkland, and therefore he still possesses the power to narrate. By refusing Caleb a story and an identity separate from Falkland and having him assume the same guilt as his employer, as well as revert to the role of domestic, Godwin is perpetuating the agenda of the conduct books and assuming that a servant's identity is tightly bound to that of his master, therefore not seeing servants as independent people, but as extensions of the masters.

In the novel Godwin attempts to arrive at the same conclusion about the rights of servants as in *The Enquirer* by having Caleb ask Falkland, "You began in confidence; why did you not continue in confidence?" (Godwin, 321) Later, in an attempt to further emphasize the need for equality and openness between classes, Caleb condemns himself for taking Falkland to court and says, "I am sure that, if I had opened my heart to Mr. Falkland, if I had told him privately the tale that I have now been telling, he could not have resisted my reasonable demand" (Godwin, 323). Godwin is again suggesting a relationship of mutual trust and respect; however, Caleb's tyranny when he has the upper hand and the fact that moments of equality allow Caleb to torment Falkland make this conclusion seem forced and impossible. Caleb claims to be a victim, and Godwin tries to

present him as such with statements like, "To do what is forbidden always has its charms, because we have an indistinct apprehension of something arbitrary and tyrannical in the prohibition" (Godwin, 107). Caleb continuously blames the prohibitions placed on servants for his desire to spy and thus for morally corrupting him. This explanation of Caleb's humanity and the psychology that triggers his behavior show that the source of his behavior is a social structure that gives power to some while oppressing others. Paradoxically, moments of equality are part of what allow Caleb to get an upper hand; echoing the anxiety present in the conduct books, these become dangerous in the novel. For instance, Caleb approaches Falkland as an equal and speaks uninvited about his thoughts. He says of Falkland's reactions: "My master seemed half inclined to encourage me, and yet doubtful whether he might venture…. Could an amusement of this sort be dangerous?... he could not probably find it in his heart to treat with severity my innocent effusions. I needed but little encouragement" (Godwin, 108). Caleb recognizes that Falkland is being lenient and that the extra freedom actually encourages him to speak to his master out of turn, as an equal, and in a harassing manner. Falkland loses control once the hierarchy of the relationship is disturbed because Caleb sees he can transgress boundaries with impunity.

Even in *The Enquirer*, Godwin ends ambiguously. Despite his call for equality, he ends by suggesting the kind treatment of servants—although earlier in the essay Godwin says kindness does not relieve the servant's oppression. Godwin's contradiction of himself suggests that he is unresolved as to the form that the master-servant relationship should take. While he condemns the existing system, he cannot envision an alternative. In *Caleb Williams*, the ambiguity of *The Enquirer* turns into ambivalence towards the

knowledge and thus power servants have access to. While other radical authors, including Mary Wollstonecraft, can utilize the servant's fluidity to imagine the master-servant relationship as a utopian ideal, in *Caleb Williams* Godwin cannot suggest a format for this relationship, because he cannot imagine the ideal. Unlike the oppressed servant of *The Enquirer*, Caleb emerges as a dangerous and tyrannical servant whose transgressions of class boundaries and the rules of service make him morally questionable. Approaching his master as a peer becomes dangerous and doesn't work, suggesting that Godwin was ambivalent about his own potent narrating servant character and the possibilities for an equal master-servant relationship.

The type of oppression that Caleb practices is aligned with the fears of servants circulating in the culture. Although Godwin addresses the subject of servant oppression and advocates an equal master-servant relationship in *The Enquirer*, the novel opens up the question of Caleb's innocence and casts him as a dangerous and opportunistic servant (similar to those in the conduct books). Read within the context of the cultural anxiety about servants, the novel's narrative becomes about the domestic's quest for identity and voice, which compromises the master's station. From the pedagogical essay one might expect Godwin to support Caleb, since narrating gives voices to the oppressed servant, but the novel contradicts his political writing by suggesting that the transgression of the master-servant relationship and of class is dangerous to both the master and the domestic. Godwin's political agenda is destabilized by the way the text justifies, through Caleb's tyranny, the conservative, hierarchical, middle-class ideas about class in the conduct books. Ultimately, instead of allowing Caleb's voice to remain powerful and equal, Godwin chooses to have Caleb lose his powerful servant identity and instead submit and

revert to the role of oppressed, hierarchically stagnant servant advocated by the conduct books.

"The master's tools": Power or Disadvantage

The problem faced by both Thady and Caleb is that both lose their master and thus their servant position and their authority. Thady wants to remain a servant. He seems to recognize the power available to domestics and to embrace it. As Butler points out, "Thady himself has an understanding of his own *métier*. Loyal servants get away with putting their fingers in the till, provided they exercise reasonable restraint."[108] Yet it is a limited power because Thady's illiteracy and dialect make him unable to straddle multiple classes as his son, or Caleb, does. In contrast to Thady, Caleb, attempting to prove his virtue, is aspiring to his master's class status and rejecting his servant role, even as he embraces it and takes advantage of the opportunities that come with being a servant. Thady is left a servant with no one to serve; what Caleb becomes is less clear. In some ways he has both identities, that of master and of servant: he has become the guilty Falkland as well as a servant without a master.

Audre Lorde writes, "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."[109] In trying to rise, the servant is attempting to change who has access to power; he does effect temporary change by usurping the master's role. Caleb, in particular, tries to become the master and to oppress the master by changing roles, making the master the object of his observations. But the master

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[108] Butler, introduction to *Castle Rackrent*, 10.
[109] Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister/Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, c1984), 112.

recovers his authority, and at the end, when Caleb, in a sense, once again has the upper hand, his renewed status fails to bring about any change. He and Falkland are still functioning within the either/or power dynamics of patriarchy. Similarly, in *Castle Rackrent*, the ambiguity of the ending may suggest the open-ended state of the situation, and the realization that Jason, who now also thinks himself too good for Judy, will become like all the past owners of the estate.

This first chapter is unique within this project because it looks at two male servants. The other chapters will focus on female servants who utilize the servant power that is explored here. Lorde suggests that "Interdependency between women is the way to freedom," and this is what is found in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*—where the master's tools are abandoned.[110] Instead, women's ability for interdependence and the servant's tools become an alternative way towards freedom for women and the lower class. Godwin's and Edgeworth's novels and the master-servant relationship described there are a starting point because the boundaries of the relationship are clearly seen, and because the hostile nature of the employer-employee relationship is key to seeing and understanding the power possessed by the servant. In addition, without making a concrete argument because there are not enough case studies for adequate comparison, this project suggests that women, who as wives and mothers already exist in multiple roles of subjection and authority, are able to successfully utilize the servant tools in a way that the male servants cannot. The women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* reject the master's tools, and therefore make a more successful attempt at dismantling the master's house. The invisibility and multiplicity of subjectivity imposed on the servant make the servant elusive and can be used to escape constraining roles.

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[110] Ibid., 111.

Chapter Two

"I will teach her to consider you as her second mother": The Dismantling Potential of the Servant's Tools in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*

Castle Rackrent and *Caleb Williams* explore the servant's potential to be like the master and the threat that the servant's fluid identity presents to authority. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* (1798) and Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1805) employ the multiplicity in the servant's identity to explore women's lack of power and imagine utopian communities; additionally, Opie looks at racial oppression. Chapter One shows that the servant's intimacy is a threat to the master and illustrates that for the servant there is a weakness in rising because it leads to the loss of the servant's tools. The authors studied in Chapter Two also acknowledge the strength possessed by the domestic, but here the mistresses radically embrace, instead of fearing, servants' similarity to themselves, and adopt the power of the servant. Narratives are shared, not usurped; the mistress's story and the servant's story mirror each other and become blurred.

Sympathetic connections and sharing is facilitated by genteel women's servant-like role in the family; as wives, mothers, and sisters women were always expected to be caretakers, and accountable to others. The different reactions men and women have to the servant's power can also be explained by Nancy Chodorow's theory of self-definition and personality formation. She maintains that " girls come to experience themselves as less separate than boys, as having more permeable ego boundaries. Girls come to define themselves more in relation to others."[1] A predisposition towards communal rather than

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[1] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 93.

individual identity and the idea of "permeable ego boundaries," suggests women's ability to create cooperative communities; fluid identities and the ability to share roles makes these alternative families possible. Wollstonecraft and Opie align the servants with the servant-like mistresses; the servant's ability to inhabit multiple subject positions, now possessed by both servant and mistress, again poses a threat to authority. While the servant's class ambiguity and the collapsing of class distinctions is dangerous for the master, this is empowering and liberating for the mistress. The servant's ambiguity frees women from the limitations of their social roles and allows shifting of roles, the ability to be simultaneously powerful and powerless. The servant's tools are used to create utopian female communities built around mistress-servant relationships that have established an equal power dynamic, challenging traditional society with an alternative.

Wollstonecraft and Opie recreate constraining class and gender roles. In *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*, the mistresses take on the servants' position and the servants take on the mistresses' position; together they resist the master's power, here represented by the normative social hierarchy that privileges men and limits women. This chapter foreshadows the implicit rejection of traditional marriage hierarchies we will see in Chapter Three. *Maria* concludes with a fluid community where power is shared; both women are powerful and both women are submissive—they use the servant's fluidity to exchange roles and build a community of equals. In *Adeline Mowbray*, although less clearly, the community is also one of equals; each of the women is simultaneously authoritative and submissive. The servant's ambiguity and multiplicity permits the inclusion of radical elements in a community that seems to conform to traditional social roles and hierarchical structures, but because the servant is both passive and powerful the

community is also both passive and powerful. Comparing the two households that end these novels reveals that the servant's ambiguity and fluidity is a source of power for women because they can escape oppressive relationships and find alternative families that are women-centered. Finally, the similarities between these two authors and their novels continues to call into question the labels of radical and conservative that Chapter One begins to question. This chapter argues that Opie, who is usually considered more conservative than Wollstonecraft, builds on and extends Wollstonecraft's egalitarian female network.

Women's communities like those imagined in Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) and Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762), and like the real-life community attempted by the Bluestockings at Hitcham in 1767, or even like the one famously lived by Sarah Scott and Lady Barbara Montagu, focused on women combining incomes in order to live independent of male relatives without becoming subservient companions. The power of the female community is the subject of Nina Auerbach's influential *Communities of Women* (1978), which argues that in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature women's communities are portrayed as simultaneously damaged, because they represent "an austere banishment from both social power and biological rewards," and yet powerful, because they are "emblems of female self-sufficiency which create their own corporate reality."[2] Auerbach argues that sisterhood is initially a negative image that is transformed by later authors: "What is a nightmare to Mary Wollstonecraft and a dream to Sarah Ellis becomes a social panacea for many writers of the 1850's and

[2] Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 1, 5.

1860's."[3] Scholars who study utopias have shown that communal images are ideals and havens in many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novels by women.[4] Many of these discussions see female alliances as part of a female utopian tradition that allows women to contest and renegotiate gender roles; resist oppression; criticize society and provide alternatives for women, as well as give women access to education, economic independence, and emotional relationships modeled on maternal care. Although not usually identified as utopian authors, Mary Wollstonecraft and Amelia Opie are part of this tradition of women writers. Both authors write fictions about women who have been displaced from their family and are searching for companionship and independence. Using the utopian idea of sisterhood, Wollstonecraft and Opie try to depict a better alternative for women; they offer the mistress-servant relationship as an answer.

The conduct books for servants imagine the master-servant relationship as a kind of utopian community for the servant, but from the point of view of the owning class. In this ideal form, the master-servant relationship retains the power structure, while creating an idyllic version of the service relationship with a servant that is nurtured, protected, and rewarded for loyal behavior.[5] To conclude her conduct book, *A Present for a Servant Maid*, Eliza Haywood writes:

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[3] Ibid., 18.

[4]For discussions of women's communities, see Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), and Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, *Reconsidering the Bluestockings* (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 2003). For discussions of utopian female community see Rebecca D'Monte and Nicole Pohl, *Female Communities, 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities* (Houndmills: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia, 1600-1800* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), and Alessa Johns, *Women's Utopias of the Eighteenth-Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

[5] According to Pohl, one definition of utopia is "an understanding of utopia as a social myth." Quoting Lewis Mumford, Pohl says that these myths are "'the ideal content of the existing order of things, myths which, by being consciously formulated and worked out in thought, tend to perpetuate and perfect that order'." Pohl, *Women, Space, and Utopia,* 64. Certainly the conduct books for servants try to create an

> Those of you who go young to Service, and continue in one Place eight or ten Years, will be then of a fit Age to marry, and besides being entitled to the Advice of your Mistress, will be certain of her Assistance in any Business you shall take up; your Children, if you have any, partake her Favor, perhaps some of them be taken into the Family, and both you and yours receive a Succession of good Offices. If your Husbands behave well to you, they will be encouraged for your Sakes; and if ill, you may depend on Protection from them. An old and tried Servant is looked upon as a Relation, is treated with little less Respect, and perhaps a more hearty Welcome. This you cannot but be sensible of yourselves; and I shall therefore conclude as I began with exhorting you to make use of the Understanding God has given you, in serious Consideration of the Hints I have thrown together, in order to render you both valuable and happy.[6]

Haywood's promise of emotional and economic rewards is implied, if not explicitly stated, in many of the conduct books for servants. The quotation opens with a reminder that there is a hierarchy of obligations that is conditional (as emphasized by the repetition of the word "if") for the rewards that are promised. The things promised include maternal advice, economic help, and even physical protection (all of which reflect the porous family/servant boundaries). Haywood identifies protection as one of the advantages gained with loyalty, and in the passage it is envisioned as safety from men and male oppression. Another benefit suggested is the idea that a servant's children will have a second mother who will perhaps take them into the family, but the servant is mothered as

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ideal "existing order" between masters and servants, one that prioritizes the needs of the master class but is framed as advantageous for the serving class.

[6] Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant Maid* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1744). http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr

well—setting up the idea of women mothering each other that is central to these two novels. Haywood also suggests that servants can be part of the family and even more welcome than family.[7] Implied then is the servant's capacity to function like family, or even to replace family. The ultimate goal and reward for the loyal servant in *A Present* is this family-like relationship with the master, but the use of the words "little less Respect" indicate that the hierarchy of the family and of class is never in question; the power of rewarding is retained by the mistress and master.

The passage from Haywood illustrates elements of the mistress-servant relationships found in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*. Wollstonecraft and Opie use the vagueness of the servant-family boundaries to recreate the family and women's position, but they level and at times even reverse the class hierarchy emphasized by Haywood. They imagine the servant and mistress sharing, exchanging, or escaping social roles. Wollstonecraft and Opie change the one-directional flow of benefits suggested by Havwood and create a community where the servant is cared for as much as she will care for the mistress. Disturbing and erasing the traditional mistress-servant relationship allows for the creation of female community. In *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray,* Jemima and Savanna possess power; as Maria's keeper, Jemima can give or withhold favors and comfort, while in *Adeline Mowbray* Savanna takes financial responsibility for her mistress. In the passage from Haywood's conduct book, the mistress is a maternal figure, having the primary power available to women: she protects the servant emotionally, physically and economically. Wollstonecraft and Opie recreate the relationship into one of equality, where the servants fill the protective role attributed to the mistress in Haywood's *A Present for a Servant Maid*.

[7] Chapter Three will instead focus on family that functions like a servant.

In the eighteenth century, motherhood became increasingly idealized. It was a "pliant and adaptable" concept that could be "invoked and adjusted for a range of political concerns."[8] The mother role could be oppressive, enclosing women within the domestic space, but Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash argue that despite the limitations created for women by the "invention of the full-time mother… a new and potentially threatening image of female control"[9] was also established. Motherhood becomes a symbol of power and illustrated the sharing of power. In *Maria,* and to an extent in *Adeline Mowbray*, it is the mistress's child that finds a second mother in the servant, reversing the conduct book idea of servants' children finding a second mother in the mistress. At the end of *Adeline Mowbray*, Savanna, along with Adeline's mother, is left with the responsibility of taking care of Editha. Furthermore, in both novels the roles of caregiver and care receiver are transferable and shared, creating a family of women. Wollstonecraft and Opie re-imagine the service relationship: the power structure is abolished, as both mistress and servant contribute to the relationship; the nurturing and protection is mutual. In women's utopias, the maternal is often utilized as an alternative to patriarchy, a point discussed by Dorothy Berks. Although Berks is discussing later American texts, her discussion applies to the tactics used by Wollstonecraft and Opie. She says of women utopian writers:

> These writers share a radical vision which would deconstruct patriarchal culture by replacing it with the values and structures of woman's culture. These writers share the conviction that the only way to save patriarchal culture from its

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[8] Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790's: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.
[9] Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash, introduction to *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science and Literature, 1650-1865* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 8.

> excesses is to put the values of motherhood at the center of the culture and to change or 'maternalize' men so they will voluntarily give up selfish and hierarchical values that rule dominant culture.[10]

Wollstonecraft and Opie also use the values of motherhood to alter social structures, and are perhaps the literary mothers of the "radical vision" shared by the later authors.[11]

Mary Wollstonecraft's novel, *The Wrongs of Women: or, Maria,* focuses on the titular character and her jail keeper Jemima. Maria has been incarcerated by her husband and separated from her child; his goal is to prevent Maria from absconding and to seize her fortune. Although the novel remains unfinished because of Wollstonecraft's death, we have the sketches of various possible endings that she left behind and which Godwin published along with the novel. The longest and most discussed ends the novel with Maria attempting suicide as Jemima enters with Maria's lost daughter whom she has taught to say "Mamma" and together they save Maria's life, giving her the desire and capacity to live. The women create a family-like community where Jemima will be a second mother to the little girl while simultaneously receiving the maternal love that she has lacked—a resolution that refers back to an earlier moment where Maria promises Jemima that in return for help recovering her daughter she "will teach her to consider you

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[10] Dorothy Berks, "So We All Became Mothers": Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and the New World of Women's Culture," in *Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative,* Tennessee Studies in Literature Volume 32, ed. Libby Falk Jones and Sarah Webster Goodwin (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 100.

[11] It is appropriate that these communities of shared and shifting roles are based on the maternal and the idea of mutual mothering; according to Nancy Chodorow, the mother-daughter relationship creates a "nonindividuated state" in women because mothers tend to perceive "their daughters as one with, and interchangeable with, themselves." And the women in these novels are indeed interchangeable and their abilities to exchange roles, and thus be equal, are the foundation of their utopian community. . Just as these maternal communities are built on women's identification with each other as victims, Chodorow claims "a girl identifies with her mother in their common feminine inferiority." *The Reproduction of Mothering*, 100, 113.

as her second mother."[12] It is this ending that most critics focus on, as I do here because it is the most logical and persuasive one. This ending reinforces the theme of women's similarities with each other regardless of class, a point made by the novel's title, *The Wrongs of Women* and by the repeated images of women's community found throughout the novel. Wollstonecraft's conclusion replaces the hierarchical power structure of marriage and the family with a partnership.

Adeline Mowbray portrays the troubled life of Adeline: her neglected childhood; her misguided decision to run away with Glenmurry and live out of wedlock, causing her mother and society to reject her; her unfortunate marriage to his cousin Berrendale, with whom she has a daughter; and the reunion with her mother which occurs immediately before she dies. Throughout, Adeline's only constant companion is Savanna who feels gratitude towards her mistress. Opie's novel similarly ends with a community of women who will share the maternal role. With the death of Adeline, Savanna (her servant), Editha (her mother), young Editha (her daughter and her mother's namesake), and Mrs. Pemberton (a mother-like figure for Adeline) come together and promise to mutually care for each other. Savanna is at the center of the group; weak and dependent, but also the strongest character in the novel, she stands as a symbol of the ambiguous strength the women in this group possess.

These novels illustrate and criticize women's lack of power, show all women are the same and broaden the perimeters of previous women's communities, but Opie and Wollstonecraft use different tactics to reach the same conclusion. Wollstonecraft equates the upper-class Maria to the lower-class servant to reveal all women's oppressed state,

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[12] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992), 92. Hereafter cited in text.

but also to make unify women of all social levels. Opie relocates her gender argument onto an abolitionist argument. In *Adeline Mowbray* the heroine is paralleled with her servant, a Jamaican ex-slave. The reason for Opie's comparison appears to be a desire to protest against racial inequity, and this is certainly part of the agenda in the text; concurrently she uses the more acceptable abolitionist forum to obliquely discuss gender. As Opie contends for Savanna's rights, she is making a case for the heroine and women.

While *Maria* is not a conventional utopian novel because it is not a sustained utopian vision, Wollstonecraft tries imagining an alternative life for women through a focus on women's relationships and moments of ideal community between women that arise throughout the text.[13] Utopian visions of women's community such as *Millenium Hall* and *David Simple*[14] are built around the idea of community with those alike in class. Wollstonecraft takes novels like *Millenium Hall* to task by bringing the servant into the

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[13] *Maria* can be read within a utopian tradition because according to Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, for a work to be considered utopian it should have "an awareness of social organization," and visions of community that represent a significant modification to society. Utopian literature also has a didactic function, an element of "subversion and social criticism"; literature in this genre "reveals the social foundations of our own world—and the cracks that form in them." Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, introduction to *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 4, 7-8.

[14] Joseph F. Bartolomeo, discussing Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* writes, "David's choice of a starting point has been read as a sign of his innocence and ignorance, given the venality of the characters he meets there, but his attraction to this familiar environment may also suggest an unconscious desire to find his friend from his own social class." Again suggesting that David is looking for those that are similar to him Bartolomeo goes on to point out that David's benevolence is mediated by the desire to help those that are deserving and that his judgments when contemplating the individuals that will become his community are based on "thinking that betrays some class bias even while repudiating it." Joseph F. Bartolomeo, "A Fragile Utopia of Sensibility," in *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, ed. Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 42-43. Similarly, Rebecca D'Monte and Nicole Pohl discuss the way in which women's visions of utopian community are mainly concerned with empowering or giving freedom to upper and middle-class women: "The lower classes are taken under charitable wings and are well provided for. Whilst they are given education and non-exploitative work, the lower classes are never part of the common ownership of the community." D'Monte and Pohl, *Female Communities,* 6. Also addressing class issues, Nicole Pohl discusses women writers' attempts to "devise and redefine the gendered spatiality of the country house in order to devise an alternative social and economic space." Pohl concludes, "This utopian desire however ends with a subordination of class equality to the stability of the larger social entity. In the true vein of eighteenth-century discourses of sensibility, social harmony and middle-class philanthropy, inferiors are locked into utopian communities as content and grateful dependents." Pohl, *Women, Space, Utopia*, 70.

community as an equal member, offering an inter-class relationship with the servant as the ideal. Opie also uses the mistress-servant relationship to draw a comparison between all women and then goes even further creating a community that is inter-racial and non-sectarian. Putting these novels in conversation blurs the political boundaries usually seen between these two authors and creates a community of women authors with similar social concerns and goals. The way the mistress-servant relationships in these texts is used to look at gender and race issues emphasizes that culturally it was a relationship of power. These novels continue to illustrate the strength possessed by the servant and the leveling potential therein. The fantasy created around the service relationship is a precursor to the authority discussed in Chapter Three, where Belinda and Fanny gain by inhabiting the periphery of the household and family. Finally, discussing Wollstonecraft's *Maria* and Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* in the context of utopias helps expand the community of women authors who wrote utopian literature and expands the definition of those communities.

Scholars see Opie who was at one time part of the same circle of radical thinkers around William Godwin, as participating in the criticism of Wollstonecraft that followed Godwin's publication of *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which allowed conservatives to attack and discredit her work and led liberals and past supporters to distance themselves from her ideas, becoming what Roxanne Eberle calls "frightened reactionaries."[15] To some extent, Opie's rejection of Wollstonecraft seems to also have been part of the general rejection of, and backlash against, Wollstonecraft following her death, an attempt to distance herself from Wollstonecraft's politics and

[15] Roxanne Eberle, "Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*: Diverting the Libertine Gaze; or, The Vindications of a Fallen Woman," *Studies in the Novel* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 122.

assure her own respectability.[16] Godwin's scandalous publication of a candid and partially inaccurate biography of Wollstonecraft's life led to public "fascination and horror."[17] He opened his wife up to "public attacks," which "enjoyed depicting Mary as a whore and Godwin as a pimp". [18] Even Wollstonecraft's friends and admirers seem to have come to the conclusion that "she had in the end gone too far."[19] And the result was that those who aligned themselves with her were forced to dismiss and separate themselves from her ideas.[20] Tomalin describes public reactions against Wollstonecraft and feminism as a "wave of defection from revolutionary ideas of any kind," which included a "steady campaign of denigration from women writers."[21] Tomalin however suggests that Opie genuinely rejected Wollstonecraft. Amelia Opie had been a friend and admirer of Godwin, and at one time an object of his attentions, but "by 1799 Godwin told Holcroft that Opie was 'no friend of mine' any longer."[22] Her relationship to Wollstonecraft seems to have been equally complex. Although initially the two women were friends, according to Tomalin, Opie turned against Wollstonecraft "with a distinctly malicious enthusiasm" for "personal motives."[23] Not only had Wollstonecraft married Godwin, who had courted Opie, who's maiden name was Amelia Alderson, but Alderson married John Opie, a friend and admirer of Wollstonecraft.[24]

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[16] Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: Meridian, 1974), 228. All biographical information on the Opie, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft relationships is culled from Claire Tomalin's biography.
[17] Ibid., 225.
[18] Ibid., 226, 227-8.
[19] Ibid., 228.
[20] Ibid., 228.
[21] Ibid., 234,235.
[22] Ibid., 228.
[23] Ibid., 228.
[24] Ibid., 228.

According to Tomalin "*Adeline Mowbray* was a travesty of the story of Godwin and Mary … that it used their experience and held them up to ridicule for their theoretical rejection of marriage."[25] However, Carol Howard points out that the politics of Opie's novel are not so clear-cut; the novel is usually read "variously as a vindication of and a condemnation of the two political philosophers."[26] Notably, Opie's letter discussing Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's marriage is often quoted as evidence of Opie's tempered liberalism: " 'Heighho! What charming things would sublime theories be, if one could make one's practice keep up with them; but I am convinced it is impossible, and am resolved to make the best of every-day nature'."[27] I would suggest that despite the difficult personal relationship outlined by Tomalin, *Adeline Mowbray* is not necessarily a rejection of Wollstonecraft, nor is it an expression of tempered liberalism. Rather Opie's novel is a re-writing of *Maria* that embraces many of the same ideas, even while seemingly rejecting Wollstonecraftian philosophy.

Like Wollstonecraft, Opie was interested in remedying the oppression of women in marriage, the family, and society. It is impossible to know if Opie wrote *Adeline Mowbray* with *Maria* in mind, but the similarities as well as the differences are suggestive. The novels similarly address community, motherhood, women's rights in society, the family and marriage, the responsibilities of the upper-classes to the lower-classes, and the structure of society. Susan Greenfield suggests that the prison setting in *Maria* was Opie's recommendation, suggesting that Opie influenced Wollstonecraft's

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[25] Ibid., 229.

[26] Carol Howard, "'The Story of the Pineapple': Sentimental Abolitionism and Moral Motherhood in Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray,*" *Studies in the Novel* 30, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 356.

[27] Shelley King and John B. Pierce, introduction to *Adeline Mowbray* by Amelia Opie (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1999), x.

text.[28] Opie's realistic awareness of the need to preserve reputation and to deal with the reality of the moment is emphasized by critics of *Adeline Mowbray*. Opie's practicality and the general backlash against Wollstonecraft and her views is cited as a reason for what critics see as restrained liberalism and an ambiguous stance on marriage and women's rights in the novel; but I would suggest that a progressive stance on women is located in Savanna, Adeline's servant and double, an argument she relates through abolition.

Discussing feminism and utopian discourse, Sarah Webster Goodwin summarizes Jean Bethke Elshtain's categorizations of women's utopias. According to Elshtain there are two kinds of unrealistic narrative utopias, one in which the "story's utopian end is a return to an androgynous community" and the other "which begins with Eve's superiority and subsequent victimization, and ends, it seems, with allegedly feminine values to reinstate a harmonious utopian community. These utopias are rigid and assume "too easily that women are innocent victims or, more assiduously, that gender differences pose a problem that can be defined in universal terms." However, Elshtain identifies a third type of utopia that is more complex "'with no pre-fixed end, no prewritten script, for individual and social narratives are not presumed to be precisely homologous'." Goodwin adds that this third type of utopian narrative is "mimetic; that is they take place in a world meant to resemble our own in the most obvious ways, and to play out possibilities present in our own. Each work has a dimension that the feminist critic might denote utopian."[29] In this kind of utopianism, "to look for values which might be labeled utopian is to ask how a work envisions a *better* community and the individuals who will build it." The

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[28] Susan C. Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance Frances Burney to Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 125 n.1.

[29] Ibid., 6.

word "better" emphasizes that these mimetic utopias are rooted in reality and try to make the existing world a more palatable place. The difference highlights the differences between Wollstonecraft's and Opie's female communities.

Wollstonecraft's utopian vision advocates for a community of women that excludes men. The women separate from society and reject oppressive gender roles; they create a separate sphere based on feminine values. In contrast, Opie offers an image of female community that serves as a response to *Maria* by recognizing the power of society as well as social conventions. For instance, Mrs. Pemberton, a Quaker who has been a maternal figure for Adeline and is a member of the female community that closes the novel, rebukes Adeline for ignoring social rules: "Thou art one of those wise in their own conceit, who, disregarding the customs of ages, and the dictates of experiences, set up their own opinions against the hallowed institutions of men and the will of the Most High."[30] The women characters of Opie's novel participate in, acknowledge, and respect the boundaries of gender, class and race, but the group finds an alternative way of living within society, subtly and yet radically challenging the conventions they seem to accept.

Opie is more realistic but simultaneously more radical. Women's rights, a subject that was considered dangerous to social stability and becomes taboo because of its association with Wollstonecraft and revolutionary sentiment, is not explicitly addressed. *Adeline Mowbray* overtly propagates social stability and gender conformity while also addressing the more acceptable issue of abolition. However, Opie intertwines her abolitionist agenda with women's rights through the doubling of mistress and servant. Indirectly, Opie continues Wollstonecraft's project of creating women's utopias and of

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[30] Amelia Opie *Adeline Mowbray*, ed. Shelley King and John B. Pierce (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1999), 122. Hereafter cited in text.

extending those communities to the lower class and to racial "others." Opie is more ambiguous because the language of the text suggests Savanna is subjugated, but the images and action of the novel indicate her primacy. The argument in Opie's text for women's rights is more covert. On one level the novel is an abolitionist text and completely unrelated to Wollstonecraft. But the story of Adeline, who rejects marriage and has a child out of wedlock, echoes Wollstonecraft's life. Although Adeline is punished for her transgression of social mores, throughout the novel Savanna is a double for Adeline; because Savanna is a double for Adeline, the acceptance of Savanna suggests the acceptance of Adeline. While Opie makes Adeline a lesson against non-conforming behavior, simultaneously her independence is sanctioned through the inclusion of Savanna. When Adeline dies in Savanna's arms, surrounded by a community of women, her subversive character is apparently erased from this group; but Adeline is still included in the spirit of the community through her double, Savanna. In making an abolitionist argument for Savanna, and in supporting the independence that Savanna claims throughout the novel, Opie is simultaneously advocating for Adeline—her abolitionist argument makes a case for both race and gender. In other words, abolition is her agenda, but also a tactic to insert a more radical feminist argument; through the doubling she is able to simultaneously discuss race and gender.

The closing images of each novel make an argument for the maid's equality as the women assume powerful and submissive roles that are shifting and can be shared. What Maria and Jemima have at the end of the novel is mutual mothering (a position of power) without men, as well as a friendship and companionship that has found a balance between the emotional and the economic. Similarly, Adeline and her Jamaican servant Savanna

build a family-like community where serving as substitute family empowers Savanna; she develops an authoritative voice and gains agency. When the community at the end embraces Savanna, they are endorsing this powerful and subversive figure.

"He impatiently put a guinea in my hand": Undoing the power structure

The central relationship of Wollstonecraft's text is that of Maria, the incarcerated heroine, and Jemima, her keeper. This focal relationship at first mimics, and then literally becomes, that of mistress and servant. Historically, middle-class women and servants, already in the same space, formed a community of sorts since daily life brought them together. The nature of the servant's job, which requires access to the mistress's home, private quarters, linen, and body, necessarily creates an intimacy between mistress and maid; and yet despite the intimacy between the women, the class boundaries and the structure of the family traditionally prohibited an acknowledgement and/or development of a relationship. Addressing the exclusion of servants from the family, Wollstonecraft in *A Short Residence in Sweden* writes,

> The treatment of servants in most countries, I grant, is very unjust; and in England, that boasted land of freedom, it is often extremely tyrannical. I have frequently, with indignation, heard gentlemen declare that they would never allow a servant to answer them; and ladies of the most exquisite sensibility, who were continually exclaiming against the cruelty of the vulgar to the brute creation, have in my presence forgot that their attendants had human feelings, as well as forms. I do not know a more agreeable sight than to see servants part of a family. By taking an interest, generally speaking, in their concerns, you

> inspire them with one for yours. We must love our servants, or we shall never be sufficiently attentive to their happiness.[31]

This representation of the ostracism and oppression of servants is central to *Maria*; it is the dystopian opposite of the mistress-servant relationship that Wollstonecraft imagines. Maria acknowledges Jemima's humanity, and loves her as a daughter, mother and friend; the two women form a family to replace the ones that have failed and betrayed them.

Wollstonecraft undoes the power structure that separates servants out of the family through the concept of charity, which she excludes from her community, allowing for the equal relationship that takes place in the novel. Like service, charity is a class-based economic relationship in which one person has monetary agency and the other is dependent. Moreover, because employers denied the value of servants, in charity, there also seems to be only one beneficiary in the relationship. Wollstonecraft summarizes her attitude towards charity in *A Short Residence in Sweden*:

> You know that I have always been an enemy to what is termed charity, because timid bigots endeavouring thus to cover their sins, do violence to justice, till, acting the demi-god, they forget that they are men. And there are others who do not even think of laying up a treasure in heaven, whose benevolence is merely tyranny in disguise: they assist the most worthless, because the most servile, and term them helpless only in proportion to their fawning.[32]

She describes charity as a self-serving activity that allows the person giving to ignore his or her own faults and feel virtuous without really making an effort. Charity is described as easy or even selfish because no real thought or feeling is necessary; and it is a way for

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[31] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark,* ed. Richard Holmes (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 77.
[32]Ibid., 187.

those with economic power to exert control over those that are weak and less fortunate. Moreover, to keep receiving charity the person receiving has to remain dependent; charity does not help the recipient and gives power to the giver. Wollstonecraft goes as far as suggesting that charity, which is a tenet of Christianity, is blasphemous.

In *Maria*, the failures and corrupt uses of charity are repeatedly illustrated. Jemima's cruel mistress kicks Jemima out of the house while forgiving her husband who has been raping Jemima and says that she had taken her "into her house out of pure charity" (Wollstonecraft, 83). Although Jemima has been working for her, she takes her as an apprentice as a favor to Jemima's stepmother, defining the relationship as charity, which allows the mistress to ignore what Jemima gives to the household through her labor. Hiding behind the idea of altruism, the mistress is able to forgive both her own and her husband's cruel behavior. Later when Jemima is desperately searching for work, all she receives from "a gentleman" is momentary aid rather than help in finding a job: "without waiting to hear me, he impatiently put a guinea in my hand, saying, 'It was a pity such a sensible woman should be in distress—he wished me well from his soul'" (Wollstonecraft, 87). In this instance, Wollstonecraft emphasizes the lack of effort and concern involved in giving money. There is no need for any emotional connection or relationship between the giver and receiver. With the word "soul" she ironically suggests the religious self-satisfaction felt by the donor while he is abandoning Jemima to the streets. The failure of charity is exemplified by the ease with which tyrannical and immoral characters such as Maria's father and husband give money to the poor. After a contrived charitable act by Venables, Maria says, "'What a revolution took place, not only in my train of thoughts, but feelings! I trembled with emotion – now, indeed, I was

in love" (Wollstonecraft, 102). This supposed generosity, a false show used to take advantage of Maria, leads to her entrapment in marriage. Wollstonecraft is showing the unacknowledged payment system that charity requires and to which she points in her letter—in effect the receiver (Maria, in this case) is victimized. Similarly, when Maria convinces a lawyer to refrain from evicting her nurse, he expects the right to kiss her. She thinks he is giving her "a kiss of charity" (Wollstonecraft, 101), but in reality she is unwittingly paying him back with her body.

Maria's own form of giving is held up as a better alternative, and her nurse, Peggy, describes her as "right charitable" (Wollstonecraft, 100). The difference in Maria's form of charity is that she has an emotional relationship with Peggy and her form of helping requires effort and is inconvenient, as seen in the effort required for Maria to move the mattress she wants to give Peggy, and in her exertion on Peggy's behalf collecting money and negotiating with the lawyer. Most importantly, Maria gives Peggy more than immediate help; she has given her nurse a means of maintaining herself by setting her up in a shop. Rather than making Peggy dependent, Maria's charity provides the opportunity to labor. The idea of charity, which is important in utopian literature, is replaced in *Maria* with a partnership. Jemima's position as a house-keeper doesn't allow for charity, which would have been the case if she were Maria's companion,[33] and it creates a balance between the two women, because (as Rizzo and Wollstonecraft herself, in the novel, point out) there is power in labor. The strength available in labor explains why Maria's form of charity with Peggy is on the right track, although incomplete,

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[33] For a discussion of the dependent and servile position endured by the companion, see Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, especially Chapter Three, "Satires of Tyrants and Toadeaters: Fielding and Colliers," Chapter Four "Elizabeth Chudleigh and Her Maids of Honor," and Chapter Five "Frances Burney and the Anatomy of Companionship."

because even Maria's charity puts her in a position of power. Peggy still feels the need to ask subserviently for help, but this is resolved by the mistress-servant relationship suggested at the end of the novel, which acknowledges that both women contribute. The boundaries and roles of Jemima's and Maria's community are flexible and multiple, creating powerful and submissive roles that are not static and oppressive, and can be exchanged.

The relationship of Maria and Jemima illustrates the way in which power can be negotiated. While in the asylum and in the conclusion, Maria and Jemima are equals. Claudia L. Johnson argues, "the emancipated, sturdy, parentally purposive, and rationally loving republican couple that Wollstonecraft spent her career imagining is finally a female couple although their republican virtues can flourish only in a retreat from the insurmountable corruption of the masculine public sphere."[34] While critics have discussed the women's community suggested by the ending—which is one of several—I propose to trace the theme throughout the novel, and to show how—by using various narrative strategies—Wollstonecraft alters traditional utopian visions of women's community, which are class based. The blurring of hierarchical boundaries, and the capacity to be both powerful and disempowered, allows the women in these novels to build community; the men in *Caleb Williams* and *Castle Rackrent* cannot do that because their relationship is competitive and individualistic.

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[34] Claudia L. Johnson, "Mary Wollstonecraft: Styles of Radical Maternity," in *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science and Literature, 1650-1865* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 170. Moreover, Johnson notes the inter-class element of the relationship and says of the novel, 'its attempt to establish a collective sense of identity inclusive of all women is quite unprecedented. Including prostitutes, landladies, and women of the gentry and the middle-class, this fellowship is based on a rational recognition of their mutually oppressive complicity in a system of male privilege as well as on their shared susceptibility to 'humanizing affections'." (Ibid., 167-8).

Just as Maria is concerned with her daughter's nourishment, so is Jemima concerned with Maria's; the first thing Jemima does is insist Maria eat. Her concern, combined with her position as a caretaker, places her in a maternal position and a position of authority. In contrast, Maria is "winning on the affections of Jemima," which is what servants are told to do in the conduct books written for them. However, it is immediately a relationship of ambiguous power as Maria tries "to eat enough to prove her docility" to Jemima, but only so as to get the upper hand and get what she wants. Maria's behavior is directly compared to that of Jemima's master, the owner of the asylum: "Had her master trusted her, it is probable that neither pity nor curiosity would have made her swerve from the straight line of her interest; …offended at the bare supposition that she could be deceived with the same ease as a common servant, she no longer curbed her curiosity" (Wollstonecraft, 64). In contrast to Maria, who reveals her situation to Jemima and asks for assistance, the asylum director does not trust Jemima, does not give information, and does not allow the servant any power. In the conduct books it is suggested that the mistress can and should have access to the servant's emotional life, allowing her to intervene on behalf of a loyal servant when necessary, but the servant is denied the same personal and emotional involvement in the employer's life. In *Maria* both women tell their story and their emotional vulnerability is equal.

Susan Sniader Lanser says of Wollstonecraft's *Maria*: "discursive acts…as they construct and interpret their histories become the means of solidifying community and escaping the patriarchal prison house."[35] Lanser proceeds to argue that Wollstonecraft "tries to bridge, if only through two voices, the class boundaries" and that "the text

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[35]Susan Sniader Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 231.

establishes at once the characters and their point of view, constituting the two women as a microcosmic cross-class community."[36] Ultimately, Lanser concludes that Wollstonecraft is unable to sustain a "communal voice" because the majority of the fragmented endings "suggest individual rather than communal resolution."[37] Although Lanser acknowledges that one ending is "evading the hetero-individualist plot," she goes on to state that "while Wollstonecraft might eventually have finished her novel, *The Wrongs of Woman* would probably not have resolved its contradictory imperatives toward conventional novelization and communal form" because the "eighteenth-century discourse lacked the valorization of female community—especially lesbian community or community across class lines."[38] But repeated patterns of community among women of all classes suggests that the communal ending between Maria and Jemima is the one towards which Wollstonecraft was working. Similarities between the stories Jemima and Maria narrate connect them to each other by suggesting they are alike and emphasizing the cross-class element of the relationship. Their stories, and all the other women's stories that mirror theirs, are paralleled in the novel, and become a way of connecting and creating community among women of different classes.

"Born a woman—and born to suffer": Women's Common Experiences

The focus on women's networks within the domestic environment and the presentation of Maria's and Jemima's friendship as an ideal suggest that women's community is the answer the novel is working towards. Wollstonecraft writes, "though boys may be reckoned the pillars of the house without doors, girls are often the only

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[36] Ibid., 230, 232.
[37] Ibid., 225. 236-7.
[38] Ibid., 237.

comfort within" (Wollstonecraft, 102); later Maria says, "Aware of the evils my sex have to struggle with, I still wished, for my own consolation, to be the mother of a daughter" (Wollstonecraft, 119). Both quotations repeat the idea of women being comforters to each other: in the first Maria is discussing her own role of caring for her dying mother, and in the second the desire for a daughter. Despite the focus here on the mother-daughter relationship, the idea of women's community also includes servant-maids, a relationship that is part of the domestic environment and is comparable to the mother-daughter relationship in the cultural imagination. Maria's own companionship and comfort has come from female servants, and in the absence of an understanding family, she relies on the maids to be her allies. It is a house-maid that helps Maria move the bed she donates to her nurse, to whom Maria is attached because of her role as a surrogate mother. This relationship recognizes women's connections and responsibility towards one another regardless of class.

Especially condemned in *Maria* are women who do not recognize the connections among all women, but instead only identify with women of the same class. This is the case of Jemima's mother's mistress, who, during her own pregnancy demands the careful and indulgent treatment she then denies her servant: "scarcely permitting a footstep to be heard, during her month's indulgence, [she] felt no sympathy for the poor wretch, denied every comfort required by her situation" (Wollstonecraft, 80). Of women who ally themselves with men, like the woman who helps George Venables drug Maria and steal her daughter, Maria says, "How could a creature in a female form see me caress thee, and steal thee from my arms" (Wollstonecraft, 134). The quotation suggests the abduction is particularly heinous because the perpetrator is a woman who should have identified with

the maternal; Maria's critique emphasizes the commiseration and understanding women should have for one another. Repeatedly, men prohibit and inhibit the formation of female community; patriarchy in the form of George will not allow Maria to bring her sisters to live with her. This is in danger of occurring in the asylum. When Jemima tells her story, Maria aligns herself with Darnford, as they make philosophical comments about the oppression of the lower class. After Jemima tells her story, Wollstonecraft writes, "Active as love was in the heart of Maria, the story she had just heard made her thoughts take a wider range…. thinking of Jemima's peculiar fate and her own, she was led to consider the oppressed state of woman, and to lament that she had given birth to a daughter" (Wollstonecraft, 92). Maria recognizes her and her daughter's identification with Jemima, making Darnford fade into the background; he is no longer her primary concern as she re-focuses on the feminine through the daughter and Jemima. This foreshadows the ending in which Jemima, Maria, and the missing daughter are united.

This exclusion of men and the creation of separate relationships with women is the process being outlined by the novel as illustrated by Maria's reaction to Venables' illegitimate child: "'I grew sick at heart. And, fearing Mr. Venables might enter, and oblige me to express my abhorrence, I hastily enquired where she lived, promised to pay her two shillings a week more, and to call her in a day or two; putting a trifle into her hand as a proof of my good intention" (Wollstonecraft, 112). Unlike Jemima's mistress, who throws her out of the house when the master seduces her, and unlike Jemima herself who convinces a lover to get rid of another pregnant mistress, Maria does not attack the woman or child she recognizes as victims like herself. Instead she becomes a secret ally, forming a kind of household with them to help maintain the child. The relationship

prefigures the family she and Jemima form, which is based on the idea of dual mothering. It also suggests that acknowledging equality with other victims allows for the creation of community. This idea of recognizing the mutual oppression of women is constantly repeated. When Maria is running away from her husband, the landlady of the home where she is hiding tells of her own oppression in marriage and her own series of flights and pursuit from a husband who wants her money. Ironically, as she echoes Maria's troubles, she says to Maria, "these are misfortunes that you gentlefolks know nothing of" (Wollstonecraft, 130). This story again emphasizes the way men inhibit female community and, just like Jemima's story, collapses the walls between women of different classes. A community of women is created around women's common experiences and circumstances; it is actualized in the relationship between Jemima and Maria, who are brought together because of their literal and figurative imprisonment.

The various women's stories repeat the theme of oppression, creating what Lanser terms a "sequential communal voice," which is "a series of mutually reinforcing narrators."[39] Most prominently, Maria's and Jemima's stories mirror each other; the similarities erase class differences. Both begin their lives with unloving and tyrannical fathers, and dead (in Jemima's case) or disconnected and thus absent (in Maria's case) mothers; both are marginalized in favor of another sibling. Jemima starts life as a servant in her father's home and then becomes an apprentice, while Maria feels like a servant in her father's home because it requires from her an "unconditional submission to orders" (Wollstonecraft, 95); later she feels like her husband's servant because she cannot love or respect him. Jemima is raped by her master, becomes a prostitute, and lives as a man's mistress. Maria is similarly a sexual victim. She is practically sold into marriage by her

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[39] Ibid., 227.

uncle when he gives her a fortune to entice Venables to marry her; later, her husband tries to sell her to another man. Recalling Jemima's rape by her master, Maria says, "My husband's renewed caresses then became hateful to me; the brutality was tolerable, compared to his distasteful fondness. Still, compassion, and fear of insulting his supposed feelings, by a want of sympathy, made me dissemble, and do violence to my delicacy" (Wollstonecraft, 113). The words "distaste," "brutality," "violence," and "fear" recall Jemima's description of her own rape. Echoing the story of Jemima's being hunted by the law for prostitution and incarcerated for being a thief, Maria is hunted by the law for running away from her husband and incarcerated in the asylum. Similarly, the two women with whom Maria hides are victims of husbands who steal their earnings, much as Venables has done to Maria. While all the stories are class specific, setting them side by side draws attentions to their similarities. Despite their different backgrounds Jemima and Maria, equally oppressed and powerless, are on equal ground where they can connect; this notion of equality makes possible the novel's utopia.

"Insisting on being considered as her house-keeper": A Revised Role

In *Maria*, Wollstonecraft creates a continuum for women's experience through her use of the word "house-keeper." Discussing her father's mistress, Maria says,

> The house-keeper, as she was now termed, was the vulgar despot of the family; and assuming the new character of a fine lady, she could never forgive the contempt which was sometimes visible in my countenance, when she uttered with pomposity her bad English, or affected to be well bred. (Wollstonecraft, 104)

The title of "house-keeper," a higher-class status than that belonging to the maid become mistress, denotes an ambiguous position. It allows for the mistress to be a lady but without really possessing the necessary qualities: like a governess, the house-keeper has an undefined position in the house and class structure. She has command over the servants and can also be a person with education or one of a better class who has economic hardships. Close contact with the family suggests a higher class and education, but it also gives her more prestige in contrast to the other servants, and a certain amount of authority.

And yet the word "housekeeper" also has the effect of disempowering, as we see when discussing her own marriage Maria says,

> for a woman to live with a man, for whom she can cherish neither affection nor esteem, or even be of any use to him, excepting in the light of a house-keeper is an abjectness of condition, the enduring of which no concurrence of circumstances can ever make a duty in the sight of God or just men.
>
> (Wollstonecraft, 117)

Whereas in the first quotation, the term "house-keeper" raises the mistress to a slightly less problematic position, in the second quotation the word is used to describe a lonely, oppressive, and demeaning life. This analogy between a wife and an upper servant, commonly used to signal a woman's oppressed position, also works to reveal that the wife is no better than a mistress and brings women of different classes together into one category. Additionally it highlights the economic inequality of marriage that imprisons women. In many ways the problem becomes that unlike house-keepers, wives are not paid and have even less independence.

The ability to connote both power and powerlessness, the ambiguity of the position, opens up a way of imagining a different option for women, where they have both prestige and independence, but also the freedom, emotional connections, and community lacking in a marriage that diminishes the wife into a house-keeper. Thus we are told that "Jemima insist[ed] on being considered as her house-keeper, and to receive the customary stipend. On no other terms would she remain with her friend (Wollstonecraft, 140). In this final quotation, the word "house-keeper," describes a position of independence, in particular economic independence. The kind of power found in the service status is explained by Rizzo: "Companions who were economically serviceable, however, could enjoy greater respect and security, even if combined with lower social status. The more empowered companions were often those who had other job titles as well and more useful but menial occupations that conferred salaries."[40] Just as a "title and salary" might reduce the status of the companion but "increase her importance and independence" in the household, in the novels the mistress-maid community and the mistress's identification with a lower-class status are actually empowering for the mistress. By acknowledging the power of labor, the novel acknowledges the value of the person working: Jemima wants to be considered a housekeeper rather than a companion who relies on the mistress's charity. The exclusion of charity (one of the few forms of power available to women) allows the women to be equal, and instead in *Maria* mistress and servant participate in a community of oscillating power based on a redefinition of charity, an acknowledgement and utilization of the power possessed by the servant, and the sharing of the mother role.

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[40] Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, 142.

Using the word "house-keeper," Wollstonecraft levels the category of class, and reveals the similarities between all the roles available to women. The word "house-keeper" is used for a vulgar house-maid that becomes a mistress; for Maria who is from the upper classes, a wife and a mother; and for Jemima, the daughter of a servant who is herself a servant, but has also been a mistress, a prostitute and a thief. Wollstonecraft is illustrating the wide array of statuses that can be encompassed by the position of house-keeper, but she is also using the term to erase class and alter the way women are positioned in relation to each other. Ladies become house-keepers/servants and servants are associated with the socially acceptable roles assigned to upper-class women. A connection is even made by Maria with her father's mistress when she writes, "It did not require an effort for me to treat her with civility, or to forget the past" (Wollstonecraft, 112). Maria can identify with the mistress and see her as a victim now that she has been a wife who is treated like a mistress and has a husband who seduces innocent servant-maids. The word "house-keeper" applies to all and creates a community around the common experiences of women as Sarah Scott does in *Millenium Hall*. But Wollstonecraft's community redefines the ideal by defying class boundaries. Rather than raising the servant in status, the community between Jemima and Maria and the mirroring of the women in the text emphasizes the metaphor of women as servants, with husbands and other male or patriarchal figures in the place of the masters. As servants, women are able to use the power of servants to resist male oppression and usurp authority.

Wollstonecraft takes a position that is ambiguous and turns it into something powerful, recreating the role; similarly, the cell is transformed into a utopian space. Jemima is a kind of house-keeper in her father's house, where it is oppressive, but in the

end she chooses the same position, re-imagined to include economic freedom and friendship. Jemima summarizes the difference when she says of going to live with her father and his family, “I was brought to her house; but not to a home—for a home I never knew” (Wollstonecraft, 81). This statement and use of the possessive pronoun “her” stresses a lack of ownership and participation. She is brought to her father’s home to be a servant and take care of her step-sister, putting her in a caretaking role, but she is “treated like a creature of a different species” (Wollstonecraft, 81) by her father and step-mother. The opposite is true of her relationship with Maria, where she is “treated like a fellow-creature” (Wollstonecraft, 79). The household of three women (Jemima, stepmother, and half sister) is a point of comparison with the community of the end where there are again three women (a mother, a caretaker/mother-like figure, and a child). In the earlier household, Jemima can not have a relationship with her half sister because of the class distinction between them: “Seeing me treated with contempt, and always being fed and dressed better, my sister conceived a contemptuous opinion of me, that proved an obstacle to all affection” (Wollstonecraft, 81). Class distinctions have already been removed from the relationship of Maria and Jemima because of Maria’s fallen state in the asylum and through the recognition that she is like Jemima. Moreover, at the end, Jemima is empowered through economic independence, through wages instead of the charity her step-mother perceives herself as giving, and through emotional fulfillment via friendship with Maria and mothering of the daughter. With her father and his wife, Jemima is overlooked and unloved. She lacks a father and mother, and a sibling. With Maria and her daughter she will be a mother and be mothered herself.

“The world contained not three happier beings”: A Utopia within the Prison

From the beginning, the cell in which Maria is incarcerated is a separate space of women’s community:

> Jemima had evidently pleasure in her society: still though she often left her with a glow of kindness, she returned with the same chilling air; and, when her heart appeared for a moment to open, some suggestion of reason forcibly closed it, before she could give utterance to the confidence Maria’s conversation inspired (Wollstonecraft, 68).

Not only does the cell bring the two women together, but their relationship there has a kind of rehabilitative effect on Jemima’s behavior, one that can not function outside the cell. Similarly, for Maria the cell and her experience in the prison is altered by Jemima’s compassion, which causes her to allow Maria to walk, read, have a light to read by late into the night, and to exchange letters with Darnford. The cell is a place where class roles are reversed; Maria becomes dependent on Jemima for everything. The inversion of power dynamics makes Jemima’s company important: “Maria anxiously expected the return of the attendant, as of a gleam of light to break the gloom of idleness” (Wollstonecraft, 64). The reversal forces Maria to see Jemima as an individual, leading to a friendship. Later in the novel, Jemima also has a rehabilitative effect on Maria’s behavior when she saves her life. Jemima’s “glow” which seems like a “gleam of light,” is only present when they are together, highlighting the importance of their friendship.

When considering her situation Maria continues to use the metaphor of light for life and hope: “The lamp of life seemed to be spending itself to chase the vapours of a dungeon which no art could dissipate. — And to what purpose did she rally her energy?

— Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?" (Wollstonecraft, 64). A direct analogy is drawn between Maria's imprisoned condition and the situation of women in general. Following the image, if the world is a prison, and women are locked up within it, there is a space within that enclosure, as represented by the cell, where women can come together and find comfort and an alternative relationship. In this poetic comparison, the light imagery is symbolic of life and that is exactly what these women find when they are together. This light literally spreads and alters the space of the cell, creating the first utopian moment of female community.

When Maria first falls in love, "A magic lamp now seemed to be suspended in Maria's prison, and fairy landscapes flitted round the gloomy walls, late so blank" (Wollstonecraft, 78). Here the emotional connection between Darnford and Maria only produces a "lamp" that is "suspended," as compared to the use of the words "bloomed," and "the sun broke forth" in the description of the utopian moment in the cell.[41] The words describing the Maria-Darnford relationship suggest limitations in comparison to the Maria-Jemima relationship. With love the walls may lose their gloom but the walls

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[41] In the prison, a blurring of gender is seen in the feminization of Darnford that allows the community to be read as a community of women. Darnford is described as always being accompanied on his walks by "two keepers; but even then his hands are confined" (Wollstonecraft, 69). The limitations of his movements and the lack of independence underscore his similarity to a woman who cannot leave her house unaccompanied. Darnford is feminized to the extent that his authority and power have been taken away from him. He tells Maria, "Whoever you are, who partake of my fate, accept my sincere commiseration—I would have said protection, but the privilege of man is denied me" (Wollstonecraft, 72). He cannot enquire about Maria and try to remedy her situation. These privileges are transferred to Jemima, whose gender is also blurred; she is described as masculine both physically with her "firm, deliberate steps, strongly marked features, and large black eyes" (Wollstonecraft, 62), and in the protective role that she plays as she keeps watch to make sure no one interrupts the meetings in the asylum. The altered privileges destabilize gender categories, which in turn allows for a re-imagining of the privileges of gender. Darnford uses his male and class prerogative to tell his story, and because of her ambiguous gendering and empowered position, Jemima is able to usurp his storytelling, allowing her to find a voice. The patriarchal and upper-class power to speak is usurped by the servant and used to alter the gender hierarchy. Pohl and D'Monte write, "Destabilizing sexual as well as class identity seems to open up a space for female community in the early modern period." Pohl and D'Monte, foreword to *Female Communities: 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities*, xiv.

that enclose and limit still remain; yet in the momentary utopian moment, the space is completely altered and the women are "transported" to a different space, suggesting that the group and community is necessary for the ideal moment to take place. The utopian group is not about mimicking and re-imagining marriage[42] but about recreating the social relationships available to women and providing a different model.[43] This community arises again in the ending of the novel that I prefer; it is only after the daughter is found and the group is created that Jemima can again step forward from the background and there is hope for change. The need for the group emphasizes that this utopia is not a version of marriage and that the maternal is at its center, replacing patriarchy.

During Maria's incarceration, the cell is momentarily transformed into a haven. Jemima has just returned to the cell and with her entrance the three occupants (Maria, Darnford, and Jemima) share a moment of intimate storytelling that leads to unity. The description suggests that the space is changed, or that a magical removal to some other space has occurred:

> So much of heaven did they enjoy, that paradise bloomed around them; or they, by a powerful spell had been transported into Armida's garden. Love, the grand enchanter, 'lapt them in Elysium, and every sense was harmonized to joy and social extacy. So animated, indeed, were their accents of tenderness, in discussing what, in other circumstances, would have been common-place subjects, that Jemima felt, with surprise, a tear of pleasure trickling down her rugged cheeks. She wiped it away, half ashamed; and when Maria kindly enquired the cause, with all the eager solicitude of a happy being wishing to impart to all nature its overflowing felicity. Jemima owned that it was the first tear that social enjoyment had ever drawn from her. She seemed indeed to breathe more freely; the cloud of suspicion cleared away from her brow; she felt herself, for once in her life, treated like a fellow-creature.

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[42] In *Companions without Vows*, Rizzo discusses the way in which the mistress-companion relationship replicated the marriage relationship.

[43] According to Lee Cullen Khanna,Utopias function around the process of exchange of care and material giving and "moving beyond dyadic relationships," which would explain why the two moments of utopia in Maria are constructed around groups of three and not just Maria and Jemima. Lee Cullen Khanna, "Utopian Exchanges: Negotiating Difference in Utopia," in Pohl and Tooley, *Gender and Utopia*, 31

> Imagination! who can paint thy power; or reflect the evanescent tints of hope fostered by thee? A despondent gloom had long obscured Maria's horizon—now the sun broke forth, the rainbow appeared, and every prospect was fair. Horror still reigned in the darkened cells, suspicion lurked in the passages, and whispered along the walls. The yells of men possessed, sometimes made them pause, and wonder that they felt so happy, in a tomb of living death. They even chid themselves for such apparent insensibility; still the world contained not three happier beings. And Jemima, after again patrolling the passage, was so softened by the air of confidence which breathed around her, that she voluntarily began an account of herself. (Wollstonecraft, 79)

This new imagined space is described as a paradise but the author acknowledges that this is merely a temporary vision. The contradictions of this imagined space are further recognized by the recognition that it is a tomb, although the group has altered its function. Similarly the final utopia is a space created within the society that Wollstonecraft has shown to be a prison for women. When the three characters are sharing the cell, the space is presented as a kind of ideal moment of human interaction. This idyllic view of the moment is suggested by the effect that it has on Jemima. Her life has made her suspicious, hard, and distrustful of relationships, but here the "cloud of suspicion cleared," she is "softened," and she opens up to the group. In comparison to the other cells and the surrounding asylum which are described as "darkened," and associated with death, happiness takes the place of sorrow, suspicions are cured and there is the brightness, again returning to the images of light that suggest life. The transformation of the space is brought about by the conversation and emotional sharing, as well as by the equality extended to Jemima: "she felt herself, for once in her life, treated like a fellow-creature" (Wollstonecraft, 79). The outcome is that "the world contained not three happier beings" (Wollstonecraft, 79). The happiness experienced is not the effect of Maria and Darnford's love or the kind treatment of the servant, but of the inclusion of Jemima; it is suggested that she is a participant and part of the transformation of the space

since she cries because she has had "social enjoyment" (Wollstonecraft, 79). Jemima's presence has altered the conversation with "the restraint of her presence" (Wollstonecraft, 79) and it is then that this moment of happiness can occur. Before her arrival the focus is on the couple and self-gratification through passion but with her arrival a group is formed, and with her tears there is an exchange of compassion and caring between Maria, Jemima, and Darnford.

When Maria and Jemima's interactions are first described, Maria is kind to Jemima and she feels "esteem" for her, but she only sees Jemima for what she can do for her. They are functioning like the charitable connections rejected earlier in the book, and are also mirroring Maria's marriage, in which Venables marries her for her fortune. This form of kindness with an ulterior motive is altered in the moment of "paradise" experienced by the three characters. At this point Maria and Jemima connect when Maria shows genuine concern for Jemima and asks about her tears. Greenfield notes that the female couple is the final ideal held up by this novel, and goes on to note that "*Wrongs* stresses women's affinities with each other regardless of class;" but she also see the relationship as a kind of accommodation where Maria "tolerates Jemima."[44] Although the relationship between Maria and Jemima begins because the women are forced together by circumstances, the novel's erasure of class differences by mirroring the two women and their stories suggests that rather than an accommodation, the inter-class relationship is the ideal desired by Wollstonecraft. Maria tries several times to find companionship with others of her class, but these repeatedly fail. The lower-class Jemima is the answer to Maria's search for fellowship.

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[44] Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters*, 93, 100.

In the utopian-like moment of community in the asylum, Darnford momentarily participates in the female community, but he is a problematic figure that threatens the community because of his class. His appearance disturbs the developing relationship between Jemima and Maria; he is set up as a contrast to Jemima and as a threat to the women's community. As soon as Maria begins to borrow Darnford's books and the two commence exchanging marginal notes and letters, Jemima fades into the background and her importance to Maria decreases. Significantly, Maria's connection to Darnford is through literature and notes that are "observations on the present state of society and government, with a comparative view of politics of Europe and America. These remarks were written with a degree of generous warmth, when alluding to the enslaved state of the labouring majority, perfectly in unison with Maria's mode of thinking" (Wollstonecraft, 68). Both the literature Maria and Darnford read and the ideas they share in their notes have to do with benevolence toward those less fortunate. Their connection is built on similar education and social points of view; they share the same class ideology, which threatens to erase Jemima from the group. During these interactions she functions like a courier, carrying the books and notes between Maria and Darnford with no share in the social interactions. The shared class point of view between Maria and Darnford also emerges during Jemima's account of her life in a momentary interruption, during which Maria and Darnford comment on her narrative. These comments are divisive and threaten to remove Maria from Jemima's experiences. When both Darnford and Jemima tell their life stories, a choice is set up for Maria. Ultimately Jemima's story leads Maria to recognize the falseness of her class alignment with Darnford.

The family imagined by Wollstonecraft blurs class identity through Jemima's storytelling, which privileges the female servant's life story, and through the power her tale has to affect and educate Maria. By speaking Jemima is able to limit Darnford's power and temporarily disturb his hold on Maria. After Jemima tells her story, Maria is left "thinking of Jemima's peculiar fate and her own, and is led to consider the oppressed state of woman, and to lament that she had given birth to a daughter" (Wollstonecraft, 92). Simultaneously, as Maria is seeing her own degraded state, Jemima becomes an individual with a story, not just a servant-woman typical of her class. The emphasis on the feminine and the maternal replaces all other concerns. Maria's attention is returned to the missing daughter; she thinks of the child and perceives the similarities between Jemima, herself, and her daughter. Rather than the romantic plot we are expecting as Jemima walks in, the novel offers a vision of empowering and nurturing female community.

Although the choice between Darnford and Jemima emphasizes women's community as a preferable alternative to traditional marital relationships, the novel makes clear that the bond of gender is not enough, that egalitarianism is also necessary to prevent exclusions, since all women share the same social experiences. The importance of the inter-class community is made evident by the way in which community with other women is not possible for Maria. While in the asylum, Maria hears another woman inhabitant singing and begins to "pourtray to herself another victim" (Wollstonecraft, 70). She starts to identify with this woman thinking of her as a victim like herself, which is what ultimately allows her to connect with Jemima. The description of this woman's voice and her "lovely" appearance mark her as upper-class in contrast to the roughness

and masculinity that signifies Jemima's working-class status. Yet Maria's hope for a kindred spirit and her identification with this other inmate of the asylum are quickly cut short when she hears the woman's mad outburst. Similarly, other possible connections with women are short-lived. Maria attempts a friendship with Venables's sister but that is quickly abandoned in favor of romance.[45] Later when Maria leaves the asylum she is also unable to find friendship with other women of her class; when visiting "ladies with whom she had formerly been intimate," she is refused admittance because she is "openly living with her lover" (Wollstonecraft, 140). Although these women also have affairs, their marriages allow them to hide their behavior. They refuse to recognize the similarities between themselves and Maria and thus with Jemima, with whom Maria has already identified. Class is an impediment to community, and weakens women by making them go mad and be useless and/or by limiting their power; they have to follow patriarchal rules in order to maintain their position. In contrast, the lower-class figure is powerful precisely because she is marginalized and already exists in a separate space from those in power, distant from the social authority that upper-class women must embrace in order to be accepted. Acknowledging that all women are outcasts and rejecting dominant society allows women to create community. In contrast to earlier utopias, to participate in this community there is a need to completely relinquish social mores and categories, making Wollstonecraft's alternative a threat to traditional society in a way other utopias are not.

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[45] Claudia L. Johnson also notes the way this friendship never comes to fruition, but for her it is has to do with the way the "heterosexual dyad represses female rather than male homosociality." She goes on to say, "Not only are women kept irrelevant to each other, but jailed themselves, they become jailers to other women as well." Johnson, *Equivocal Beings*, 66. In contrast, I argue that the class difference is necessary because the servant's multiple subject positions are necessary for the final community.

"I will teach her to consider you as her second mother": Co-mothering

The equal female community first seen in the cell emerges in the ending of the novel I am discussing as Jemima, Maria, and the missing daughter join together. Drugged and waiting to die, Maria reviews the possibilities open to women, then rejects them and offers an alternative. Reflecting traditional religious thought, Maria first thinks "may I find a father where I am going" (Wollstonecraft, 147), but paternal care and male protectors have not been the answer at any point. Maria's father has been tyrannical and neglectful, and both her husband and lover are merely interested in her fortune, abandoning her after benefiting from that money. Her brother has participated in the plot to steal Maria's money and child while secluding her in the asylum, and even her uncle traps her in marriage but later fails to help her escape. Moreover, it is men that prevent women in the novel from helping each other. Maria's next thought is of her mother, but the novel has characterized mothers as often powerless to help their children: women who are bound to men are limited in what they can do for themselves or other women. The only thing that Maria's mother has been able to give her is the legacy of escaping through death, and Maria repeats the words she utters while dying.[46] This final section opens with the idea of escape: "She swallowed the laudanum; her soul was calm—the tempest had subsided—and nothing remained but an eager longing to forget herself—to fly from the anguish she endured to escape from thought—from this hell of disappointment" (Wollstonecraft, 147). The option of death and escape was available to

[46] When Mary Wollstonecraft's own mother died her last words were, " A little patience, and all will be over" Tomalin, *The Life and Death*, 20. These words are echoed in *Maria* by Maria's mother as she dies: "A little more patience, and I too shall be at rest" (Wollstonecraft, 103), and are again recalled in Maria's own words as she lies dying.

Jemima's mother too; Maria is in danger of following this traditional path for women without men.

The novel is trying to offer a different answer, to reject the traditional endings of marriage or death for women. Instead, the form of escape and the answer it provides is that women need to combine together and separately from men. Wollstonecraft's answer to women's oppression, a life giving community, which appears in a "vision" (Wollstonecraft, 147) when Maria is most debased and desperate, empowers Jemima and creates a balance between the women. As Maria lies dying, Jemima enters with the lost daughter, whom she has taught to say "Mamma." Together, they save Maria's life by giving her the desire and capacity to live, so that she says, "'The conflict is over! I will live for my child!'" (Wollstonecraft, 148). In fact she will live not only for her daughter, but also for Jemima, who will be a second mother to the little girl and to Maria, but who will also be a daughter. Jemima asks, "Would you leave her alone in the world, to endure what I have endured?" (Wollstonecraft, 147). Her words link Jemima and the daughter, suggesting that she will vicariously finally receive the maternal love that she has been missing and in that in some sense she will also be mothered by Maria who will be her mistress and friend. The servant's larger role in mothering elevates her, creating a balance between her and the mistress, giving her access to a power appropriated and defined by the middle class.

Wollstonecraft makes maternity into a position of power, using it to challenge patriarchy and class hierarchy. Maria's story of having her child stolen as she is breastfeeding affects Jemima: "The woman awoke in a bosom long estranged from feminine emotions, and Jemima determined to alleviate all in her power" (Wollstonecraft,

64). Her maternal instinct functions to unify women, emphasizing gender and ignoring class. The altered allegiance positions them as a threat against male authority because they will work together to against the patriarchy that allows women to be falsely incarcerated. From the moment that Jemima and Maria connect due to a shared maternal instinct, Jemima begins to listen and watch her master, questioning his authority. Yet despite this initial focus on the biological similarities among women, Wollstonecraft is not interested in emphasizing the physical and biological roles of women, which can limit and weaken. For Wollstonecraft, maternity is a social role and a way of interacting among women that can be used to recreate social relationships and structures. When Wollstonecraft writes, "She pronounced the name of her child with pleasurable fondness; and with all the garrulity of a nurse, described her first smile when she recognized her mother" (Wollstonecraft, 93), she fails to differentiate between the mother and nurse, blurring the two roles and depicting mothering as a shared role; it is the ability to share power that creates community.

Wollstonecraft re-imagines motherhood as a position that invests women with authority. Jemima says, "Now I look back, I cannot help attributing the greater part of my misery, to the misfortune of having been thrown into the world without the grand support of life—a mother's affection. I had no one to love me; or to make me respected, to enable me to acquire respect" (Wollstonecraft, 82). In addition to the emotional and moral component of mothering, traditionally assigned to maternity, Wollstonecraft's emphasis on "respect" suggests social position, the giving of which is a power usually attached to the father. She goes on to further reassign paternal functions to women by imagining mothers as the protectors of daughters and saying that only a mother, "will dare to break

through all restraint to provide for your happiness—who will voluntarily brave censure herself, to ward off sorrow from your bosom" (Wollstonecraft, 95), invoking the idea of masculine courage and protection usually associated with the father. Wollstonecraft recreates the maternal so that it is less limiting by endowing it with traits usually associated with the masculine. To imagine Jemima as a mother is to empower her and the sharing of the mother role, is to create a community where both are empowered; yet since they also mother each other, both are simultaneously submissive.

In the first instance of community, Maria is maternal in the compassion she shows for Jemima and in her role of educating Jemima's heart; the two women share the maternal role when Maria promises that if Jemima finds the daughter, Maria "will teach her to consider you as her second mother" (Wollstonecraft, 92). As Maria initiates the search by asking Jemima to find the daughter, and Jemima does the physical searching, both participate in maternal concern and care. At the end of the novel, Jemima is the prime maternal figure. While Maria gives up on finding her daughter and sits back to lament and then attempt suicide, Jemima is actively busy trying to find the child and ultimately is successful, showing Jemima's independence from Maria. This point of activity is important in terms of the middle-class ideology of motherhood, which advocated the mother's central role in the home.[47] Idle aristocratic mothers were criticized and urged to become involved and busy mothers, particularly by the advocates of breastfeeding.[48] That a comparison between women of different classes is being

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[47] For a discussion of ideas about maternity in the eighteenth century see Greenfield and Barash, *Inventing Maternity*, and Greenfield *Mothering Daughters*.

[48] Toni Bowers writes, "The denigration of aristocratic mothers as unloving pleasure-seekers who refused to be inconvenienced by breastfeeding becomes ubiquitous in Augustan conduct literature." Toni Bowers, "A Point of Conscience": Breastfeeding and Maternal Authority in *Pamela*, Part 2" in Greenfield and Barash, *Inventing Maternity*, 141. This theme of the uninvolved and inactive mother is seen in *Maria.* When discussing the miseries of her childhood, Maria says of her mother, "My mother had an indolence of

drawn is clear from the way the suicide attempt and the locating of the infant are paralleled in the plot; the two moments take place at the same time. Just as Maria attempts to end her life and terminate her pregnancy (which is passive, and equivalent to abandoning the child), Jemima walks in with the little girl. She has been vigorous in her pursuit and care of the child; moreover, she has done the job of a mother; she has taught the child her first word, educating her. Furthermore, if a mother's role is also to give life and protect, Jemima's role in the novel is repeatedly that of giving life, by saving Maria's daughter, by saving Maria from the asylum and then from herself, and by possibly saving the unborn child.

Mothering is a form of power given from Maria to Jemima and shared. Maria's association with Jemima, and her lower-class servant status, is also empowering to Maria. Community with a servant gives her access to lower-class mobility and freedom, the same mobility that allows Jemima to travel in order to find the daughter. The servant also has the capacity to work and survive, a freedom not given to upper-class women. Maria's own sister dies because she can not make a living; Maria criticizes her calling it "false pride" and addressing her daughter says, "I fondly hope to see (yes; I will indulge the hoper for a moment!) possessed of the energy of character which gives dignity to any station; and with that clear, firm spirit that will enable you to choose a situation for yourself, or submit to be classed in the lowest, if it be the only one in which you can be the mistress of your own actions" (Wollstonecraft, 111). Work, which empowers servants and earns them the right to be part of the family (as seen in the excerpt from Haywood's

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character, which prevented her from paying much attention to our education" (Wollstonecraft, 96). In *Mary*, Wollstonecraft similarly describes the heroine's problematic childhood by describing Mary's mother as having "a kind of indolence in her temper;" and she goes on to say that "the children were given to nurses, and she played with her dogs." Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary,* ed. Janet Todd (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992), 5,7.

A Present), is held up as a goal for women; throughout the text, in the stories told by the many women, the work of service is available to some women as a way of surviving. The lower-class servant also has the capacity to live despite a ruined reputation while the upper-class woman who loses her position has to die, as seen in the case of Maria's sister. Jemima and the class status she shares with Maria, give Maria the ability to live. Together they defy the authority of the asylum, of Maria's husband (by recovering the baby) and of society (by recreating the family). They also recreate the traditional plot of marriage or death for the unmarried but sexualized woman. Both Maria and Jemima have sexual histories that compromise their virtue in the eyes of society, but they do not die like other compromised heroines, including Adeline in Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, nor are they condemned to an unhappy and isolated life in a convent. They are isolated in the utopian tradition of Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*, and find the possibility of living together in a nurturing community without men.

If we read the novel as ending with the discovery of the missing child, Maria's daughter will have a mother—in fact she will have two maternal figures that complement each other and a community of women to grow into. The similarities between Jemima and Maria's daughter suggested that the daughter was about to repeat Jemima's history, but the ending suggests that in this new family there is chance to change the trajectory of a woman's life. Importantly, as she is dying, Maria's thoughts also move from the traditional ineffectual mother to Jemima who has been a surrogate mother and who will co-mother with Maria. Together the mistress and servant create a new kind of family. In this community, the mistress and servant roles are harmonized; the blurred class boundaries allow the women to create a space in which they have access to power that is

flexible and shared. In recognizing the servant's contribution, the novel redefines the service relationship by altering the one-directional flow of benefits described in the conduct books for loyal servants. In the servant literature, only the master has the ability to nurture, guide, and protect the servant, but here both mistress and servant benefit from the relationship. It seems appropriate that women of all classes are brought together in the term "housekeeper," which was itself an ambiguous group. The servant's class flexibility and the double position of mistress (authority in the house over children and domestics, but servant to her husband) make the mistress-servant relationship particularly appropriate for a community that is imagined as hierarchically flexible and permeable. In *Adeline Mowbray* the servant is again a useful model for the community, this time because the multiplicity of the servant, the ability to be both servant and mistress-like, allows Opie to be subtly subversive in her condemnation of gender oppression and in imagining alternative relationships for women.

"Service of the heart": Rethinking Wollstonecraft

The final image of *Adeline Mowbray*, like that of *Maria*, is a community of mothers and daughters and of maternal nurturing. Opie takes up Wollstonecraft's focus but in her text the gynocentric network requires the acknowledgement and sanctioning of society. From the beginning of the novel Opie is critical of Mrs. Mowbray precisely because she rejects the practical, social sphere for the life of the mind: "this propensity to lose herself in a sort of ideal world, was considerably increased by the nature of her studies" (Opie, 4), and these same studies cause her to neglect her familial and domestic duties. After running away with Glenmurry, Adeline hopes several times to find comfort by withdrawing from society. When she is attempting a reconciliation with her mother,

she says, “I have no doubt but that my mother will now receive us; and that living in a romantic solitude, being the whole world to each other, our days will glide away in uninterrupted felicity” (Opie, 100); but this possibility is denied her. The primary lesson that Adeline seems to learn as she longs for female friendship, but is repeatedly rejected, is that she was wrong to think “that, as we lived for each other, we might act independently of society and serve it by our example even against its will” (Opie, 112). Yet, Opie does create a separate and independent space for women. With the death of Adeline, Opie punishes those that have subverted tradition, and leaves the reader with a group of women that will comfort one another. As they focus on their domestic and maternal concerns, as well as their Christian duties to fellow human beings, the women will assist each other in enduring the patriarchal rules of their society (which they recognize and respect). Although the overall picture of the final community leaves the structures of society in place, the individuals that form it, especially the figure of Savanna, subvert that image. Brenda Tooley says of Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian*, “the novel presumes the inevitability of institutional exercises of power and creates spaces within them for positive agency.”[49] Similarly, Opie sees the inevitability of social structures, and perhaps the necessity for them, since the community at Rosevalley that opens the novel lacks these structures and it is precisely for this reason that the household is problematic. But within those boundaries she creates a space of freedom and power. Opie makes the servant representative of Adeline and of all women, an abolitionist argument that strengthens the servant. Using the servant’s ambiguous strength, Opie makes women and their community both passive and strong.

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[49] Brenda Tooley, “Gothic Utopia: Heretical Sanctuary in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian,*” in *Gender and Utopia*, 68.

The ambivalent desire to separate from Wollstonecraft while supporting her leads to contradicting moments in the text of *Adeline Mowbray.* The novel is simultaneously conservative and radical even on the same points: women should marry but vows are meaningless, and maintaining established social structures is important but the Jamaican ex-slave and servant is the strongest character. Scholars have accounted for the contradictions in a variety of ways. King and Pierce describe it as "the middle ground Opie will occupy throughout the narrative, apparently endorsing the conservative critique of women who pursue theoretical politics, but equally warning against the dangers of a female failure to engage with those same ideas."[50] Also noting the "conflict between these competing ideologies," Howard notes "the social and political vision of the novel is fundamentally conservative" but there remains "a lingering affection for the proponents of the now dormant liberal philosophy."[51] Suggesting Opie takes the "middle ground" or that she shows a "lingering affection" for the liberal is a tepid reading of *Adeline Mowbray*, and does not adequately acknowledge its radical elements. While a focus on Adeline leads to a conservative or ambiguous reading, a focus on Savanna reveals Opie has relocated her arguments on gender to the servant figure and to her discussion of race and abolition.

The analogy between women and slaves prevailed in many of the texts addressing gender oppression and it was utilized by Wollstonecraft herself in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Moira Ferguson discusses the use of this analogy as she explores the way gender politics and abolitionist politics are inter-related, tracing the different forms and stages of the abolitionist movement and women's varying roles in it.

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[50] King and Pierce, introduction to *Adeline Mowbray*, xv.
[51] Howared,"'The Story of the Pineapple'," 357.

On the level of abolition, Opie argues for Savanna's equality and right to be accepted in society. But the mistress-servant relationship is used to show the similarities between Savanna and Adeline and to parallel the two figures; Savanna comes to fill in for Adeline as her voice. Since the servant functions as her mistress's double, to advocate for Savanna is to advocate for Adeline; the doubling allows Opie to support Adeline as she empowers Savanna. At all times Opie is arguing for both racial and gender rights.[52]

Greenfield also notes Savanna's role as Adeline's alter ego, but argues that she "helps return Adeline to the privileged social position she lost when divided from her mother. As the ultimate representative of the dark underclass, the servant provides a point of contrast against which Adeline's superior status can be distinguished," she writes and emphasizes Savanna's "role in absorbing the burden of abjection that formerly hampered the heroine."[53] While Savanna empowers Adeline, it is not because she is a lower point of comparison, but rather because Savanna shares her dual position of power and powerlessness with Adeline. By redefining Savanna's social position and strengthening her, Opie does the same for Adeline; it is a way to present her dual agenda without being overtly radical. By embracing Savanna and mothering her, the community seems to be practicing a kind of benevolence that maintains patriarchal order, but in the acceptance of Savanna, what they are embracing is an unchanged Adeline and a rebellious, powerful Savanna that has subverted and replaced authority. Through the doubling of mistress and servant, and through their relationship, Opie imagines equality among women. In this way, she surreptitiously pursues the same project as Wollstonecraft: female utopian communities that are egalitarian.

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[52] Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York: Routedge, 1992).
[53]Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters*, 126, 135.

Opie seemingly distances herself from Wollstonecraft, and takes on abolition, a widely accepted social cause that was already a covert way for women to access authority—both because men also endorsed it, and because it was considered an appropriate topic for women since it dealt with the emotions, caring, charity and the domestic through the goods consumed in the home.[54] Women's access to the public sphere via abolition became increasingly the possibility later in the nineteenth century, but Clare Midgley suggests that abolition empowered women early on by giving them a certain kind of social power and influence in the public debates over abolition. They were seen as "guardians of religion and morality, an attitude which encouraged men to take heed of women's views on a topic such as slavery."[55] Women's involvement in abolition was considered more appropriate than their involvement in other social issues because of the abolitionist debate's focus on religion, morality and questions about the treatment of women and the division of families. Opie uses the covert access to power granted to women by the abolitionist cause to make her own surreptitious argument for women.

A typical abolitionist argument would show Savanna's similarities to white women to show her humanity and thus her equality. By allowing Savanna to mirror and replace most of the women in the novel, as well as Berrendale, Opie shows Savanna's likeness with women and men but she also turns the argument back around. If Savanna and all women are the same, and Savanna is also the same as men, here represented by Berrendale, then Opie is claiming women's equality with men. Opie also alters the

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[54] Rizzo connects altruism or benevolence to social action and social power: "…more than men, women were by the second half of the century likely to come together for tacitly or avowedly altruistic purposes, that combinations of women, unable to meet for aggressive purposes (as in regiments), unlikely to meet for overtly deliberative purposes (as in judicial or governmental bodies), condemned to meet only for social purposes, had begun to discover charitable societies and purposes a challenging as well as acceptable use for their talents." Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows,* 23.

[55] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 16.

traditional abolitionist discourse by leveling the power dynamics of the relationship between the slave and the white abolitionist. Midgley writes,

> Idealising their own social position, white middle class British women sought to affirm their power and influence not by challenging male domination of the anti-slavery movement but by representing enslaved women both verbally and visually as the ultimate passive victims. They were described as 'the weakest and most succourless of the human race', as 'helpless victims'. White middle-class British women felt it was their duty to speak on behalf of these black women because as slaves they lacked the ability to speak for themselves and were deprived of male protection. Their assertions of sisterhood were thus in part paternalistic—or perhaps the term 'maternalistic' is more appropriate—offers of help by the benevolent to the powerless.[56]

Midgley observes that white women gained power in their relationships with, or juxtapositions to, slave women; this power dynamic is reversed or cancelled in *Adeline Mowbray*. As Savanna speaks for Adeline, and the maternal role is shared, we again see the oscillating power found between Maria and Jemima in *Maria*.

The two women meet when Adeline saves Savanna's sick husband from jail and certain death by paying his debt. Adeline is in the position of power when she saves the husband, but as the novel proceeds Savanna protects Adeline. Reflecting on this reciprocation of care, there is a moment when Savanna first comes to Adeline to be her servant in return for Adeline's help, and she is described as an ideal servant because she protects and nurtures Adeline with extra care. Communicating her point of view, the text describes her behavior as "the service of the heart" (Opie, 154). At the same moment, we

[56] Ibid., 102.

are given Adeline's thoughts and told that Adeline sees Savanna as "a being whom I have served" (Opie, 154). As in *Maria*, the women alternate in the position of power. Adeline has the economic power of paying the debt and at times treats Savanna like a servant (giving her orders and reprimanding her); however, Savanna also has economic power and is protective of Adeline for most of the novel. Savanna and Adeline are analogous, blurring the boundaries between mistress and servant. Opie asserts Savanna's equality and rethinks the practices of abolition. The mirroring works against both the "idealizing" of women, and the "maternalistic" "help by the benevolent to the powerless" discussed by Midgley.

Opie's analysis of abolition is comparable to Wollstonecraft's exploration and rejection of charity. Just as Wollstonecraft recreates charity to imagine a different way for women to relate to each other, Opie uses a mutually beneficial charitable act to depict the ideal relationship between classes and races. Charity is a traditional and acceptable form of power for women and Opie acknowledges it as such. The reader recognizes Adeline's innate virtue because she is charitable. However, the novel also shows the way generosity can be misused by characters like Sir Patrick who tries to seduce Adeline by giving charity in order to lull Adeline into believing that he can be trusted. Opie also explores how charity can be a meaningless act used to assume power. Mrs. Norberry sends Adeline money in order to get rid of her and emphasizes her sense of superiority by writing, "hoping miss Mowbray will soon see the error of her ways" (Opie, 142). Her letter sets a clear boundary between her daughters (also the giver of the charity) and Adeline (the receiver) when she emphasizes that although Adeline has asked for a loan, she and her daughters are giving a gift, thus disempowering Adeline. Unlike

Wollstonecraft, Opie does not reject charity altogether; rather she shows the charity practiced by Adeline towards Savanna where she gives what she can barely spare because of real concern and identification, rather than superiority, to Savanna. That Savanna is able to pay Adeline back acknowledges that she has her own power and creates a balance between the two women. Here charity creates an equal friendship, and becomes a model for the ideal relationship among women. In Opie's text charity leads to the same outcome as in Wollstonecraft's text; it makes possible an equal mistress-servant relationship, even though in *Maria* it is accomplished by rejecting charity. The same outcome with different presentation speaks to the differences between Opie's and Wollstonecraft's novels. When it comes to transforming traditional social behaviors and codes, Wollstonecraft overtly rejects them, but Opie adopts and then alters conventions.

"I never saw any woman…I so much wished to resemble": Abolition and Doubling

In return for Adeline's charity, Savanna "vows" her own and her son's services to Adeline: "Here, child, tawny boy, down on knees and vow wid me to be faithful and grateful to this our mistress, till our last day" (Opie, 145). When Adeline has a daughter, Savanna talks of "sending for the tawny boy to come and see his new mistress, and vow to her, as he had done to her mother, eternal fealty and allegiance" (Opie, 183). Grateful for Adeline's friendship as well as the payment of the debt, Savanna becomes a servant or as the exchange of money would suggest, a slave. But even as that relationship begins, the novel starts to question its validity, to challenge the hierarchy therein and to re-imagine it; like Wollstonecraft, Opie shows all women are in a shared position.

When Adeline first sees Savanna she witnesses a debt collector in the process of taking Savanna's sick husband William away to jail. Both the debt collector and a woman who tells Savanna's story to Adeline speak of her as a "lady." The two characters differentiate between her and Savanna, who is referred to as "that ugly black b—h" (Opie, 138). The woman relating the story says, "'it is only a poor man" (Opie, 137) and the debt collector says, "If I had been you, I would at least, have thanked the lady'"(Opie, 139); but even as they are differentiating between Adeline and Savanna, the reader and Adeline see the falseness of these distinctions, since the circumstances of Savanna's life mirror those of Adeline. Savanna is described as "the picture of sickness and despair, supporting a young man who seemed ready to faint every moment"; Adeline has just sold her veil, which she uses to hide "the sorrow marked on her countenance" because Glenmurry is also sick and dying (Opie, 136-7). Furthermore, like Savanna, who has spent all her money trying to save William, Adeline has just sold her last ornament in an effort to give Glenmurry some alleviation from his illness. Seeing her own circumstances reflected in the couple, Adeline is moved to help: "Adeline immediately pressed forward to inquire into the cause of a distress only too congenial to her feelings" (Opie, 137). Witnessing the scene with Savanna and her dying husband who is being dragged off to jail for debt, "Adeline thought on Glenmurry's danger, and shuddered as she beheld the scene; she felt it but a too probable anticipation of the one in which she might soon be an actor" (Opie, 138). As she continues listening to people tell Savanna's story and watching the scene of "distress," "Adeline felt it to her very soul" (Opie, 138); this textual moment recalls the scene where Maria recognizes her daughter's fate and her own circumstances

in Jemima's story. Adeline can help and save William, restoring him to Savanna in the way she would like to have Glenmurry restored to her.

The doubling of Adeline and Savanna stresses Adeline's subjugated position by showing that Adeline is as powerless as an ex-slave. Savanna is comparable to the virtuous, if misled heroine, erasing the differences of class and race that exist between two women who will become mistress and servant. The doubling stresses Adeline's similarities to Savanna, rather than depicting Savanna as unique for her race and class because she is like white women. Through the paralleling of mistress and servant Opie argues for Savanna's equality. Making an abolitionist argument, she alters the usual way of humanizing the racially different "other." She gives Savanna the servant's multiplicity, which will allow her to make her argument for Adeline and for gender equality. Savanna is equal and therefore part of society, but it does not alter her subjugated position since she is like the exiled Adeline. Moreover, although her similarities with Savanna emphasize Adeline's outsider status, they also paradoxically strengthen her. The relationship is reciprocally empowering.

According to Dwight McBride, "The primary site of contestation for the slavery debate in the nineteenth-century was African humanity" because "the main argument for the pro-slavery advocates for the justification of slavery was that Africans were not of the same variety of humanity as Europeans and were, therefore, fit for slavery," while "abolitionists were constantly responding to this claim in their writings by showing examples of the humanity of the African."[57] Opie participates in arguing for slaves' humanity, particularly through the importance she places on the maternal role and on

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[57] Dwight A. McBride, *Impossible Witness: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: new York University Press, 2002), 1, 8.

Savanna's superiority in that role. At the end, when Adeline dies in Savanna's arms, it is the ultimate recognition of her humanity, a portrait of the Jamaican as the ideal woman capable of loyalty, caring, comforting and self-sacrifice. Of course it could be argued that this is an oppressive, rather than an idealized role, because it assigns the sacrifice and suffering to the servant, allowing her to bear the master's burden. But the capacity to offer comfort to a dying person has been idealized from the beginning of the novel and set up as the role occupied by virtuous and ideal women. At the end of the novel this is the position that Savanna has achieved. When Adeline's grandmother dies, Opie writes, "In a few days more, she breathed her last on the supporting arm of Adeline" (Opie, 13). Similarly, the idealized Mrs. Pemberton is also capable of this selfless care of another woman; the reader is told that she has been taking care of a sick friend for "four long years" and that "her friend died in her arms" (Opie, 248). Finally a sign of Mrs. Mowbray's redemption is that by the end of the novel she has learned to care for the sick and dying. She is even capable of caring for Miss Woodville, who has prevented her from finding Adeline and comforts her as she dies, putting aside her travel plans to find Adeline. Savanna can achieve equality because she can provide this kind of comfort.

Indeed, Savanna is the only one who can provide care for Adeline, both physical and emotional, and the only one with the rational thought and insight to understand and see Adeline's true virtue. Adeline calls her the only person "who loves me with sincere and faithful affection" (Opie, 188). The end of the novel reiterates this sentiment and suggests that Savanna is Adeline's true mother. As Adeline dies, "she grasped Mrs. Mowbray's hand to her lips, and in vain imperfect accents exclaiming 'I thank thee, gracious Heaven!' she laid her head on Savanna's bosom, and expired" (Opie, 268). One of the

novel's trajectories is towards reuniting mother and daughter and fulfilling Adeline's last wish to die in her mother's arms. In her final letter to her mother she says, "How I should like to feel your hand supporting my head, and see you perform the little offices which sickness requires" (Opie, 257-8). Yet she finally dies in Savanna's arms. Dying in Savanna's arms is the ultimate recognition of Savanna's humanity and equality. Adeline says of Savanna, "the anxious friend (I will not call her servant) who is now my all of earthly comfort, will scarcely have money sufficient to pay me the last sad duties; and I owe her … a world of obligation" (Opie, 259). Although the relationship begins as a mistress-servant relationship, Savanna takes care of Adeline emotionally and financially, challenging and subverting the hierarchies of class and race. Abolitionists often denied slaves full humanity and equality with whites, but Opie offers Savanna equality and even pre-eminence through the comparisons made between Savanna and all the other women—Adeline, Adeline's mother, Mrs. Pemberton, and even with Berrendale.

Opie further blurs the boundaries of race by emphasizing what McBride calls "a common denominator"[58] between slave and reader. Motherhood draws women together, and unites them in a community with one another and encourages the reader to see white and black women as equal.[59] Similar to Wollstonecraft's claim that all women understand maternal affection and that this binds them together, recognizing similarities between women also creates a community in Opie's novel by extending maternal capacity and feeling to the racially different character. Opie's abolitionist stance may seem conservative to modern readers, but it is important to remember that this period is mostly

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[58] McBride, *Impossible Witness*, 14.

[59] This same technique is used in slave narratives to appeal to readers. In Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Jacobs uses her motherhood and maternal anguish to connect to her female readers by showing them that she shares their maternal values, feelings, and concerns.

concerned with ameliorating slavery and primarily focused on the slave trade in an effort to make slaves less replaceable and thus more valued commodities. The goal was to force owners to take greater care of their slaves, who would not be as easy to replace. From this perspective Opie's paralleling of Savanna and Adeline and the idea that she deserves a position in the family is radical. Moreover, Opie gives Savanna a position of superiority since Savanna's better mothering elevates her above Mrs. Mowbray, and even above the novel's exemplars, Mrs. Pemberton and Emma. In his discussion of Opie's "The Black Man's Lament," McBride suggests that Opie was progressive in her thoughts on abolition. He asserts that in contrast to other authors who represent African humanity and rage, including Maria Edgeworth in "The Grateful Negro" (1802) and William Cowper in "The Negro's Complaint" (1778), Opie "makes the slave a sympathetic figure. Through her advocacy of moral education, she puts the slave one step closer to full inclusion in the society of humankind."[60] This same kind of greater inclusion for the slave manifests itself in *Adeline Mowbray* in Savanna's inclusion in the community that closes the novel.

Savanna is further compared to Mrs. Mowbray in the vows both women make to Adeline. Adeline's mother forsakes her because she is competing with her and thinks Adeline has taken away her husband; Savanna comes to her because Adeline has restored her husband. Mrs. Mowbray promises to not see Adeline until she is dying; Savanna vows to never leave Adeline until her own death. Becoming a surrogate mother for Adeline, she picks up the task of mothering that Mrs. Mowbray has denounced. The contrast between Savanna and Mrs. Mowbray suggest how women should relate to each other, and challenges divisions due to class and race, by making a case for Savanna's maternal superiority and greater insight when it comes to Adeline. Opie takes this

[60] McBride, *Impossible Witness*, 8.

technique further when she allows Savanna to be the model mother. There are many maternal figures in the novel that attempt to help Adeline, but only Savanna successfully fills this position, establishing her role as the ideal mother, a position that is confirmed at the end of the novel.

When Glenmurry dies Mrs. Pemberton goes to Adeline because she knows Adeline "had no female friends" (Opie, 159). Yet Savanna completes the task and stays to care for Adeline: "'You leave her to my care,'… 'you leave her to my care, and who watch, who love her more than me?'" (Opie, 161). Similarly, Emma (another exemplar in the novel) says she will convince Adeline to marry Glenmurry in order to save her reputation, but it is Savanna who gets Adeline to marry Berrendale and in a manner saves her reputation. Although this is a problematic marriage it is suggested that it is preferable to Adeline's fallen state. The marriage does not allow Adeline to completely re-enter society but it does protect her. In both instances, the servant fulfills the same task in the text as in the home, carrying out the tasks required by the master-class, allowing Savanna to not only replace but also exceed the other women's capacity to help Adeline.

Continuing with the doubling technique that promotes the novel's abolitionist argument, the marriage-like resonance of Savanna's vows also contrasts her with Berrendale. Berrendale marries solely for his comfort, to have someone to take care of him. When the couple discusses marriage, Berrendale hesitates to marry "a woman so degraded as Adeline appeared to be" but when she promises to "study his happiness and wishes, in the minutest particulars…a twinge of the gout assisted Adeline's appeal" (Opie, 174). Berrendale's self-interest is repeated when just a few lines later Opie writes, "while a vision of approaching gout, and Adeline bending over his restless couch, floated

before him,, all his prudent considerations vanished" (Opie, 174). In contrast, Savanna's vow to serve Adeline is selfless, as was Adeline's assistance, and is mutually beneficial. Both women gain strength; Savanna has an outlet for her voice when she defends Adeline, and Adeline gains a voice via Savanna. The mistress-servant relationship functions to re-imagine marriage as a relationship of transferable power, and suggests the greater comfort women can find with each other, as seen when Savanna, her son, Adeline and Editha are all in the parlour equally sharing in a domestic moment: "Adeline, alive only to the maternal feeling, at this moment had forgotten all her cares; she saw nothing but the happy group around her, and her countenance wore the expression of recovered serenity" (Opie, 191). When Berrendale walks in, the moment is ruined, because the equality disappears. Savanna and Tawny boy exit, returning to their marginal positions, and Editha is taken away as Berrendale claims his "chair, as usual, in the warmest place," the place that had formerly been equally shared by all (Opie, 191). Like Darnford in *Maria*, the upper-class male character threatens to inhibit female relationships. This moment is also comparable to the situation in Adeline's childhood home where Mrs. Mowbray preferred isolation and ignored her maternal duties; it offers a different female household.

When Editha is born, Savanna again fills in for Berrendale who only feels "languid pleasure, if pleasure it could be called," while Savanna is "wild with joy" (Opie, 183). Her reaction is directly compared with Berrendale's, and is a mother's reaction. Since Savanna and Adeline's relationship, by filling both the roles of mother and husband, erases class and racial distinctions, it makes both the parental relationship and marriage more balanced, questioning and restructuring the hierarchy of authority.

Moreover, because Savanna replaces and usurps the husband's power, her doubling of Berrendale claims her equality not only with other women but also with all of society. Given that Savanna is representative of Adeline, she extends this equality to Adeline, allowing Opie to use her abolitionist stance to alter gender boundaries. In the character of Savanna, she usurps male power on behalf of women. Here we begin to see how abolition is not just a goal, but also a tactic used by the novel to covertly authorize women. The abolitionist agenda that elevates the servant, and the consequent empowerment of women, are articulated through Savanna's confrontational and candid voice.

"who dat love you can love dem?": Savanna's Voice

In the novel servants are often the speakers of truth and reality. When Mrs. Mowbray is too absorbed in theories about children's shoes and the best kind to get for Adeline, the nursery-maid observes that, "'in the mean time miss Adeline will go without any shoes at all'" (Opie, 7). Similarly, when Mrs. Mowbray experiments with Adeline's diet, restricting her food while she indulges her own appetite, the servants secretly feed her. In both cases, the servants are the practical and material reality of the household, carrying out the intentions of the upper-class. Finally, after Mrs. Mowbray marries Sir Patrick one of the maids breaks the news to Adeline and says, "I am sure I have cried enough on your account, that I have" (Opie, 48). Voicing concerns because Adeline's mother has married without "writings, or settlements" and because Sir Patrick is "head and ears in debt, and my lady is to pay him out on't" (Opie, 49), the maid articulates both Adeline's grief and the real material concerns of the situation. This moment recalls the way Edgeworth's Thady has the perspective to assert his masters' true circumstances.

While the servant admits the legal problems involved in the marriage and the economic loss it signifies for Adeline, Adeline herself reacts by altering the language to that of sentiment: "'Then has my mother given me up, indeed!' she exclaimed, clasping her hands together, and the once darling child may soon be a friendless outcast!'", and "giving way to a violent flood of tears" (Opie, 49). The servants' practical roles in life translate into an ability to see clearly, particularly when it comes to material and economic reality—the domain of their jobs. In each case the servant is a protector and ally of the heroine, verbalizing the reality of the situation.

Like the servants in her mother's home, Savanna perceives and conveys Adeline's need for physical protection allowing her to care for Adeline in a way that others have tried but failed to accomplish—by leading her to marry. Recalling that Adeline finally submits to marriage because she uses "the sacred name of wife to shield me from insult" (Opie, 179), it is significant that Savanna is the one to initiate the conversation with Berrendale that renews the topic of marriage and leads to the union. Interrupting a conversation between Savanna and Berrendale in which Savanna has brought up the topic of marriage, Adeline walks in. She is unhappy about what she hears, but says, "still I—I must own that it is not so ill-timed as it would have been some weeks ago. I will own, that since yesterday I have been considering your generous proposals with the serious attention they deserve" (Opie, 173). Not only is Savanna giving voice to Adeline's thoughts, her presence is necessary for those thoughts to be verbalized.

The reader is told that Adeline "fancied that all the sufferings she underwent were trials which she was doomed to undergo, as punishments.… She therefore welcomed her afflictions, and lifted up her meek eyes to heaven in every hour of her trials, with the look

of tearful but grateful resignation" (Opie, 185). This is the lesson that is seemingly learned by Adeline, and yet through Savanna's doubling of her mistress, Opie criticizes this passivity. Midgley discusses the way white women abolitionist positioned themselves in relation to black slave women and suggests that white women represented enslaved women as silent and passive victims. But Opie gives Savanna the power of voice. Her capacity to speak up is in direct contradiction to Adeline's silent suffering and inability to defend herself, which can be read in two ways. On the one hand, Savanna has greater power than Adeline and the other women in the text; and on the other Savanna as a metaphor for all "enslaved" women argues for women's right to power. The similarities between the mistress and servant and the doubling that occurs, suggest that Savanna functions as an alternative version of Adeline's life. By reading Savanna as a double, we see the way Opie is arguing for Adeline's empowerment and acceptance; through Savanna, Adeline and women in general are given a voice. Savanna's capacity to speak out and to challenge those she confronts gives her a power that none of the other women has, and allows her to usurp the power of those against whom she speaks by replacing them.[61] For instance, Savanna replaces the mother, but she also speaks out in anger for her treatment of Adeline against Mrs. Mowbray. She also verbalizes Adeline's forgiveness of, and reconciliation with, her mother.

Repeatedly, Adeline's silence is filled with Savanna's voice, challenging her oppression, and allowing Savanna to gain agency by defying authority. Savanna speaks up for Adeline when Berrendale takes the best food for himself but is displeased with Adeline for her "most excellent appetite" (Opie, 181) and placidly watches Adeline

[61] This is the same ability to speak and give a counter-story possessed by the narrators in Chapter One of this dissertation.

deprive herself. We are told that the inequity was noticed by Adeline but that she was "resolved to forget, if possible, the petty conduct of Berrendale—[but] the mulatto, who from the door's being open, had heard every word of the conversation which had so disturbed Adeline, neither could nor would forget it" (Opie, 182). Savanna makes a "resolution to thwart him" and tries repeatedly to get Adeline to eat. When she succeeds, Berrendale shows "how much he grudged the supposed expense." Adeline remains passive but Savanna responds: "snapping her fingers in his face, and looking at him with an expression of indignant contempt, [she] exclaimed, 'I buy dem, and pay for dem wid mine nown money; and my angel lady no be oblige to you'" (Opie, 183). Savanna simultaneously speaks out against and replaces Berrendale by providing food for Adeline. Adeline wants to forget but the words "if possible" suggest that it may not be possible. Yet she remains silent about what has "disturbed" her, while Savanna acts and then speaks out. Just like the servant in Mrs. Mowbray's household who asserts the injustice of Mrs. Mowbray's marriage without "writings, or settlements" (Opie, 49), the food episode sets Adeline's and Savanna's reactions side-by-side, revealing the way in which Savanna functions as Adeline's transgressive voice.[62] This potent voice is the one incorporated into the concluding "society of amiable women."

Savanna gains and gives agency by speaking for Adeline; but Savanna also strengthens Adeline by offering her friendship and an alternative to the traditional life available to women. Savanna is the only person Adeline refers to as a friend, saying of

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[62] While Eberle notes the power of Savanna's character and voice she argues that Savanna's character is undercut by "the romantic racism which pervades Opie's characterization. " She goes on to argue, "Opie's attempts to replicate Carribean dialect also diminish Savanna's forthright statement's of defiance." Eberle, "Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*," 141-2. However, Savanna's rage and power is emphasized by her actions in the scenes where she speaks. Her behavior (i.e., throwing doors, grabbing Mrs. Mowbray, and exploding at Berrendale) and the comparison between her reaction and that of Adeline, who remains passive, indicate that her voice is powerful. This is the same thing that we see at the end of the novel, where there is also a disconnection between what is said and what is described.

her, “She is my nurse, my consoler, and my friend” (Opie, 264).[63] Yet even after Savanna is with her, Adeline feels “severe disappointment” because “she longed for the society of the amiable and accomplished of her own sex; and hoped that, as Mr. Berrendale’s wife, that intercourse with her own sex might be restored to her which she had forfeited as the mistress of Glenmurry” (Opie, 184). Adeline’s recognition of Savanna as her friend does not occur immediately but is learned by the end of the novel. Repeatedly throughout the novel, Adeline, like Maria, wishes for the “society of amiable women” (Opie, 68), but she cannot have it with the women of her class. First she thinks it is going to be Mr. Maynard’s sisters, then perhaps Emma and her sister-in-law, but these women, like Mrs. Pemberton, Mrs. Beauclerc, and Glenmurry’s cousins cannot be her companions because she is considered a “fallen” and “ruined” woman. Yet even after her marriage, Adeline is refused female friendship because Berrendale refuses to take her into public places, and because middle-class women are powerless to transgress the rules of society, which dictate their relationships and inhibit female community. This latter inhibition to community is seen in the example of Mrs. Beauclerc, who wants to befriend Adeline but cannot, even after she gets married, because a female relative threatens to disinherit her. Yet, again echoing *Maria*, the reader is shown that these women that society views as virtuous are actually immoral and false, hiding affairs and viciously competing with each other making them inappropriate friends for Adeline.

It could be argued that Adeline never recovers the society of her peers because the novel is using her as a warning and punishing her behavior. But, the novel rejects judging women by their social façade, just as it rejects judging a person by their race. The point is

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[63] Adeline also calls Savanna her friend in the quotation that I discuss on page 55 of this chapter: “the anxious friend (I will not call her servant) who is now my all of earthly comfort” (Opie, 259).

made when Adeline and Savanna are equated with the religious paragon, Mrs. Pemberton. The servant's racial difference is compared with Mrs. Pemberton's religious difference through Dr. Norberry who reacts to Savanna's race as he does to Mrs. Pemberton's Quaker garb. In both cases he is initially afraid of the differences that mark them and is then subsequently convinced of their merit and reconciled to their difference because of their capacity to grieve for Adeline, signs of their humanity. The comparison between race and clothes also suggests that race, like clothing, is a façade. It is the two women marked by their differences that are most compassionate towards Adeline, again showing a parallel between Mrs. Pemberton and Savanna, and showing the way in which being outcast, although for different reasons, allows these women to create a community based on their similar positions. Opie is arguing that like race and alternative religions, which society does not accept or understand, a person like Adeline is deserving of understanding and acceptance; she is arguing for an egalitarian utopian community.

"She laid her head on Savanna's bosom, and expired": A Powerful Community

From the moment that Adeline leaves home, she is searching for female community and attempting to return to her mother's matriarchal home. The community that opens the novel is a female household, but Mrs. Mowbray "govern[s] her household with despotic authority; and after embracing at some moments the doubts of the sceptic, she would often lie motionless in her bed, from apprehension of ghosts, a helpless prey to the most abject superstition" (Opie, 5). Adeline's childhood home is hierarchical, ignores the real world and does not take care of its dependents (including Adeline, Adeline's grandmother, and the servants). In contrast, the household at the end is nurturing and

inclusive of all the women. The novel returns Adeline to a different Rosevalley, where women are in their traditional place as nurturers, but at the same time they are empowered.

In the text, concern for Savanna gives Adeline friendship, and at the end unites women in a community: Mrs. Pemberton promises, "I will never leave thy mother, and [that] Savanna shall be our joint care" (Opie, 267). The supposed purpose of this affiliation is to care for Savanna, yet her role as the ultimate mother in the final image of the novel suggests an alternative function for this community. The ending highlights a moment of female community but there are other moments in the novel suggestive of women's communities that indicate the covert meaning of this final image. For instance, when Emma and her sister are in France they can associate with Adeline because they are strangers to that society and their reputation can not be compromised: "'The world here to us, as we associate with none and are known to none, is Mr. Glenmurry and miss Mowbray; and of their good word we are sure'" (Opie, 83). The suggestion is that women's community functions differently in the world (where they must function) and within the private or unseen space. Another instance of female independence is seen when Mrs. Pemberton lives with another woman and takes care of her, suggesting that women can be economically self-sufficient the friend then leaves Mrs. Pemberton an estate. The community at the end has both the privacy to act and economic independence. They will be nurturing and continue to participate in society via charity but they will also function unseen in the domestic space.

In reading the ending, critics focus primarily on Savanna's subjugated position. Susan Greenfield sees her as "commerce" that with "remarkably little self-consciousness the

novel sacrifices;" the result is that it "facilitates [the] mother-daughter connection precisely because her racialized position licenses her own continued objectification."[64] Howard suggests the following of Savanna's position at the novel's conclusion: "she does not in the end establish herself as the authoritative leader in the new community of mothers. Instead, Savanna becomes infantilized."[65] I would argue that Savanna holds a dual position in the final image of community. She is both subjugated and demoted to the position of child when Mrs. Pemberton says, "'I give thee my word, that I will never leave thy mother, and Savanna shall be our joint care'" (Opie, 267); and she is also equal or superior to the other women in the group when Adeline dies in her arms thus recognizes her maternal role. Similarly, Anne K. Mellor argues that, "Savanna functions simultaneously if contradictorily as both servant and co-mother, indeed as the only mother who yet deserves that title of the infant Editha" (323). But Mellor sees economic limitations on Savanna's character, saying that "Even as Opie makes this radical claim for superior maternal love and faithful care of the black woman, she locates Savanna within an economic and social condition of dependency."[66] (322). Her dual positions is exactly the point, the way Opie quietly makes her argument for women's rights. Yet I would go further and argue that Savanna has the ability to economically care for Adeline, not only with food. Adeline's letter suggests that Savanna would have taken care of Adeline until her death if her mother had not arrived. Savanna lacks the economic power of Mrs. Mowbray, as she herself notes, but she is not dependent. In many ways this is similar to the ending of *Maria* I discuss here, where women are both powerful and

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[64] Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters*, 143, 142.
[65] Howard, "'The Story of the Pineapple'," 368.
[66] Anne K. Mellor, "'Am I not a Woman, and a Sister?' Slavery, Romanticism, and Gender" in *Romanticism, Race, and Imperial Culture, 1780-1834*, ed. Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 323, 322.

powerless, both mothers and mothered, but here it is embodied by the single figure of Savanna. By making Savanna an object of care, the women are practicing abolition and brought together. Yet by moving Savanna to the center of the group as the mother that Adeline chooses, Opie raises her above the other women, erasing and reversing hierarchies within the community, a tactic that revises the traditional abolitionist discourse and traditional social structures, creating a utopian vision. Finally, by empowering her as the representative of all women, both because of the slave/woman analogy and because Savanna has come to replace all the other women in the text, a claim is made for women's power.

A moment that is seen as evidence of Savanna's subjugation to Adeline and thus as problematic in terms of their friendship as well as Opie's abolitionist stance is when Adeline says,

> Remember, you have given me a right to claim your life as mine; nor can I allow you to throw away my property in fruitless lamentations, and the indolent indulgence of regret. You shall go to Jamaica, Savanna: God forbid that I should keep a wife from her duty! You shall see and try to recover William if he be really ill…and then you shall return to me, who will either warmly share in your satisfaction or fondly sooth your distress" (Opie, 195).[67]

Opie does not erase ownership from the equation but there is a shift in the language of the passage that changes the terms and definition of it; on the level of language the importance of ambiguity and flexibility continues to be stressed. The passage begins with ownership, but this is blurred by the language of family and love, and by the sympathy

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[67] This moment is discussed by Susan Greenfield in *Mothering Daughters* and by Carol Howard in "'The Story of the Pineapple': Sentimental Abolitionism and Moral Motherhood in Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*."

between Savanna and Adeline, as well as through Adeline's recognition of Savanna's humanity and her emotions as a wife. Here, Adeline also recognizes the importance of Savanna, not as property but as a companion, a friend, and family, saying that she loves her "next to my child, and my mother" (Opie, 195). And yet Savanna is compared to both the mother and daughter, and replaces and surpasses them. For instance here we are told that after Savanna leaves, "Adeline felt the want of Savanna in various ways so forcibly, that not even Editha could, for a time at least, console her for her loss" (Opie, 195). Not only does the sentence elevate Savanna above Editha in the family but the language exemplifies the way in which the novel works. It creates ambiguity by not explaining how Savanna is missed and yet what is missed is comparable to Editha, although even Editha is not enough, suggesting that Savanna's role exceeds that of the child and daughter. But as soon as this possibility of greater consequence is suggested for Savanna, Opie moderates it with the words "for a time at least." Although critics see Adeline as claiming ownership of Savanna, this part of the text is problematic; it begins by subjugating and enslaving Savanna but then shifts to reveal Savanna's importance to Adeline and to all the other people who will make this trip possible out of gratitude and love for Savanna. In this episode, Opie is exploring the functions of female community and the way that Savanna and Adeline are family. This moment also notes how Adeline economically provides for Savanna; however, Savanna also has economic power and has provided for Adeline and will do so again setting up the kind of oscillating power that Wollstonecraft suggests. The utopian community at the end of the novel works the same way as this moment; Opie suggests and then moderates to seem more traditional, opening up the possibility that both women and people of color can and should have power.

The conclusion can be read in two contradictory ways. Verbally the novel suggests that Savanna will be cared for and that she will be in a child-like and subjugated position, but the action of the novel, especially Adeline's death in Savanna's arms, suggests that she is the real mother in this community. Moreover, Savanna's mirroring of Adeline suggests that its not in Editha but in Savanna that an unchanged and vocal Adeline that has been accepted back into the family. Savanna covertly bring radical values into the community through her presence, which reminds the reader of her verbal strength, her racial equality, and her gender equality.

By embracing Savanna the community apparently practices a kind of charity that maintains patriarchal order; but they embrace an unchanged Adeline and a rebellious, powerful Savanna. Savanna covertly brings radical values into the community through her presence. The utopian community at the end of *Adeline Mowbray* may be more realistic or at least traditional because the compromised heroine is accepted and lives through her servant and double, Savanna. The inclusion of Savanna further expands the boundaries of women's utopian community, as it continues Wollstonecraft's project of extending utopian community and power within that community to the lower classes, even going further, since the final community of women at the end of Opie's novel is not only inter-class but also composed of multiple religions and inter-racial.

"Dr. Norberry…was contemplating the group": Multiplicity, A Feminist Ideal

The utopian communities imagined by Wollstonecraft and Opie use the mistress-servant relationship as a model. They take the traditional cultural ideal of the service relationship and replace the hierarchy therein with the servant's multiple subject

positions; in both novels multiplicity is a strategy for giving women a form of agency. In *Maria*, the mistress and servant use the servant's ability to access multiple roles to share power. In *Adeline Mowbray*, first Adeline and Savanna uses this shifting to share authority, and in the final community the fluidity is used to share power among all the women, but especially to include Savanna's revolutionary character, which is both submissive and forceful. Admittedly, the women's form of authority is partially undercut because to possess it they must isolate themselves from society, and function covertly. However, as James Scott notes, "Rituals of subordination…may be deployed both for purposes of manipulation and concealment."[68] It would therefore be incorrect to think that because the women partially practice submissiveness or because they choose to exist on the periphery that they are powerless. I would additionally argue that a different form of power does not mean a lesser or weaker form of power; the servant presents a real menace to the master.

These communities function on two levels. In Wollstonecraft's and Opie's texts the mistress and servant exchange positions and utilize the servant's multiplicity as a way share power—this is the utopian ideal and the servant's identity is a model for it. At the same time, the communities themselves are like servants, marginal and ambiguous and fluid. They function like the servant in relation to the patriarchy, which stands in the place of the master. On this level, the communities are threats to the established order. As *Castle Rackrent* and *Caleb Williams* show, the servant's power is dangerous to the master because it threatens to replace the established order. The utopias imagined by Wollstonecraft and Opie are exactly that—alternatives offered in place of traditional

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[68] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 35.

social relationships. These novels give women alternatives to marriage. In the next chapter the heroines marry but they implicitly reject the marriage plot; both novels gloss over the final marriages. Instead both Belinda and Fanny create a space of authority for themselves through their servant roles. Whereas in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* the mistress-servant dyads share and exchange the mistress-servant positions, in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, the heroines successfully embody both—something Savanna's character intimates in the final moments of Opie's novel when she replaces Adeline.

Thady and Caleb lose the servant's position and therefore lose power. In Mary Wollstonecraft's and Amelia Opie's novels the women in a sense lose their access to the master's position. As both mistresses and servants, they possess ambiguity and they are a threat to patriarchy, but they must separate from the patriarchy; in this sense they are servants without access to the master's position. Opie's less isolated utopia will apparently function in the real world, suggesting the possibilities explored in the next chapter. In Chapter Three the servant finally has access to both roles and greater potential for retaining the servant's multiplicity, the ability to be a servant but to access the master's position.

Chapter Three

"She was useful, she was beloved": Fanny and Belinda as Servants and Substitutes

The novels explored thus far emphasize the power available in the servant position. In Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), serving is a source of agency and authority for the heroines, but Belinda and Fanny are not properly servants because they are genteel. Belinda is not explicitly labeled a companion but is in a companion-like position in the Delacour household.[1] Fanny is biologically family but treated like a stranger. Having entered the homes of families with a higher-class status than their own, and as outsiders living in the family, both characters share the domestic's dependent, peripheral, and unclear position in the family. As in the case of Thady and Caleb, they are presented with the ability to assume a higher-class status; Belinda and Fanny, like Thady, choose to embrace the ambiguity that is the domain of the servant. Belinda and Fanny both replace actual servants. These heroines have access to information and secrets, and are like servants witnesses to their masters' private lives. Whereas observing makes Thady and Caleb obviously dangerous, in these texts the heroines use the information they possess to help unite and uphold the family. Superficially, they seem to fulfill the agenda of the conduct books, which dictated that the servant's energies are for the benefit of the master. But just as Thady gains power and a place in the family by fulfilling the role of the loyal retainer, Belinda and Fanny are empowered by service, and gain positions of authority that rival the master's in the families they serve. Resembling Thady, Caleb, Jemima, and Savanna, Belinda and Fanny

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[1] For a detailed discussion of the companionate position see Betty Rizzo's *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994).

take on familial roles that give them authority. But they are the most successful examples of the usurpation and replacement of the master thus far: Belinda gains the maternal authority that belongs to the mistress, and Fanny assumes Sir Thomas's patriarchal authority. Both heroines recreate the traditional family, seemingly perpetuating the status quo, but recognizing Belinda's and Fanny's connection to servants reveals that they simultaneously change and challenge social and family hierarchies.

The women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* create non-hierarchical relationships within their utopian women's communities, questioning and altering traditional social structures. By exchanging roles, Maria and Jemima and Adeline and Savanna access the servant's power while also inhabiting positions of authority. Belinda and Fanny go one step further; they are at once central and marginal. As part of her service Belinda takes on a vital role in the home as a mother to Lady Delacour when she nurtures her through her illness and helps her find domestic happiness. Fanny too takes on family roles to assist the Bertrams; but with Fanny we finally see the servant successfully retain her power while also accessing the master's authority. Whereas the vague ending of *Belinda* leaves the heroine's final position unclear, Fanny preserves her fluidity; she is servant and mistress, the powerful position achieved by the mistresses and servants explored in Chapter Two, and she achieves this situation within the traditional family.

In *Belinda*, written one year after *Castle Rackrent*, Edgeworth returns to the theme of the dangerous servant and of the power servants have because of their intimate positions in their master's home.[2] Thoroughly concerned with servants, *Belinda* looks at

[2] This novel, like *Castle Rackrent*, reiterates the subject of the Edgeworth letter that opens Chapter One of this dissertation and shows the threat created through servants' intimacy and proximity to the master. This is especially evident in Lady Delacour's relationship with Marriott since as confidante and caretaker, Marriott has an especially intimate relationship with her mistress. It is this role that Belinda usurps.

these figures from multiple angles, presenting servants that are dangerous and loyal; simple and crafty; and dependent and autonomous. Domestics influence their masters, inverting the master-servant relationship; this is seen in the rumors they spread and repeat, both hindering and resolving much of the plot. Marriott, Lady Delacour's waiting-maid, is the first to learn and tell of Mr. Hervey's Virginia; she ends the gossip that is ruining Belinda's reputation; and she accomplishes what Lady Delacour cannot, getting Lord Delacour to fire his devious valet, Champfort. The many servants in the text and the command they exert are the background against which Belinda's servant alliance is set. Edgeworth explores the revolutionary ideas engaged by servants, including questions of equality and class as well as of gender and racial rights—subjects that challenge the status quo of authority in traditional society, nation, and family.

Belinda is a complex novel that begins with the protagonist's arrival in the Delacour home; this presents the reader with the troubled Delacour household and marriage, which is characterized by profligate spouses, and a neglected, missing daughter. Later, Belinda is also a visitor in the Percival home. The Percival family, the ideal household with the exemplary Lady Anne at its center, stands in contrast to the chaotic Delacour home. The question of women's proper roles, raised by Lady Delacour and Lady Anne, is further analyzed in the story of Harriet Freke, Lady Delacour's cross-dressing and libertine ex-friend who rejects the conduct expected of women and is ultimately punished for her transgressions. Edgeworth also looks at women's roles in the story of Virginia, who is isolated from men and educated away from society by her grandmother and then by Clarence Hervey, the novel's hero who is trying to educate the

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Belinda like *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* is concerned with the threat that women's relationships present to the established order.

perfect woman. His pre-existing commitment makes his growing admiration for Belinda problematic. Further complicating the courtship plot, Belinda is also courted by Mr. Vincent, a Creole. These storylines share a concern with power and the boundaries of social categories.

The many different women in the novel raise the issue of women's rights and beg the question: what is a proper woman? Edgeworth also explores the trope of women's relationships with one another as a source of power and threat to traditional society and family. Lady Delacour's friendship with the sexually ambiguous Harriet Freke is dangerous because it replaces her "natural" relationships with husband and daughter, and the same is true of her bond with her maid. Marriott, Lady Delacour's maid, and the many servants that occupy the various households also address the issue of the class system. And through Mr. Vincent and Juba, his West Indian servant, Edgeworth addresses the rights of man and issues of colonization and race.[3] The heroine intersects all these issues in her various relationships. She is yet another servant and through her Edgeworth offers women and servants authority and independence. Questions of equality, freedom, and rights for individuals regardless of class, gender or race, like the multiple servants in the text, also frame Belinda's story and her servant role.[4] But, as in *Castle Rackrent*, Edgeworth does not offer clear answers.

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[3] For a discussion of the colonial and racial issues in Belinda see Susan Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance Frances Burney to Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002, especially chapter four. Greenfield suggests that Mr. Vincent's Creole identity and association with his black servant Juba "blurs the boundaries of nation and race." Greenfield argues that Belinda's threatened marriage to Mr. Vincent is a threat of miscegenation and a threat to national boundaries. Ibid., 109, 119.

[4] Butler explains that Edgeworth is especially connected to the politics of her time and that she has her own unique views that were heavily influenced by her father; she calls Edgeworth "the most thorough-going individualist writing outside the jacobin movement." Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and The War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 126.

The novel begins by engaging the idea of social mobility. The first person introduced is Mrs. Stanhope, an expert in “the art of rising in the world,” who has married off “half a dozen nieces … to men of fortunes far superior to their own.”[5] She has placed the educated, genteel, but impoverished Belinda with Lady Delacour, giving her the opportunity to go to court and have credit with Lady Delacour’s “trades-people” (Edgeworth, 9). She benefits from Lady Delacour’s aristocratic rank, just as servants partially share their master’s status and benefit through perquisites such as castoff clothing and household luxuries they can clandestinely enjoy. Belinda is socially ambiguous because she is in a precarious social situation; she can socially fall or rise, making it unclear where she belongs. Her place in society is also vague because she is not of Lady Delacour’s status but she participates in her social environment. Mrs. Stanhope’s ultimate goal is for Belinda to marry well, exchanging her ambiguous class status for an elevated rank.

The titular heroine is a companion, a kind of genteel upper servant in the Delacour household. She is not a family member but lives with Lady Delacour and is dependent on her. Companions were not officially recognized as servants, although they were, as Betty Rizzo terms it, an “above-stairs service.”[6] Belinda rejects her aunt’s social aspirations and chooses to serve Lady Delacour. Unknown to everyone except her waiting-maid, Lady Delacour believes she has developed breast cancer from a festering injury received in a female duel that challenges gender conventions because it is considered socially inappropriate; her condition requires cosmetic camouflaging and medicinal assistance that is provided by her maid in a locked boudoir. In a moment of

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[5] Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, ed. Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7. Hereafter cited in text.

[6] Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, 40.

desperation, brought on by the betrayal of her friend, Harriet Freke, Lady Delacour takes Belinda into the secret boudoir and reveals her wound and her belief that she is dying (Edgeworth, 31). Belinda promises to protect the secret and assist Lady Delacour through her illness.

Like the perfect servant, she puts Lady Delacour's well-being before her own, even risking her own reputation, when she allows Lord Delacour and Clarence Hervey to suspect that she has a lover hidden in the secret boudoir. By her behavior she effectively reverses the hierarchies of age and class. Belinda inhabits multiple subject positions, the hallmark of the servant. Moreover, she supports dual and contradictory ideas when she guides Lady Delacour to exchange female companionship for marriage and family, but does not herself follow the path she seems to advocate. Choosing to serve Lady Delacour rather than pursue social elevation, Belinda is in a sense preferring female friendship to marriage. It comes as no surprise from the author of *Castle Rackrent* that in *Belinda*, the servant's position is once again clearly one of power but Edgeworth now imagines what that power can offer women who are genteel but impoverished. Being a servant somewhat liberates the outcast woman from the constraints of gender in both *Belinda* and *Mansfield Park*.

Immediately engaging the idea of social ambiguity, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* begins with a history of the Ward sisters and the marriages that place them in different social ranks, pointing to the instability of class. Miss Maria Ward marries advantageously and is "raised to the rank of a baronet's lady," becoming Lady Bertram.[7] The second Miss Ward, later Mrs. Norris, marries a clergyman, and Miss Frances Ward marries "a

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[7] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), 5. Hereafter cited in text.

Lieutenant of Marines, without education, fortune, or connections" (Austen 5). Austen's heroine, Fanny, perpetuates these blurred boundaries and inhabits the ambiguous identity produced by unclear social categories. She is poor, with a genteel mother and lower-class father. Her vague social status is increased when Mrs. Norris intervenes and encourages the aristocratic Bertrams to adopt Fanny to relieve her parents' financial burdens. Classifying the adoption as charity forces dependency and gratitude on Fanny.[8] Her marginal role in the family mimics the servant's situation in a household. Servants are strangers who attain a place in the family when they share the master's private space, and because the ideas of paternalism impose a familial relationship. The servant position allows Fanny to destabilize and reverse the power dynamic established when she is brought to live in the Bertram household.

Critics of the novel note Fanny's servant-like role, [9] but do not discuss the way it empowers her to marry Edmund and to resist the subjugation imposed on her. She effectively becomes a servant when she replaces Miss Lee, the governess, as her aunt's companion. Fanny is defined by gratitude, usefulness, and by the silence and mild temper that make her invisible—the primary qualities required of servants. Calling Fanny a "virtual" servant, John Wiltshire describes her as an, "unpaid servant, kept at needlework, though her quietness and willingness gradually endear her to the mistress of the house."[10] Her willingness suggests it is an advantageous role. Indeed her servant-like status gives

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[8] Wollstonecraft's critique of charity is illustrated here by Fanny's position in the family; she is marginalized and ignored except when she can be utilized. See chapter two of this dissertation.

[9] Jane McDonnell writes that Fanny "perfectly exemplifies the submissive ideal for a woman: gentle, modest, sweet-tempered and obedient, she makes herself useful as a virtual servant in the family." Jane McDonnell, "'A Little Spirit of Independence': Sexual Politics and the Bildungsroman in 'Mansfield Park'," *NOVEL: A Forum of Fiction* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1984): 201.

[10] John Wiltshire, introduction to *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xlvii.

the ability to watch and listen, to be invisible, and to be useful, behaviors that allow Fanny to replace various family members, undermining the hierarchy of the family.

Like Pamela and Moll Flanders, Fanny lives among people of a higher class than herself and acquires an education that allows her to exist in multiple social milieus. As her uncle points out, at the ball she "acquits herself like a gentlewoman" (Austen, 172). Aside from Fanny's beauty, Sir Thomas is "pleased with himself for having supplied everything else; —education and manners she owed to him" (Austen, 189), emphasizing that Fanny's status has been altered by changing her home. Early in the novel he acknowledges that bringing Fanny into the family blurs class status: "a girl so brought up must be adequately provided for, or there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family. He thought of his own four children—of his two sons—of cousins in love" (Austen, 7). His concern that a marriage with a Bertram son could result from Fanny's education and presence in the home conveys an anxiety over preserving social boundaries, recalling Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. The attempt to maintain class differences while bringing Fanny into the family results in her complicated identity. Unlike the Bertrams, she also becomes an outsider to her biological family after being adopted. Fanny only maintains a relationship with one brother, who is in the navy thanks to Sir Thomas's patronage; he can also adapt to his family or to the Bertram family: "Of the rest she saw nothing; nobody seemed to think of her ever going amongst them again, even for a visit, nobody at home seemed to want her."[11] Fanny cannot be easily identified because she blends in with her adoptive family even as she maintains her outsider status.

[11] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), 17. Hereafter cited in text.

Fanny and Belinda possess two kinds of ambiguity. One has to do with their relationship to the family and the other with their class status, but both align them with the servant. Belinda is a guest in the Delacour home but also functions like an upper servant when she replaces Lady Delacour's waiting-maid and Lady Delacour comes to depend on her. Fanny, who has greater class ambiguity than Belinda, is both central and marginal at the end of the novel. She is still a servant to the Bertrams but also a daughter; as a wife she is the mistress of her home but the servant of her husband; and as a mother she will be in the service of patriarchal society. Her submissiveness, and her desire to please and be useful meet the social requirements of an ideal woman. But even as the heroine of the novel and the wife of Edmund, she retains her ambiguous identity, and the marriage that ends then novel challenges traditional family and class hierarchies.

Fanny's role in the Bertram family corresponds with Nancy Armstrong's delineation of the domestic woman[12] and her virtues are independent of class. In conduct books, which detailed and proliferated a middle-class ideology, Fanny's virtuous and demure conduct was offered as an ideal to combat the indolent, idly employed aristocratic woman (seen in the figure of Lady Bertram). She assists her aunt in needlepoint and fringe, writes letters, and presides over tea. Her delicate constitution is repeatedly stressed: she gets headaches, is easily fatigued, and requires regular exercise for her fragile health. As a dependent Fanny is like a companion or a governess who needed to earn her living, but was considered above the working class.[13] Fanny's activities are genteel, and her body displays the appropriate feminine responses to exertion, but with the exception of Mrs. Norris, her work separates her from the other women in the

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[12] See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), especially pages 59-95.
[13] Ibid., 78.

household. She cuts flowers in the heat and walks extensively on errands. Hearing of Fanny's activities, Edmund scolds, "'Has she been walking as well as cutting roses; walking across the hot park to your house, and doing it twice, ma'am? — No wonder her head aches" (Austen, 52). His response calls attention to the excessiveness of the work and highlights Fanny's duality. Like a stereotypically sturdy lower-class female she completes the task, but her reaction to the work associates Fanny with genteel women.

Fanny is also servant-like because of her invisibility and inscrutability. She can sit in a room and be easily forgotten. While Sir Thomas cannot decipher her affect:[14] "She was always so gentle and retiring, that her emotions were beyond his discrimination" (Austen, 248). That Fanny cannot be "read," is further emphasized by her inclination "to silence when feeling most strongly" (Austen, 250), as illustrated at the ball when no one guesses Fanny's feelings for Edmund. Remaining impenetrable, invisible, and a bystander, she reads others, as Thady and Caleb read their masters. Faced with the same situation as Caleb, Fanny can mimic the upper class, but like Thady, Jemima, and Belinda, she insists on being a servant.

Belinda chooses to embrace the servant role when she literally replaces Lady Delacour's waiting maid by promising to remain with Lady Delacour until she dies. Although married and a mother, Lady Delacour is isolated. She does not respect her husband, a drinker and gambler who she tries to dominate; he in turn has been alienated by her behavior. After having lost two children, one because she unsuccessfully tried breastfeeding, Lady Delacour sends the third out to a nurse and then to boarding school. Instead of mothering she pursues a life of dissipation with her sexually ambiguous friend,

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[14] As indicated in the introduction of this dissertation, Judith Frank in *Common Ground* observes that the affect of the servant cannot be read.

Harriet Freke who wears trousers and encourages Lady Delacour to participate in a duel. In the course of the novel, Belinda uses her intimacy to set to right the discord and disorder of the Delacour family; she upholds the hierarchy of the family by guiding Lady Delacour to accept her role of wife and mother. Yet her mediatory actions also empower Belinda and allow her to question the traditional woman's life and domestic hierarchy that she imposes on Lady Delacour.

Belinda's replacement of Marriott seems to stop the reversing of the mistress-servant relationship, but in actuality the undermining of authority continues in her own relationship with Lady Delacour. While critics note that Belinda is an ideal held up by the novel and that she leads Lady Delacour, they do not take into account her position as a companion or replacement of the waiting maid, making her authoritative role subversive. Rather then becoming the "toadeater"[15] that companions were expected to be, Belinda rejects the debilitating and humiliating subservience often required of these women when she rehabilitates Lady Delacour. As in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*, the maternal role is one of authority, exemplified in *Belinda* in the role of Lady Anne Percival. Both husband and wife participate equally in the education of their children: "Mr. Percival was a man of science and literature, and his daily pursuits and general conversation were in the happiest manner instructive and interesting to his family" (Edgeworth, 216). Lady Anne is described as his equal: "Lady Anne Percival had, without any pedantry or ostentation, much accurate knowledge, and a taste for literature, which made her the chosen companion of her husband's understanding, as well as his heart" (Edgeworth, 216).

[15] Originally, in 1742, the term was applied to "a political lackey (or toady)." Sarah Fielding used it two years later for the "humble companion." The word was meant to emphasize the tyranny and humiliation to which the companion was subject. For a discussion of the term "Toadeater" see Rizzo, especially chapter three, pages 41-60.

Educating her children gives Lady Anne an important function in the family and means she has the knowledge to be her husband's partner.

Education was central for Edgeworth. Much of her writing was children's stories for instructional purposes and in 1798 she co-authored, with her father, *Practical Education*, "the major treatise on education."[16] In her father's household Maria Edgeworth helped to educate all the siblings that resulted from her father's three marriages following her mother's death; it was her way of making "a useful contribution."[17] Being learned and participating in the education of children also gave Edgeworth an important role in her family and a special connection with her father. Butler suggests that writing the educational tales was a way for Maria Edgeworth to maintain the most important relationship in her life; as her siblings grew up, it was a way "to maintain the large share of her father's attention."[18] Pedagogy gave Edgeworth a way to rival her multiple stepmothers and her many siblings.

No wonder, considering the importance of education to her life, teaching is a powerful role in the novel. Lady Anne is an ideal woman because she inspires her children with curiosity. In contrast, Mr. Vincent's upbringing among slaves teaches him to gamble ruining his character. Also highlighting the power of teaching, a small lesson in chemicals helps Juba overcome his superstitious fears, and Virginia's isolated life with a woman that does not possess any talents or abilities leaves her ignorant of the world. It is this maternal and didactic power that Belinda appropriates as she guides and nurtures Lady Delacour back to domestic health, and it allows her to escape the subjugation faced

[16] Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth; A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 169. All biographical information on Edgeworth comes from Butler's biography.
[17] Ibid., 159.
[18] Ibid., 158.

by Lady Delacour and Virginia. Of course the maternal role can also be oppressive because it tied women to the home and separated them from the social and political world their husbands occupied. But Edgeworth, like Wollstonecraft, removes the maternal power from the traditional family where women were unequal and constrained. Like the women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*, Belinda is a mother in an alternative relationship. For Wollstonecraft transforming the family and women's roles is a fantasy that can only occur in isolation. Edgeworth allows Belinda, without actually becoming a mother, to access maternal power and to recreate the servant and mother role within the traditional family, implicitly rejecting marriage in favor of the mistress-servant relationship. Although Edgeworth is usually seen as less radical, she goes farther than Wollstonecraft in authorizing women by imagining a woman using the servant's tools in society rather than in a utopian space.[19]

Deborah Weiss contends as I do that Edgeworth's politics are radical, arguing that Edgeworth is more like Wollstonecraft then critics realize. Edgeworth's condemning depiction of Lady Delacour's masculine, cross-dressing friend, Harriet Freke who flagrantly rejects all the social mores set for women, suggests that she is upholding traditional female roles. Freke is a shown to be a dangerous influence on Lady Delacour as she leads her away from her family and the proper female sphere into a duel and a dangerous liaison that compromises her reputation and ends with the death of her admirer at the hand of Lord Delacour. As Weiss explains, Edgeworth seems to be attacking

[19] This inverted political reading of Edgeworth and Wollstonecraft has been suggested before. Kathryn Kirkpatrick compares Wollstonecraft's *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* with Edgeworth's *Belinda* and suggests that when it comes to awareness of colonialism and the class system, Edgeworth "might be said to move beyond Wollstonecraft's formulations in *Vindications* by offering an implicit critique in *Belinda* of the blind spots of liberal feminism." Kathryn Kirkpatrick, "The Limits of Liberal Feminism in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," in *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*, ed. Laura Dabundo (Lanham: University of America, Inc., 2000), 77. Similarly, I suggest that Edgeworth goes further than Wollstonecraft in the authority she offers women and in the power she allows the servant.

Wollstonecraft through the character of Harriet Freke, "by making Freke appear to be a caricatured version of Wollstonecraft, considered by her contemporaries as the most masculine of female thinkers."[20] Freke's language "is full of allusions to Wollstonecraft's most famous work: she rails about false delicacy and false shame, refers to women as slaves, and shrieks about female cunning—all easily identifiable, if superficial, distillations of Wollstonecraft's critiques of women."[21] Weiss calls Edgeworth "deceptive" and suggests that she divides the female philosopher (a character used to "lampoon Wollstonecraft"[22]) into two different figures, Harriet Freke and Belinda, and "uses Freke not to assail Wollstonecraft and to condemn her ideas, but rather to lampoon the idea of Wollstonecraft that circulated in the culture;"[23] Edgeworth then replaces Freke with Belinda "the true female philosopher."[24] As Weiss would have it, Edgeworth seems to be condemning radical feminist politics even as she supports them. I would similarly argue that Edgeworth switches the offending Marriott for the more acceptable Belinda, diverting her readers' attention from one revolutionary storyline while inserting those same radical politics into another character. When Belinda replaces Marriott she becomes the servant and still blurs the master-servant hierarchy, allowing the servant to lead and dictate to the mistress.

While most critics see Edgeworth as conservative,[25] there is also a wide critical agreement that she revels in obfuscating techniques, and is always proposing unclear, or simultaneously various, answers. Janet Egleson Dunleavy similarly describes

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[20] Deborah Weiss, "The Extraordinary Ordinary Belinda: Maria Edgeworth's Female Philosopher," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 445.
[21] Ibid., 445.
[22] Ibid., 444.
[23] Ibid., 446.
[24] Ibid., 459.
[25] See Chapter One of this dissertation for examples of such discussions.

Edgeworth's focus as divided. She suggests that Edgeworth possesses "bitonality," which divides the reader's sympathies between Belinda and Lady Delacour, making it unclear who is the heroine of the novel.[26] Similarly, in the introduction to a recent collection of essays on Edgeworth, Julie Nash determines that "with nearly everything Edgeworth wrote, we have to read between the lines a bit."[27] She goes on to claim "that Edgeworth's life and work—at once moralistic and doubting, conservative and radical—resist easy categorization."[28] Many critics notice the way she blurs boundaries and categories; I propose this ambiguity extends to the heroine.

Critics tend to read Belinda as an uncomplicated model woman, quoting Edgeworth herself who noted Belinda's perfections: "I was so provoked with the cold tameness of that stick or stone Belinda."[29] For instance, Laurie Fitzgerald declares, "Edgeworth set out to write a novel that would instruct young women to seek happiness within the quiet realm of domestic pursuits…. Belinda is to learn from the mistakes of others and to be perceived as the moral model of the novel's centre."[30] While Belinda is a model to be admired and imitated, her designation as an exemplary woman is subversive. Pamela is a paragon because *despite* being a servant she is like an upper-class woman, perpetuating that class's ideal of gender. But Belinda challenges established categories as she exercises maternal authority without being a mother.

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[26] Janet Egleson Dunleavy, "Maria Edgeworth and the Novel of Manners," in *Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners*, ed. Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990), 57.
[27] Julie Nash, *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), xiii.
[28] Ibid., xv.
[29] Maria Edgeworth, quoted in Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 109.
[30] Laurie Fitzgerald, "Multiple Genres and Questions of Gender in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 304 (1992): 823.

Following the trajectory of this project, each author seems to extend the successful use of the power allotted to the servant, rendering the terms *radical*, *progressive* and *conservative* increasingly complicated—a point that has already been hinted at in the similarities between Edgeworth and Godwin, and between Wollstonecraft and Opie. Like the lines between master and servant, the boundaries between radicals and conservatives are unclear and permeable; these are fluid categories. Edgeworth and Austen continue to emphasize this point. According to Marilyn Butler, Edgeworth is "more 'political' than Austen,"[31] but Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Austen's *Mansfield Park* are similar when it comes to the servant, and indeed, Austen gives her "servant" greater agency. Pairing these novels helps us see that Fanny is like an upper servant, that she too replaces servants which allows her to access authority. Austen's *Mansfield Park* is can be read as conservatively preserving the traditional patriarchal family, but she actually allows Fanny to both keep her servant power and to integrate into the family without relinquishing her servant position.

Jane McDonnell identifies "two incongruous roles in Fanny—the exemplary heroine and the suffering heroine."[32] This dual identity is the same one that Caleb attempts to utilize, but here it is used successfully; Fanny can simultaneously attain a central position in the family, and remain in the margins, retaining the servant's freedom to exist in multiple spaces. She avoids the stagnant life of Lady Bertram, but also the overly active and fretful life of Mrs. Price. Chapter Two of this dissertation suggests that women negotiate roles of authority and subjugation. While the women in Wollstonecraft's and Opie's novels exchange and shift between roles, and Belinda

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[31] Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and The War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 124.
[32] McDonnell, "'A Little Spirit of Independence'," 205.

assumes a mistress-like authority through her service, Fanny encompasses both the servant's peripheral position and a central mistress-like position. From the margins, just as in the marginal women's communities of *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*, Fanny successfully alters her position, replacing multiple family members. Similar to the housekeeping which gives Jemima an independent space in the family, and the serving which allows Belinda to find autonomy from her aunt and Lady Delacour, her usefulness gives Fanny the ability to belong and contribute. Service allows Thady and Caleb to assume narrative power, changing their subjugated positions. Similarly, the women in *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray* create communities and escape constraining social roles. Belinda's servant role allows her to find power outside of marriage. Going even further, Fanny assists a diminishing family to exist, occupying the same role as Sir Thomas when he adopts Fanny to assist the Price family. Fanny retains the servant's ambiguity and ability to occupy multiple subject positions while also acquiring the master's power.

"Marriott knows her power": Servant Power in *Belinda*

In *Belinda* the servants propel the plot and complicate the lives of those they serve. They generate the gossip about Belinda's supposed attempts to ensnare Lord Delacour, and spread the rumor that Clarence Hervey is married. The nursemaid who permits Helena, Lady Delacour's third child, to survive her infancy suggests servants' ability to replace and maintain the family. The imposing presence of those below stairs is also exposed in the mute servant, an unseen and almost successful spy on Lady Delacour; further threatening the family, the governess becomes Lord Delacour's mistress. Serving and submissiveness is explicitly named as a dangerous form of power when Lady

Delacour complains of a former chaplain, “Always cringing, yet always intriguing—wanting to govern the whole family, and at the same time every creature’s humble servant” (Edgeworth, 317). Julie Nash’s recent book on servants in the novels of Edgeworth and Gaskell argues that servants’ power is a theme in much of Edgeworth’s work; she discusses “servants’ potential to disrupt social roles.”[33] Of the powerful and socially disruptive servants in the text, there are three that shed their anonymity: Mr. Vincent’s childlike and loyal servant, Juba; Lord Delacour’s manipulative and dangerous valet, Champfort; and Lady Delacour’s waiting maid, Marriott. The latter is loyal but potentially dangerous.

Lord Delacour’s valet alienates husband from wife as a form of revenge. He replaces Lady Delacour, acquiring her control of her husband. Knowing his master’s ego he leads Lord Delacour to resent his wife for governing him, he interferes whenever there is a chance of reconciliation. Champfort says of his master, “he might have been brought to leave off his burgundy, and set up for a sober man; which would not suit me at all” (Edgeworth, 343). Later it is discovered that he has used Lord Delacour’s tendency to drink to steal money, recalling Thady’s and Jason’s tactics in *Castle Rackrent*. The possession of private information as in *Caleb Williams*, and the knowledge of the employer’s character, as in *Castle Rackrent*, makes the servants in *Belinda* a threat.[34]

Mr. Vincent’s servant, Juba, is the complete opposite of the opportunistic Champfort. His excessive gratefulness, loyalty, and childlike dependence are

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[33] Julie Nash, *Servants and Paternalism in the Works of Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Gaskell* (Aldershot, England: 2007), 40. To show that servants in Edgeworth are connected to questions of rights and to issues of power, I make many of the same points as Nash about the servants that populate the text. But while Nash focuses on the real servants, I extend the theme by reading the heroine, Belinda, as a servant.

[34] Marriott’s male equivalent suggests that the male servant is always more dangerous. He recalls the idea, discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation, that a house cannot have two masters, making male servants like Thady and Caleb more overtly dangerous.

stereotypical of the black servant. Mr. Vincent brings him to England "because the poor fellow begged so earnestly to go with young massa" (Edgeworth, 219). Juba, who is stereotypically superstitious, becomes ill when he believes he is being haunted by an obeah-woman. In actuality Harriet Freke is tormenting him as retribution for a dispute over a coach-house. Belinda shows Juba the falseness of his beliefs, demonstrating how the obeah-woman is made to appear using phosphorous. The episode confirms the stereotypes and suggests that black servants are indeed simple, childish, and in need of paternal care. But the fact that Juba can be taught suggests that Edgeworth believes he is not inferior, but in need of education. Juba's ability to learn just as the Percival children learn addresses the abolitionist slogan "Am I not a man and a brother," which argued for freedom based on the slaves humanity and similarity with whites. Edgeworth suggests that all individuals are the similar as long as equally educated, countering the pro-slavery argument that Juba is meant to be subjugated because his race makes him naturally inferior. Even more radically, in the first edition of *Belinda* Juba marries a poor white tenant of Mr. Percival's. Greenfield explains that Edgeworth later removed this event because her father had advised her against it.[35]

But Edgeworth is ambivalent about Juba's equality. Mr. Vincent names his dog after his servant and considers both "the best creature in the universe" (Edgeworth, 346). Belinda points out that Mr. Vincent is conflating the two figures: "Juba, the dog, or Juba, the man?... you know, they cannot be both the best creatures in the universe" (Edgeworth, 346). While this leads Mr. Vincent to differentiate between man and dog, Belinda's comment is not a rebuke. The comparison is laughed at by the characters and keeps the two Jubas on the same level. But Juba's comparison to the dog indicates the danger that

[35] Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters*, 119.

lies behind the mask of loyalty; in a later scene Juba the dog violently attacks to protect Juba the servant. Extreme gratitude and loyalty frightened masters because they did not really think it was genuine; the ideal raised concerns over what really lay behind the smile, a point illustrated in Lady Delacour's waiting maid, who is loyal but feared by Lady Delacour and suspected by Belinda.

In the text Marriott is powerful and potentially dangerous. Lady Delacour has lost her relationship with her husband, all her friends, and family. The only relationship she has is with her waiting maid, a relationship that oppresses Lady Delacour. Following the loss of her last friend, Harriet Freke, Lady Delacour says, "Now I am alone in the world—left to the mercy of an insolent waiting-woman" (Edgeworth, 32). There are repeated references to the unnatural power that Marriott possesses: "Marriott knows her power" (Edgeworth, 20). Of Belinda Edgeworth goes on to write:

> Miss Portman had observed, that Marriott exercised despotic authority over her mistress; and she had seen, with surprise, that a lady who would not yield an iota of power to her husband, submitted herself to every caprice of the most insolent of waiting-women…. she was soon convinced that Marriott was no favourite with lady Delacour; that her ladyship's was not *proud humility*, but fear. (Edgeworth, 20)

Marriott can dictate Lady Delacour's behavior: she decides what Lady Delacour should wear. Lady Delacour herself declares, "Marriott's a faithful creature; and very fond of me; fond of power too" (Edgeworth, 21). Ultimately, the threat presented by the intimately knowledgeable servant seems to be more of an imagined threat:

> Mrs. Luttridge's maid, ma'am, who is my cousin, has pestered me with so many

> questions and offers, from Mrs Luttidge and Mrs Freke, of any money if I would only tell who was in the boudoir—and I have always answered, nobody—and I defy them to get any thing out of me. Betray my lady! I'd sooner cut my tongue out this minute. (Edgeworth, 26)

The intimacy between Marriott and Lady Delacour shifts the power dynamics in the relationship. The mistress is vulnerable and open to attack; she is physically defenseless because dependent, and socially susceptible because her reputation is in her maid's power. Marriott maintains the silence and loyalty required of servants, but that she, and servants in general, are a potential threat, is indicated by Lady Delacour's fears, and by the way Lady Delacour's enemies court Marriott, and later Belinda. This background of servant agency frames Belinda's offer to replace Marriott as Lady Delacour's confidant.

Belinda is usually read as a didactic novel recommending domesticity to women, but because Belinda replaces Marriott, she continues the subversion in the Marriott plot, questioning the domestic roles Edgeworth seems to recommend and further leveling the mistress-servant relationship. Nash writes that Edgeworth "goes so far as to create servant characters who are stronger, more successful, and more capable than their masters and mistresses, undermining the notion that these people are in need of the fatherly guidance of their 'betters'"[36]: this is intensified in the case of Belinda. Nash notes that in the Marriott storyline, "The rightful roles of servant and master have been reversed. Lady Delacour 'submits' to a 'despot.' Marriott is opinionated, occasionally rude, and she speaks her mind freely."[37] She goes on to note that the relationship is about power as evidenced by the struggle over Marriott's macaw, which Lady Delacour orders removed

[36] Ibid., 17.
[37] Ibid., 44.

because the noise disturbs her convalescence. Both mistress and servant have an exaggerated response to the bird. Marriott takes her mistress's dislike of the bird personally, translating it into a dislike of herself and Lady Delacour sees Marriott's attachment to the bird as a lack of loyalty and disobedience. Nash explains that "the subtext of this conflict has everything to do with power and very little to do with a pet bird. Lady Delacour's assertion that she 'will not live a slave' reveals her fear that the natural hierarchy of servant and master is threatened by Marriott's possession of her mistress's secret."[38] It is Marriott's power and potentially threatening position that Belinda assumes, seen when Lady Delacour becomes afraid that Belinda has replaced her with Lord Delacour and with her daughter.

As Nash sees it, Edgeworth "gives the maid a powerful voice;" Marriott is "able to stir things up by making a lot of noise," but at last "Lady Delacour wins the power struggle."[39] Despite arguing that, "by exposing the dissatisfactions of people who work in domestic labor, Edgeworth may not be consciously advocating for the kind of radical leveling decried by Burke, but her ideas amount to leveling nonetheless,"[40] Nash ultimately concludes that Edgeworth "hardly shatters the social hierarchy."[41] My claim that Belinda occupies a servant position suggests a more radical reading of the servant then the one suggested by Nash. For Nash, Edgeworth is conflicted, in favor of reform but afraid of the implications. She concludes of Edgeworth's fictional servants and her focus on the issues surrounding servants that, "she struggled to understand and debate

[38] Ibid., 45.
[39] Ibid., 46.
[40] Ibid., 34.
[41] Ibid., 46.

these issues from her earliest novels to her last, leaving the debate open until the end."[42] I agree with her view that Edgeworth ultimately leaves her stand on the servant and the servant's power undecided. As we have seen in the case of Thady, Edgeworth recognizes the servant's power and does not completely condemn or support it; instead she leaves her view ambiguous.

In the closing scene of *Belinda* there is a shift in genre, and in a theatrical moment Lady Delacour addresses the reader; she takes center stage as she resolves the multiple plots by arranging all the characters with a partner and/or family unit. Lady Delacour places Belinda with Clarence Hervey, Virginia is directed by Lady Delacour to form a group with her father and suitor, and Lady Delacour joins her husband, and daughter. When Lady Delacour takes over to unite these families as a way of concluding the novel, Belinda is no longer leading but throughout the novel Edgeworth has endowed her with authority and significantly leveled hierarchies, before backing away from her stand. Reading Belinda as a servant lets us see how Edgeworth allows the successful and radical use of the servant's power, although whether Belinda keeps her power is left unclear.

"'Trust to one…who will never leave you at the mercy of an insolent waiting woman—trust to me'": Replacing Marriott

Unmarried, without a fortune, and apparently without other connections, Belinda occupies an ambiguous class position and role in the Delacour household: she is not of the family but she lives within the household; she is not of Lady Delacour's social circle but as a guest she will participate in the same milieu; she is not of the lower class but she is dependent and economically limited. Although she is not officially a companion,

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[42] Ibid., 51.

Belinda functions as one for Lady Delacour. Mrs. Stanhope describes her as "a poor girl" and yet she is not of the lower class, but the kind of genteel impoverished woman who might be a companion. Being companions allowed them to maintain a class status because "for the sake of the pride of their mistresses they were politely acknowledged to be of equal class, just as wives were acknowledged to be of equal class with their husbands."[43] This access to gentility is one of the aims possessed by Mrs. Stanhope who wants Belinda to mix with the upper echelons of society to find a husband. Part of the reason she is invited to be a guest of Lady Delacour's is that "her ladyship was so much pleased by Miss Portman's accomplishments and vivacity" (Edgeworth, 7), in other words she is an entertaining companion. Although she is not economically supported by Lady Delacour and thus not formally a companion, Mrs. Stanhope intends for Belinda's residence to be economically beneficial and to teach her the value of money, leading her to strive for social elevation: "You will, of course, have credit with her ladyship's trades-people, if you manage properly. To know how and when to lay out money, is highly commendable" (Edgeworth, 9),

At the beginning of the novel Mrs. Stanhope is educating Belinda and recommends the behavior usually recommended to young ladies in conduct books for women, behavior that is similar to that required from servants in conduct literature suggesting that women are almost always servants. The proper hierarchy of the relationship between Belinda and Lady Delacour is established: "from her ladyship's situation and knowledge of the world, it will always be proper, upon all subjects of conversation, for her to lead and you to follow. It would be very unfit for a young girl like you to suffer yourself to stand in competition with lady Delacour" (Edgeworth, 9).

[43] Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, 31.

Lady Delacour is accustomed to leading and being imitated, but Belinda guides and sets an example for Lady Delacour. Belinda is also competition for Lady Delacour in her ladyship's mind, when she easily believes that Belinda is attempting to become the next Lady Delacour. The intimacy and knowledge Belinda acquires as an inhabitant of the Delacour household and the silence that is required of her also imitates the servant's position. After Belinda writes a letter that reveals private information, Mrs. Stanhope tells her to observe "a profound silence;" Belinda herself "reproached herself for having told, even her aunt, what she had seen in private" (Edgeworth, 16).

As Rizzo explains, the companionate relationship was complicated. Companions could not receive a salary, yet they needed economic support. Like servants they were both inside and outside the family; but unlike servants, because companions "lived in the house as social equals they inevitably took on the coloration of dependent family members."[44] Servants are ambiguous because they are family-like but the companion, who is still an outsider, has even more access to the family and family's status as she is integrated into the family. Rizzo's study of the mistress-companion relationship is an important point of departure for my argument: it makes clear that these women's positions could be positions of subjection or power, depending on the form the relationship took. Because they were usually prohibited from working and because of the attempt to retain their genteel class position, they were dependent and at the mercy of others. But as Rizzo also points out there were options for empowering oneself, including assuming a maternal role.

Belinda can attempt to rise as her aunt instructs her, but she rejects the goal of social elevation, partially because of what she sees from her servant's perspective.

[44] Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, 31.

Inhabiting the Delacour home lets her see the true misery of Lady Delacour's life: "'If lady Delacour, with all the advantages of wealth, rank, wit and beauty, has not been able to make herself happy in this life of fashionable dissipation,' said Belinda to herself, 'why should I follow the same course and expect to be more fortunate?'" (Edgeworth, 70). Instead she reduces her rank, becoming a servant when she replaces Marriott. She gives up the goal of going into society, by giving up the chance to "go to court" (Edgeworth, 70); she does not "appear on the birthnight" (Edgeworth, 83) and does not go "to the drawing-room"(Edgeworth, 84). Belinda is exchanging status and access to society for independence and moral values. Butler points out that "Belinda learns to escape [authority], and to rely instead on her own judgment."[45] At this point Belinda begins to act for herself: "The regret which Belinda felt at having grievously offended her aunt was somewhat alleviated by the reflection that she had acted with integrity and prudence." (Edgeworth, 215) She also stops following Lady Delacour's advice and instead becomes the dispenser of advice and a moral leader. Rather than receiving monetary help from the Delacours as her aunt has suggested, Belinda reverses the economic dynamics of the mistress-companion relationship; she gives Lady Delacour the money that had been designated for a dress, helping her buy new horses Lord Delacour has refused to purchase. As she gives up her attempts to rise, Belinda gains authority.

After seeing the boudoir and learning its secret, Belinda takes over the servant's space. She explicitly offers to replace Marriott: "'Trust to one,' said Belinda, pressing her hand with all the tenderness which humanity could dictate, 'who will never leave you at the mercy of an insolent waiting woman—trust to me'" (Edgeworth, 33). Even as she echoes ruling-class language, Belinda becomes confidante, caretaker, and advisor to Lady

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[45] Butler, *Jane Austen and The War of Ideas*, 141.

Delacour. Marriott herself acknowledges that she has been replaced when Lady Delacour is injured. She begs Belinda, "'I'll do anything you ask me—but pray let me stay in the room, though I know I'm quite helpless" (Edgeworth, 129). This devotion recalls Juba and is the ideal wished for, but distrusted, in all the conduct literature. In place of Marriott Belinda becomes the keeper of Lady Delacour's secret, a role often associated with servants.

Belinda ostensibly sets to right the "unnatural" power dynamics between Lady Delacour and Marriott and of the Delacour home, giving Lady Delacour a more class-appropriate friend and confidante, and by reuniting husband and wife. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace argues, "Lady Delacour stands to learn a great deal from Belinda and, by the end of the novel, Belinda's role approximates the author's own: at the conclusion both Belinda and the author have labored to 'shape' a *rehabilitated* Lady Delacour."[46] As the only person left in Lady Delacour's life, Marriott had replaced all of Lady Delacour's other relationships, including her daughter and husband. In supplanting Marriott, Belinda becomes a substitute for these relationships as well. She uses her position to reconnect Lady Delacour with the people she has replaced. While Belinda's relationship with Lady Delacour is frequently seen as rectifying the proper hierarchies of class and gender that are threatened in the Marriott and the Harriet Freke relationships, she actually continues to question and blur these categories.

Noting Belinda's replacement of Marriott and Harriet Freke, Susan Greenfield argues for Belinda's restorative role: "Belinda helps restore domestic and maternal order

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[46] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 110.

and cure Lady Delacour by displacing both Marriott and Harriet."[47] Belinda's relationship with Lady Delacour does indeed also replace Lady Delacour's dangerous friendship with Harriet Freke, especially as the friendship begins at the moment that Lady Delacour learns that Mrs. Freke has betrayed her and become friends with an enemy. This replacement also appears to rectify the homoerotic and gender-erasing danger presented by the sexually ambiguous Harriet and her wild escapades, which lead Lady Delacour to injure her breast by participating in the masculine activity of dueling while dressed in men's clothes. The duel possesses additional relevance because of the resulting injury to the breast, which is representative of her femininity and maternity. But as in her replacement of Marriott, Belinda continues the threat presented by Harriet Freke.

Harriet Freke's masculine clothing and behavior symbolizes a total rejection of the feminine; she is a threat to the heterosexual family. A negative character, meant to be a lesson on how women should not behave, Harriet Freke is punished at the end of the novel. Meaningfully, the outcome of her "frolic" affects her ability to "be able to appear to advantage in man's apparel" (Edgeworth, 312). The very essence of her deviancy is taken away as penalty. Her punishment seems to erase the homoerotic threat that she represents. However, the threat of homoeroticism is present, albeit less obviously, in Marriott and Lady Delacour's relationship. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft condemns physical intimacy between women. Thinking specifically of servants, she advices that "girls ought to be taught to wash and dress alone" and goes on to say that if assistance is absolutely necessary, "let them not require it till that part of the business is over which ought never to be done before a fellow-creature." For

[47] Susan C. Greenfield, *Mothering Daughters: Novels and the Politics of Family Romance, Frances Burney to Jane Austen* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 114.

Wollstonecraft female intimacy threatens the family and marriage: "To say the truth women are, in general, too familiar with each other, which leads to that gross degree of familiarity that so frequently renders the marriage state unhappy. Why in the name of decency are sisters, female intimates, or ladies and their waiting-women, to be so grossly familiar."[48] This "gross" familiarity must be necessary in Marriott's care of the unhealthy breast inside the closed-up secret boudoir.

In her friendship with Lady Delacour and through her replacement of Marriott, Belinda also replaces Harriet Freke. Belinda's relationship with Lady Delacour is also intimate; she sees Lady Delacour's diseased breast, which she later helps to care for, implying that she continues the threat women's physical familiarity presents to the family. Belinda also temporarily replaces all Lady Delacour's other family, and her influence also affects the functioning of the family. Typical of Belinda's ability to be both subversive and conformist, she continues to represent the threat embodied by Mrs. Freke and Marriott, even as she quiets that peril by urging Lady Delacour to show her wound to Lord Delacour and to submit to male authority by seeking the advice of Dr. X. Belinda steers Lady Delacour to be a loving mother and wife properly respectful of her husband. But as a younger woman of a lower class who leads and counsels Lady Delacour, Belinda disturbs the hierarchies of class, age, and gender. The dangerous power she gains is indicated by the way Lady Delacour, Clarence Hervey, and her aunt perceive her as a threat to the family, when all believe Belinda is trying to become the next Lady Delacour. By taking on the servant role she gains the servant's power and

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[48] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: Norton & Company, 1988), 127. Although in *Maria*, Wollstonecraft supports female families, the question of homoerotism does not, in my opinion, seem to be an issue because of the concurrent romance plot and because the women are sexual victims; they seem to be escaping to a platonic pre-formed family that is concerned with mothering.

continues the subversive subversion seemingly subdued in the Marriott and Harriet Freke storylines. I would suggest Belinda is more dangerous than Marriott who is clearly of the lower class and cannot blend into the family.

The text draws attention to these class differences, as Marriott's abilities as a servant are contrasted with those of Belinda when Lady Delacour falls out of her carriage and is brought home injured. Drawing on the stereotypes of uneducated, irrational, and overly emotional servants, Edgeworth portrays Marriott as hysterical; in an effort to keep everyone away from the secret boudoir, she almost gives away her Lady's secret. Belinda can blend in and thus marry in; the rumor that she is manipulating the family to marry Lord Delacour is believed by many of the characters. But Belinda gains the ability to control the family by usurping the power possessed by the servants in the text. By nurturing Lady Delacour, she also rivals Lady Anne as an ideal mother. When Lady Delacour says, "Take me where you please, my dear Belinda" (Edgeworth, 168), she emphasizes the power to control that mothering gives Belinda. Her ability to direct is seen again after the carriage is overturned and Lady Delacour agrees to see a doctor only because Belinda threatens to go away, which would leave Lady Delacour friendless and in danger of having her secret revealed. The influence Belinda possesses undermines the hierarchy of her relationship with Lady Delacour.

"Take me where you please, my dear Belinda": Belinda's Authority

A servant's position in the household allows Belinda to mother Lady Delacour. She sees what no one else can see, not only because she is entrusted with Lady Delacour's secret but because she can see the Lady Delacour hidden from the public

gaze: "A short time after her arrival at lady Delacour's Belinda began to see through the thin veil with which politeness covers domestic misery. Abroad, and at home, lady Delacour was two different persons" (Edgeworth, 10). The narrator says that, "At a distance, lady Delacour had appeared to Miss Portman the happiest person in the world; upon a nearer view, she discovered that her ladyship was one of the most miserable of human beings" (Edgeworth, 69). Intimacy allows her to understand and see what even Lady Delacour's husband and family do not see, that behind her wit and raillery she longs to be maternal and domestic. Belinda utilizes Lady Delacour's desire for a true friend to pique her interest and get her to consent to an interview with her daughter. She also uses Lady Delacour's wish to be in control to draw her closer to her husband. Rather then let Lord Delacour decide that she should be repaid the money she loaned Lady Delacour, Belinda suggests that the money be given to Lady Delacour, letting her feel that her husband has conceded power to her.

Likewise, Belinda penetrates Lord Delacour's public façade of bravado and uses Lord Delacour's desire to be his wife's choice to cajole him into visiting her. She suggests that Lady Delacour is anxious for his company, leading him to decide that "though I like to be treated with respect in my own house…I would not give lady Delacour the trouble of coming down here with her sprained ankle, especially as she has inquired for me several times" (Edgeworth, 136). In the same vein Belinda plays upon Lord Delacour's pride when he is complaining about lady Delacour's wit; Belinda responds "'but is it fair, my lord, to make use of wit yourself to abuse wit in others?'... which put his lordship into perfect good humor with both himself and his lady"

(Edgeworth,155). Her purpose is to unite but her tactics are the same as those of Champfort, who uses his knowledge of the family to control the master's behavior.[49]

Marriott credits Belinda with reuniting the family: "we may thank miss Portman for this, for t'was she made every thing go right" (Edgeworth, 314). Similarly, Lord Delacour and his aunt, Mrs. Margaret Delacour, assert that Belinda brings domestic harmony to the Delacour home, a fact pointed out by Mrs. Delacour herself when she tells Belinda, "'permit me ... to return you my thanks, for having, as my nephew informs me, exerted your influence over lady Delacour for the happiness of his family…. I rejoice that I have had an opportunity of expressing, in person, my sense of what our family owes to miss Portman" (Edgeworth, 212). Recalling Jemima in *Maria*, Lady Delacour says Belinda "has saved my life. She has made my life worth saving. She has made me feel my own value. She has made me know my happiness. She has reconciled me to my husband. She has united me with my child. She has been my guardian angel" (Edgeworth, 335). The servant seems to be doing her job and working for the master's benefit when happily upholding the traditional family, but Belinda disturbs a seemingly conservative agenda by blurring the hierarchies of age, class and gender.

In *Belinda* the younger woman who has assumed a servant-like position is in control. A reversed age hierarchy is also evident in the Percival children who are treated like equals, and in Helena, Lady Delacour's daughter, who shrewdly catches a maid spying on her mother, although no one else notices. Mitzi Myers argues that the age hierarchy is also subverted in the novel: "the older generation commit spectacular gaffes in judgment, whereas the seventeen-year-old titular heroine in suprarational, the mentoria

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[49] This is the same power possessed by Thady and Caleb, manipulating through intimate knowledge of the master's personality.

of her elders, and the numerous even younger children shrewdly assess adults and notably intervene in the action."[50] She goes on to say, "Edgeworth's is, ultimately, a tale of child power, of smart, resistant youngsters who shape up their elders."[51] As Lady Delacour's guide Belinda usurps the maternal and educational roles. Subversively she is allowed this central role despite perpetuating the revolutionary storylines of Marriott and Freke.

Paula R. Backscheider discusses the way novels of this period imitated conduct books, teaching women about courtship and marriage.[52] Collin B. Atkins and Jo Atkinson call *Belinda* a "consistent statement on the duties of women and the best education to prepare them for those duties."[53] Each of the women in *Belinda* is an example to be imitated or a warning for the young female reader to avoid. Among the choices presented, Lady Anne is often seen as the paragon. Katherine Sobba Green writes "Of the instructive voices in the novel, Lady Anne Percival's is most attractive,"[54] and she calls the Percivals' home a "domestic utopia."[55] Similarly, Kowaleski-Wallace points out that "the Percivals function as the ideal representation of a new-style patriarchal family and allow Edgeworth to establish the maternal ideal against which all other kinds of female behavior must be measured."[56] Introduced in the midst of her children whose "healthy, rosy, intelligent," (Edgeworth, 98) faces are proof of her success as a nurturer

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[50] Mitzi Myers, "My Art Belongs to Daddy? Thomas Day, Maria Edgeworth, and the Pre-Texts of *Belinda*: Women Writers and Patriarchal Authority" in *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century 'Women's Fiction' and Social Engagement*, ed. Paula Backscheider (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 105.
[51] Ibid., 107.
[52] Paula R. Backscheider, "'I Died for Love': Esteem in Eighteenth Century Novels," in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), 152-168.
[53] Collin B. Atkins and Jo Atkinson, "Maria Edgeworth, Belinda, and Women's Rights," *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 115-6.
[54] Katherine Sobba Green, *The Courtship Novel 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 150.
[55] Ibid., 147.
[56] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters*, 120.

and educator, Lady Percival is the ideal mother and her family is the picture of domestic felicity. Furthermore, she creates "ease" and imparts "happiness," an extension of her nurturing role, which is confirmed by her education of Helena Delacour.

In her service to Lady Delacour, Belinda becomes a mother, equal to the honorable Lady Anne; Mrs. Delacour parallels and conflates the two women, calling them both "truly virtuous women" (Edgeworth, 460). Belinda emerges a better judge than Lady Anne when she challenges her authority by resisting Mr. Vincent and is ultimately proven correct in her resistance. Kathryn Kirkpatrick explores the question of who is the ideal woman in Edgeworth's novel, and like me questions the idea that Lady Percival is the novel's exemplar. Kirkpatrick notes that she "gives the heroine what appears to be bad advice."[57] She asks, "If Lady Percival is Edgeworth's ideal woman, why does the reformed Lady Delacour preside at the end of the novel and why is it *her* choice of suitor whom the heroine marries?"[58] Kirkpatrick concludes that Edgeworth gives "Lady Delacour, the reformed aristocrat, precedence."[59] I similarly think that Lady Anne is displaced but I would suggest that Belinda, not Lady Delacour, replaces her. Several times Lady Delacour repeats that she will eventually allow Belinda to lead her to Lady Percival who will reform her, but it is Belinda who in fact fulfills this role in the novel.

Belinda's "artless feelings" (Edgeworth, 33) show Lady Delacour that there are virtuous people capable of being trustworthy friends, a lesson which leads Lady Delacour to confide in Belinda and is her first step towards her reformation and recovery. Lady Delacour herself notes Belinda's role as her educator: "I depend on your taste and

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[57] Kathryn Kirkpatrick, "The Limits of Liberal Feminism in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," in *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*, ed. Laura Dabundo (Lanham: University of America, Inc., 2000), 74.
[58] Ibid., 77.
[59] Ibid., 80.

judgment in all things" (Edgeworth, 168). Belinda guides Lady Delacour to domestic felicity, and convinces her to seek real medical help. Her capacity as nurturer is most obviously seen in her promise to stay with Lady Delacour throughout her illness; it is further illustrated in the way she takes control and nurses Lady Delacour when her coach is overturned. Her maternal role also manifests itself when she demonstrates to Juba the falsity of his superstitions. Less obviously, she enlightens Clarence teaching him the important qualities in a good wife. By claiming the right to mother without marrying, she claims the right for women to have power outside of marriage; her behavior questions women's assigned roles. Like Wollstonecraft in *Maria*, Edgeworth allows women to possess power in alternative relationships, a possibility she seems to silence in the punishment of Harriet Freke.

"We have all of us seen *Pamela married*—let us now see *Belinda in love*": Another Ambiguous Ending

In place of the typical married-happily-ever-after ending expected from a domestic and courtship novel, the ending of *Belinda* shifts genres. Lady Delacour takes center stage and creates a tableau, placing the characters in pairs and family units. As if it were a staged drama she addresses the "reading" audience with an unclear moral: "Our *tale* contains a *moral*, and no doubt, You all have wit enough to find it out" (Edgeworth, 478). Myers suggests of the ending that "only a rash critic would dare serve up just one"[60] meaning. I would suggest the ending is a repetition of *Castle Rackrent*; Edgeworth again backs away from the powerful servant she has created and refuses to see Belinda integrate into the upper class, bringing her difference into that milieu.

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[60] Myers, "My Art Belongs to Daddy?," 112.

As she arranges the final tableau, Lady Delacour says, “we have all of us seen *Pamela married*—let us now see now see *Belinda in love*, if that be possible” (Edgeworth, 472). Comparing Belinda with Pamela reiterates the servant identity of the heroine but there is also a refusal to imagine her marriage to the upper class Hervey. Although Lady Delacour does say, “that the happy couples were united,” she “will not describe wedding dresses, or a procession to church” (Edgeworth, 477). Moreover, as she positions Belinda and gives her to Clarence Hervey there is the suggestion that Belinda resists: “Nay, miss Portman, it is the rule of the stage” (Edgeworth, 478). Rather than tying up the plot, Edgeworth leaves the readers with questions and without a resolution, leaving a feeling of uncertainty created by the ambiguous moral, the refusal to imagine the marriages, and Belinda’s resistance to giving her hand to Clarence Hervey.

Just as in *Castle Rackrent*, where we are left unsure whether the servant ultimately usurps the power and unsure as to how that usurpation should be viewed, in *Belinda* Edgeworth also leaves the ending and the servant’s place in the family unclear. In doing so, Edgeworth may be said to prevent Belinda from losing her power—a power that some have pointed out only lasts during the time of courtship for women. Rachel M. Brownstein hints at the loss of power that comes with marriage: “The wedding day is the ultimate, and final, point of the Exemplar’s glory.”[61] And Katherine Sobba Green argues that the courtship novel has a feminized agenda that is actually progressive because of the attention it pays to women and women’s issues. She defines the courtship novel as a subgenre of the novel that “treated the time between a young woman’s coming out and her marriage as the most important period in her life…. thematically they offered a

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[61] Rachel M. Brownstein, *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 43.

revisionist view: women, no longer merely victims, became heroines with significant, though modest, prerogatives of choice and action."[62] The marriage plot highlights a moment of agency for women, but its completion terminates the period of influence. By refusing to complete the courtship novel, even shifting genres to the theatrical moment where Lady Delacour addresses the audience, Edgeworth keeps Belinda safe from a marriage that would cement her class status and end her term of power. If this is the case, Belinda's refusal of her hand is a refusal to give up her fluid identity by marrying.

The reference to Pamela recalls that the original upstart servant loses her agency with marriage. Toni Bowers argues, "As Mrs. B., Pamela can still name her husband's tyranny, but she must finally submit to it."[63] Belinda has shown the ability to be both submissive and authoritative but a confusing conclusion jars readers and reminds them they have been reading a fiction, and prevents Belinda from being a servant while blending in to the upper class. In contrast, Austen gives readers the wedding and suggests that Fanny, even married, retains her servant power. Green writes: "One of the social proscriptions that Austen took apparent pleasure in examining was that against unequal matches, especially advice against marriages involving class or status inequities."[64]

"My Fanny—my only sister—my only comfort now": Fanny's Substitute Role

In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* servants remain in the background; occasionally named, they allow the house to run smoothly, helping the women dress, carrying out preparations for the ball, and making curtains and scenery for the play. The butler

[62] Green, *The Courtship Novel 1740-1820*, 2.
[63] Toni Bowers, "'A Point of Conscience': Breastfeeding and Maternal Authority in *Pamela*, Part 2," in *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science, and Literature 1650-1865*, ed. Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 151.
[64] Ibid., 153.

announces visitors and carries messages for his master, while the governess teaches the children and is a companion to Lady Bertram. Domestics are often the victims of Mrs. Norris's temper and false assiduousness. She scolds the maids, concerns herself with Wilcox, the coachman, and watches that the servants do not share the household food with their family. Looking to benefit, at Sotherton Mrs. Norris busies herself with the staff and obtains "pheasant's eggs and cream cheese from the housekeeper" and "a beautiful little heath" from the gardener (Austen, 75). Seeing the acquired goods as gifts, Mrs. Norris feels important, as someone that servants need to please. Mrs. Norris also uses domestics to distinguish herself from them through her commands.

While real servants are not pivotal to *Mansfield Park*, service is central to the novel. There are discussions about the importance of the clergy and the proper role for clergymen, and Edmund's decision to follow that path connect service with the idea of service to God. In addition, Fanny's brother's career in the military and his bravery raise the issue of service to one's country. Both the clergy and navy are seen as respectable and important careers that need to be protected from individuals who do not understand the service ethic and instead corrupt these professions. Edmund and William are seen as positive examples that elevate the idea of serving and their vocations allow them to thrive. When she helps to bring Fanny to Mansfield, Mrs. Norris finds another person on whom she can exercise authority and against whom she can elevate herself, but her efforts to have Fanny adopted also engage the idea of service: she acts as a liaison between the Bertrams and Prices, substitutes for her sister and brother-in-law in the effort to adopt Fanny, and relieves her sister Price's financial burdens. Mrs. Norris's service is a form of power that allows her to prosper; she lives a life of luxury and authority by acting

for her sister and she usurps Sir Thomas's authority: Mrs. Norris manages the wife, daughters, and servants and economizes for Sir Thomas.

Replacing, substituting, or assuming another person's role allows characters to assume different positions and be someone different, usually someone more important. Edmund acts for his father when he is away and Tom assumes his father's authority to proceed with the play. The game of private theatricals raises the theme of taking on roles. Replacing gains strength at the end of the novel, when Fanny replaces several family members, allowing the family to remain intact. After Maria's and Mr. Crawford's elopement, Edmund says, "My Fanny—my only sister—my only comfort now" (Austen, 302). And in her reunion with Fanny, Lady Bertram says, "Dear Fanny! now I shall be comfortable" (Austen, 304). Both quotations emphasize her role as comforter, her usefulness and service, and stress her role as a substitute. For Edmund she replaces his sisters; for Lady Bertram she replaces Mrs. Norris, who is useless during the crisis, despite her constant meddling. In her move to the parsonage and as an importable companion to Lady Bertram Fanny further substitutes for Mrs. Norris. Additionally Fanny replaces Mary Crawford, while Susan is described as Fanny's "substitute" (Austen, 320). And in the concluding remarks of the novel, the narrator summarizes Sir Thomas's feelings: "Fanny was indeed the daughter that he wanted" (Austen, 320). As she has done for Edmund, Fanny replaces the Bertram daughters for Sir Thomas.

Fanny's ability to replace allows her to integrate herself into the family, to marry Edmund, and to become the heroine of the novel. Many readers and critics are disappointed by *Mansfield Park,* by its heroine, and by the conclusion. Anna Despotopoulou calls *Mansfield Park* "a novel which has often in the past been tainted by

negative criticisms of the heroine's priggish insistence on rules of conventional morality."[65] John Skinner, comparing Fanny to other Austen heroines, writes, "it is as if Jane (or even Mary) Bennet were raised to the status of heroine, and Elizabeth reduced to the villain of the piece."[66] Fanny seems so un-heroine-like because she is the perfect servant obediently following all the master's rules. She is not like Richardson's servant-heroine, Pamela, who is unique for her morality, but also for her beauty, the liveliness of her letters, and her dramatic suffering—for her ability to be the center of attention, drawing the interest of all the other characters in the novel because she is not a typical servant. Fanny is quiet, invisible, suffers silently, and never tells a noteworthy story; instead she shrinks the few times she is the focus of attention. As the novel ends she continues in the margins of Mansfield, assuring the continuation of the family through her replacements of daughters (Maria and Julia), sisters (Maria, Julia, and Mrs. Norris), and the woman Edmund intends to marry (Mary). While this role of second best diminishes Fanny, it allows her to be a heroine. Poovey complains, "even though Fanny triumphs at the end of the novel, the qualities of passivity, reserve, and self-depreciation she embodies make it difficult to understand how she has overcome either the Bertrams' moral inertia or the Crawfords' anarchic power. Fanny emerges victorious simply because the others falter."[67] This is true because, as we have seen, the servant finds a space in the family when there is a weakness but it is precisely her "passivity, reserve, and self-depreciation" that permit Fanny to fill in the gaps in the family. Fanny's ability

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[65] Anna Despotopoulou, "Fanny's Gaze and the Construction of Feminine Space in *Mansfield Park*," *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 3 (July 2004): 569.
[66] John Skinner, "Exploring Space: The Constellations of *Mansfield Park*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 4, no. 2 (January 1992): 140.
[67] Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 223.

to be a good daughter, sister, and wife creates the false sense that the Bertrams are a successful family, yet they can only exist with the help of substitutes (Fanny and Susan). In effect making the family function is evidence of Fanny's servant role since it is a servant's job to make the family and house run smoothly.

The reward for ideal servants, becoming part of the family, can take on a different meaning from the one intended by conduct literature.[68] Instead of becoming dependents, servants can become authoritative. Service is demanded of Fanny from the moment she arrives at Mansfield but it quickly becomes her preferred role. Fanny purposely and willingly spends her time retreating and effacing herself, following Mrs. Norris's dictum that she must always be "the lowest and last" (Austen, 151-2). Caleb uses a similar social ambiguity to assert equality with the master, but Fanny never claims to be equal. Like Thady and Jemima, she insists on her servant position, but she has the ambiguity of Caleb (in fact greater ambiguity then Caleb) and possesses the ability to occupy multiple roles, as seen in the mistress-servant relationships of *Maria* and *Adeline Mowbray*. Through her replacements Fanny assumes positions of power even as she is the perfect servant. She socially conforms to the family, but is content with her place and seemingly does not challenge the master's authority. Yet by submitting Fanny subverts the meaning of compliance and the subjugated role.

Scholars note the importance of social boundaries and the flexibility of those boundaries in *Mansfield Park*, but many read Fanny as resisting change. Auerbach suggests, "Modern readers may shun Fanny as a static, solitary predator, but in the world of *Mansfield Park* her very consistency and tenacity are bulwarks against a newly

[68] This revision of the familial relationship promised is seen in Edgeworth's Thady and is discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation.

opening space that is dangerous in its very fluidity."[69] Paula Marantz Cohen, like me, sees Fanny "as an outsider within the Bertram family" and calls Fanny "both 'in' and 'out'."[70] But Cohen reads Fanny as becoming "part of the central internal dynamic of the family system."[71] While Fanny participates in the family when she replaces others, she simultaneously maintains her marginal identity; she provides stability but defies boundaries the boundaries of the family. When Fanny arrives the family and the servants perceive her as a strange outsider. While her cousins "hold her cheap," "Miss Lee wondered at her ignorance, and the maid-servant sneered at her clothes" (Austen, 12-3). Fanny belongs nowhere but by the end of the novel she belongs everywhere. Kay Torney Souter sees Fanny's adoptive status as giving her an "ill defined role": "Fanny is in fact a hybrid, with no secure place in the social order…both part of and excluded from the family."[72] Souter goes on to say, "she creates an adult self out of the particular circumstances of her life as she experiences it."[73] Fanny does create an identity but that identity thrives on being "ill defined."

Some critics describe the trajectory of the novel as Fanny's movement from margin to center. Auerbach sees Fanny as "moving from outsider into guiding spirit of the humbled Bertram family" as a "conqueror."[74] Likewise, Marilyn Butler says Fanny

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[69]Nina Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 35. Similarly Ruth Bernard Yeazell notes that *Mansfield Park* is about the blurring of categories and boundaries; she argues that the novel reveals an "impulse to draw a world divided by clear spatial and ontological boundaries." Ruth Bernard Yeazell, "The Boundaries of Mansfield Park," *Representations* 7 (Summer 1984): 135.

[70] Paula Marantz Cohen, "Stabilizing the Family System at Mansfield Park," *ELH* 54, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 679.

[71] Ibid., 679.

[72] Kay Torney Souter, "Jane Austen and the Reconsigned Child: The True Identity of Fanny Price," *Persuasions: Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 23 (2001): 208, 212.

[73] Ibid., 214.

[74] Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment*, 28, 33.

gains importance: "From being a bystander, Fanny becomes the active heroine."[75] There is a movement of increased status for Fanny but it is not permanent, and in fact Fanny resists moving into the center. I would propose that Fanny achieves the fluid state of the domestic servant that interacts with the family. She acquires a form of power, but it does not mean she has "the power" or that she takes over the family. The trajectory for Fanny, as I see it, is from margin to center, and then from center back to the margins. She comes into the home and becomes a servant, filling various roles for the family. With Maria's marriage, the removal of Julia and the absence of Edmund, Fanny begins to lose anonymity. After Henry Crawford's proposal, Fanny is in even greater danger of being elevated. She escapes this central position when she is sent to Portsmouth. When she returns from her parents' home Fanny returns to her servant position.

What Fanny accomplishes is more complicated than rising and being absorbed into the family, or rising and becoming the leader of the family. I would complicate the argument of critics such as Ellen Pollack who argues that when Fanny returns to the Bertram family, "She is no longer an outsider and an inferior, but a soon-to-be-fully-integrated member of the Bertram clan as daughter to her uncle and wife to her cousin and foster brother."[76] Fanny is integrated because she replaces members of the family, but simultaneously she remains an unequal outsider. When she marries, Fanny remains a servant to the Bertrams. She resides at Thornton Lacey and later the parsonage, which like the attic and the east room are marginal to the main house. These two residences

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[75] Butler, *Jane Austen and The War of Ideas,* 236. Also seeing Fanny as "exchang[ing] the outsider's role for the insiders" and becoming central, Cohen suggests that Fanny occupies "a position of power in her weakness." Cohen, "Stabilizing the Family System," 684

[76] Ellen Pollack, *Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 175. Similarly Yeazell writes, "When Mansfield welcomes Fanny back, it is no longer to the humble east room with its chilly heart…and 'the lowest and last' assumes her rightful place in the house." Yeazell, "The Boundaries of Mansfield Park," 142.

connect Fanny to Mansfield but simultaneously separate her, and define her as dependent on the "patronage" of Sir Thomas. Ironically, remaining a servant is a form of freedom and even superiority for Fanny, especially because of the religious implications attached to service via Edmund who will serve God and the parish. Butler similarly reads Fanny as choosing to serve: "in opting for Mansfield Fanny volunteers to continue in her personal obscurity, her life of somewhat undefined usefulness in a subordinate role." For Butler, "the Good Life—visibly Christian, humble, contemplative, serviceable—is realized in Fanny"; she further argues "to see the Evangelical strain in the book as socially radical—the triumph of a representative of a humbler class over the corrupt aristocracy—is to get the emphasis entirely wrong."[77] Yet Fanny does alter the hierarchy by integrating her "humble class" into the Bertram family. It is subversive that usefulness, with its religious connotations, used in the servant manuals to recommend complacency, is a source of agency.

Raising the issue of social class, Ellen Pollack says it "remains undecided" whether,

> Fanny Price has forgotten her own class origins and thus fulfills the threat alluded to by Walter Benjamin in the epigraph that heads this chapter—'that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes'; or whether, on the contrary, she remembers her history of suffering with a vengeance and retains a private sense of *ressentiment* or performative agency.[78]

Rather than undecided, I think, Fanny is part of both social classes. Pollack captures the crux of much criticism of Fanny Price—does she rise socially or is she a rebel, is she a victim or manipulative and dangerous? Critics argue that Fanny is a conniving presence,

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[77] Butler, *Jane Austen and The War of Ideas*, 243.
[78] Pollack, *Incest and the English Novel,* 199.

presenting a meek exterior while harboring malevolent feelings. Auerbach calls Fanny's role "her somewhat sinister position as outsider who strangely moves into the interior."[79] Amy J. Pawl argues Fanny is motivated by "selfishness and moral dishonesty."[80] The tendency to see Fanny as insincere comes from her fluidity, her ability to adapt and to replace.[81] This destabilizes authority, but her honesty or dishonesty is indeterminable.

Much criticism on this novel focuses on deciphering who in *Mansfield Park* has power (the Bertrams or Fanny), and on the related question of whether or not Fanny has power. Criticism about Fanny is polarized. She is called a Christian heroine and thus moral leader, or an oppressed victim; a heroine that rises and joins the ranks of the aristocratic Bertrams or a rebel that invades the family and usurps power. These critical views miss the point of her ambiguous servant position. Fanny serves the family's purpose, even as service gives her agency. Critics insist on seeing Fanny as manipulative and monstrous because she empowers herself, or as passive and at the service of the family and completely devoid of agency. I argue she is both passive and authoritative—the form of power she possesses is what the servant possesses. Even critics who see Fanny as gaining power from her weakness see her as moving inward in the family and upward on the hierarchy. But Fanny at the end of the novel is still inside and outside, on the cusp of social and family boundaries, both submissive and powerful. She serves and also usurps. Sir Thomas maintains his patriarchal position and the power of patronage but he and the family have been admonished. The family has been saved from destruction, but they have been further invaded by the lower class in the form of Susan.

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[79] Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment*, 27.
[80] Amy J. Pawl, "Fanny Price and the Sentimental Genealogy of *Mansfield Park,*" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* January 16, no. 2 (January 2004): 288.
[81] This fluidity causes the same tendency in critics to read Thady and Caleb as either dishonest or as victims.

"is she out, or is she not?—I am puzzled": Fanny's Servant Identity

Fanny's ability to blur and undermine comes from her in-between identity, which is a direct result of her complicated position in the family. As they prepare for Fanny's arrival Mrs. Norris and Sir Thomas discuss "the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up…. to make her [Fanny] remember she is not a Miss Bertram…[because] they cannot be equals;" they worry that Fanny's disposition will "be really bad," and influence the other children, and thus reserve the right "to not "continue her in the family" if she proves immoral (Austen, 10). Likewise they prepare "for gross ignorance, some meanness of opinions, and very distressing vulgarity of manners; but [conclude] these are not incurable faults" (Austen, 10). The discussion replicates the cultural worries about servants' location in the home because of children, and the desire to educate while keeping servants separate. Sir Thomas and Mrs. Norris use the attic to make Fanny understand her place in the household.[82] But the attic also identifies her with the servants. J. Jean Hecht writes, "Regardless of the size of the house, the attic storey was generally favoured for lower servants."[83] Theresa McBride similarly notes servant lodgings were in the "attic and cellar."[84] Fanny's accommodations are similarly isolating and accentuate her difference from the family.

In *The Enquirer*, Godwin discusses the stark differences between the living spaces assigned to servants and those inhabited by the family. Godwin compares the shameful

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[82] As Stephanie M. Eddleman notes, the attic "marginalizes Fanny, removing her from the main stream of the family." Stephanie M. Eddleman, "Mad as the Devil but Smiling Sweetly: Repressed Female Anger in *Mansfield Park*," *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 28 (2006): 46.

[83] J. Jean. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956),103.

[84] Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976). 50-1.

conditions in which servants were housed to a "jail." He imagines visiting "the mansion of a man of rank" and describes it as a place of "splendor," and "costliness," with rooms that are "spacious, lofty and magnificent."[85] But in the servant quarters he sees "dark passages," and "gloom." It is a place without light or air, "musty and stagnant" with rooms that reveal "the depression and humiliated state of mind of its tenant."[86] McBride's historical study of servants echoes Godwin and points out that living conditions often "attracted considerable criticism."[87] She says, "The servant's room was generally small, with sloping ceilings, dark, poorly ventilated, unheated, dirty, lacking privacy or even safety."[88] Nothing suggests that Fanny's "little white attic" is of this nature, but it is "reckoned too small for anybody's comfort" (Austen, 263), and isolates her.

Fanny's continuous outsider status and intimacy in the family make her role in the family, and her social status vis-à-vis the family, blurry. She is literally and symbolically separated from the Bertrams. Mrs. Norris makes the function of the attic clear:

> It will be much the best place for her, so near Miss Lee, and not far from the girls, and close by the housemaids, who could either of them help to dress her you know, and take care of her clothes, for I suppose you would not think it fair to expect Ellis to wait on her as well as the others (Austen, 10).

Fanny is physically separated from the other daughters and near the space occupied by the different servants at Mansfield. While Mrs. Norris is discussing Fanny's physical location in the household, her description also applies to Fanny's social location in the family. Mrs. Norris's description of Fanny's proximity and relation to maids, governess,

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[85] William Godwin, *Enquirer; Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (London, 1797), 207-9. http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr
[86] Ibid., 208.
[87] McBride, *The Domestic Revolution,* 51.
[88] Ibid., 51.

and daughters is all the same—it means she is not like them and yet similar to them, however the words used (*near*, *close*, *not far*) all imply different degrees of similarities. According to the OED one of the meanings for *close* as an adverb is: "Of two or more parts or things in local relation: 'Joined without any intervening distance or space'" or "in immediate proximity, very near."[89] Through the use of the word *close*, Mrs. Norris suggests the greatest affinities between Fanny and the housemaids and in many ways Fanny is a housemaid for her aunts. Similarly, she is at the disposal of her cousins: "Fanny was up in a moment, expecting some errand, for the habit of employing her in that way was not yet overcome" (Austen, 102). Yet Edmund's attempt to stop his siblings indicates that she is not a servant.

In contrast to *close*, *near* suggests that she is similar to the governess and yet slightly removed from Miss Lee who is neither a servant nor family. It is this identity Fanny will most resemble as the novel progresses, but upon her arrival from Portsmouth Fanny lacks the education and manners possessed by the governess, which places her only "near" Miss Lee. When "denoting proximity," the OED defines *near* as: "To, within, or at a short distance; to or in close proximity;" and when "denoting manner" the definition is:"Close to, within a short distance of (a place, thing, or person) in space;" or, "close to, almost at or approaching (a state or condition)."[90] Whereas *close* suggests immediacy and lack of space, *near* suggests a small distance between objects or people.

Finally, Mrs. Norris suggests the greatest difference between Fanny and her other nieces; emphasizing this distance is the reason for placing Fanny in the attic. The word

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[89] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "close," http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/
[90] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "near," http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/

far itself is defined as: "At a great distance, a long way off."[91] Although it says that Fanny is "not far" the word *far* suggests distance while the others suggest different degrees of proximity. While Mrs. Norris stresses the difference in Fanny, she shows the impossibility of completely separating her. A distinction is made between the lower servants who will assist Fanny and the genteel Ellis who serves the Bertram daughters when Mrs. Norris says that the housemaids can "help to dress" Fanny, rather than have Ellis "wait on her" (Austen, 10); only those from the master class can be served. Fanny is placed below the upper servants, yet she has assistance because she is part of the family, highlighting her ambiguous identity. The words used suggest different forms of proximity and distance from the servants, the governess, and the daughters, but also suggest Fanny is the center because she is the constant referent.

Fanny's unclear position in the household is further accentuated as well as increased when she takes over the East Room. The reader is told that with the daughters grown up, "the room had then become useless" (Austen, 105). The room is near the now obsolete nurseries, and is the same space previously allotted to the governess, another socially unclear inhabitant of the household. According to Armstrong, she "represented a threat to the well being of the household" because "it was by fulfilling the duties of the domestic woman for money that she blurred a distinction on which the very notion of gender appeared to depend."[92] Fittingly by this point in the novel Fanny can occupy the governess's ambiguous role because she has adapted to Mansfield, and been educated. In taking over Miss Lee's room she replaces the governess just as she replaced her as her

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[91] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "far," http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/

[92] Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction,* 78-9. Or as Ruth Brandon claims, the governess was a threat because she suggested the possibility for independence, "a respectable woman earning, however exiguously, her own living," thus blurring gender and class boundaries. Ruth Brandon, *Governess: The Lives and Times of the Real Jane Eyres* (New York: Walker & Company, Inc., 2008), 14.

aunt's companion. The room is connected with servants and peripheral because unwanted, but is a more ambiguous space than the attic. It is physically closer to the center of the house and used by anomalous figures—the socially in-between governess and the children who are family without authority. P. Keiko Kagawa writes of Austen:

> She begins by placing Fanny in the attic room, furthest from the house's domestic center, moves her down the attic stairs to the East Room which will become her sitting room, and ends by securing Fanny a position in the family's central rooms—the drawing room and the ball-room. Each move brings Fanny physically closer to Edmund, as well as closer to the attainment of her social goal of marriage.[93]

Kagawa notes the importance of Fanny taking over the East Room and correctly sees it as a space that is closer to the house and the status of the family but sees it as part of Fanny's journey outward. The East room is connected to Fanny's power and identity but because this space lies between the attic and the main home, it is a reflection of her in-between identity. Similarly, John Skinner says of Fanny's habitation, "it reflects Fanny's gradual estrangement from Portsmouth and eventual identification with Mansfield."[94] But Kagawa and Skinner see Fanny as socially rising, ignoring how after she becomes important in the family because Maria has married, Julia has left as her sister's companion, and Henry courts her, Fanny returns to the margins of the family and to the margins of Portsmouth, a move that re-identifies her with her lower-class origins as well as shows her to be neither from Portsmouth nor truly of Mansfield.

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[93] P. Keiko Kagawa, "Jane Austen, The Architect: (Re)Building Spaces at *Mansfield Park*, *Women's Studies* 35 (2006), 136.
[94] Skinner, "Exploring Space," 134.

Fanny's access to the attic, the East Room and the main house suggest her ability to exist in all the social spheres these different spaces signify. Throughout the text she moves back and forth between being family and outsider. Fanny both literally and metaphorically occupies the perimeter of the house and family. Adoption is a move to the margins and a decline in importance for Fanny: "to these sorrows was added the idea of the brothers and sisters among whom she had always been important as playfellow, instructress, and nurse" (Austen, 13). Her move to Mansfield Park is simultaneously a social move upward. Her arrival in the family sets up the paradox of power, showing the marginal position is one of power for Fanny because it makes her in-between and gives her access to multiple roles in the family, and thus to diverse social stations.

Fanny observes the family, and as with the play, learns the roles performed by the various family members. Early in the novel Fanny's adaptability is suggested:

> The place became less strange, and the people less formidable; and if there were some amongst them whom she could not cease to fear, she began at least to know their ways, and to catch the best manner of conforming to them. The little rusticities and awkwardnesses which had at first made grievous inroads on the tranquility of all, and not least of herself wore away. (Austen, 14-5)

She is the ideal conduct book servant—like the master and able to fit in, but content with her situation. Haywood writes: "Humours have all of them a certain way of being soothed; which if you hit, as a little Attention will teach you how to do, you will find more Kindness from those very Persons, than you might from others of more even Temper."[95] Haywood goes on to say, "it is your Interest to study by what Sort of

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[95] Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant Maid* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1744), 8. http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr

Behaviour you can most ingratiate yourself, as the Scripture says, The Eye of the Handmaid looks up to her Mistress, so you ought diligently to observe not only what she says, but also how she looks, in order to give Content."[96] Similarly, *The Complete Man and Maid Servant* tells a lady's maid that: "It is her duty to study her lady's temper, for every person has something peculiar to themselves."[97] Fanny knows how to fit in with each family member; since she watches and listens, she knows more than others.

"As a bystander,'…'perhaps I saw more than you did": The Servant's Perspective

Fanny's first act of replacement occurs when she takes over Miss Lee's post as her aunt's companion. Replacing a servant gives Fanny a place in the family. Lady Bertram summarizes the way service makes her of the family: "she could not acknowledge any necessity for Fanny's ever going near a Father and Mother who had done without her so long, while she was so useful to herself" (Austen, 251). Fanny is part of the family, but the word "while" stresses that her membership is contingent on her usefulness. As part of her service Fanny replaces absent family, assuring the continued comfort of those left behind. She gains in importance because there is no one else. Wiltshire writes, "Fanny Price's final happiness is contingent, a fallout from the motives, projects and passions of the rival figures whose lives have been so tellingly intertwined with hers."[98] This is part of the servant's power. They can replace because their location in the family provides the necessary knowledge to fit in, and puts them in the right place at the right time to function as substitutes.

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[96] Ibid., 8.
[97] *The Complete Man and Maid Servant: Containing Plain and Easy Instructions for Servants of Both Sexes* (London: J. Cooke, 1764), 69-70.
http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/servlet/ECCO?locID=cuny_gradctr
[98] Wiltshire, introduction to *Mansfield Park*, lxxxiv.

When Maria gets married and leaves the family home with Julia as a companion:

> Fanny's consequence increased on the departure of her cousins. Becoming, as she then did, the only young woman in the drawing-room, the only occupier of that interesting division of a family in which she had hitherto held so humble a third, it was impossible for her not to be more looked at, more thought of and attended to, than she had ever been before; and 'where is Fanny?' became no uncommon question, even without her being wanted for any one's convenience. (Austen, 141)

Just as when she becomes her aunt's companion, Fanny must again provide comfort by helping the family avoid boredom. Another similar moment of replacement is Fanny's replacement of Edmund; she becomes useful to Mary Crawford as a companion to ease the dullness of her days, as a connection to, and replacement of Edmund. Furthermore, for the Grants and Mary, Fanny again replaces the missing Bertram daughters, and therefore is asked to dine at the parsonage. The attention from the Bertrams, Mary's friendship, and the invitation to dinner acknowledge Fanny's identity as part of the family, bringing her out from her marginal position. Similarly at the ball held for Fanny and William (itself a sign of Fanny's increased importance) Fanny is the focus of attention and the subject of analysis: "To be placed above so many elegant young women! The distinction was too great. It was treating her like her cousins" (Austen, 189). With Maria and Julia's absence, Fanny becomes increasingly central but she recoils at this attention. Instead of reveling in her importance, she regrets her cousins "were not at home to take their own place in the room" (Austen, 189).

Fanny further threatens the family hierarchy when she gains Henry Crawford's serious attentions and socially advantageous marriage proposal. In musing on a possible marriage to Fanny, Henry boasts: "I am the person to give the consequence so justly her due. Now she is dependent, helpless, friendless, neglected, forgotten" (Austen, 203). He asks: "What can Sir Thomas and Edmund together do, what *do* they do for her happiness, comfort, honour, and dignity in the world to what I *shall* do?" (Austen, 203). Fanny indeed gains importance in her uncle's eyes because of her admirer; it is why he gives the ball. Furthermore, by gaining the suitor her cousins (and reportedly most women) vie for, Fanny supersedes both Bertram daughters. Yet she rejects Henry, and the eminence he would give her. Henry's proposal threatens to solidify her social identity and makes her an object of scrutiny. When she becomes subject to the notice of her uncle and Henry, Fanny's status is increased, but she is also reduced to a commodity to be watched. At both the ball and dinner Fanny wants to be part of the group but to remain quietly and invisibly in the background, to be both central and marginal.

Contemplating the evening at the Grants', Fanny hopes for "her favourite indulgence of being suffered to sit silent and unattended to" (Austen, 153). She is pleased at the "prospect of having only to listen in quiet, and of passing a very agreeable day" (Austen, 153). Mrs. Norris is distressed at the attention Fanny is receiving and at the importance it confers, but Fanny always retreats to her preferred vantage point, the background: "Fanny who had edged back her chair behind her aunt's end of the sofa, and screened from notice herself, saw all that was passing before her" (Austen, 128). Similarly, at the ball she is the center of attention but, "was never summoned to it, without looking at William, as he walked about at his ease in the back ground, and

longing to be with him" (Austen, 187). Mary Crawford observes Fanny's predilection for invisibility, saying she "seemed almost as fearful of notice and praise as other women were of neglect" (Austen, 136). Tellingly, Fanny refuses to emulate the upper-class accomplishments of music or drawing. She is denied equality with her cousins, but she also resists equality.

Invisibility and the peripheral are where Fanny seeks safety. When Henry is courting Fanny he often tries to engage her attention. On one of his visits Fanny inadvertently "shook her head" and is drawn into the conversation, leaving Fanny "vexed with herself for not having been as motionless as she was speechless" (Austen, 252). She is only able to escape the discussion by serving tea, which "delivered her from a grievious imprisonment of body and mind. Mr. Crawford was obliged to move. She was at liberty, she was busy, she was protected" (Austen, 234). Service frees her from an oppressive situation and unwanted attention. Observing and listening also allow Fanny to alter the power dynamics between her and Sir Thomas, Mrs. Norris, and Edmund. Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Grant think Henry is in love with Julia, Mrs. Norris has overestimated her nieces, while Edmund (even with a hint from Fanny) thinks Henry Crawford is merely charming. Fanny is wiser than the family: "since the day at Sotherton, she could never see Mr. Crawford with either sister without observation, and seldom without wonder or censure" (Austen, 82). She tells Edmund, "'As a bystander,' said Fanny, 'perhaps I saw more than you did…'" (Austen, 237); and later repeats, "I was quiet, but I was not blind" (Austen, 246). Fanny's insight undermines the superior judgment claimed by the family. In judging, she assumes an upper-class prerogative, recalling Sir Thomas's decision at the beginning of the novel to reserve his right to evaluate Fanny's behavior.

Fanny is also able to do what no one else in the novel dares when she stands up to Sir Thomas; this is possible because of her servant perspective. When Mr. Crawford proposes to Fanny and Sir Thomas urges his suit, Fanny has the courage to refuse the proposal because of the behavior she has witnessed from Crawford: “Her ill opinion of him was founded chiefly on observations, which, for her cousins’ sake, she could scarcely dare mention to their father” (Austen 215). Despite her fear of Sir Thomas and her desire to please, she is able to resist his tyranny because she knows it is not possible “to do otherwise” (Austen 217). Sir Thomas rebukes Fanny’s refusal saying, “I should have been very much surprised had either of my daughters, on receiving a proposal of marriage at any time, which might carry with it only half the eligibility of this, immediately and peremptorily, and without paying my opinion or my regard the compliment of any consultation, put a decided negative on it” (Austen, 216). In challenging Sir Thomas’s authority Fanny rejects the expectation that women must follow the advice of men and the assumption that women’s goal and purpose is to marry.

Watching and listening without participating allows Fanny to see the whole picture. At Sotherton Fanny sees the developing relationship and conflicts between Edmund and Mary, and she hears the flirtations between Maria and Henry who disregard her presence. She perceives Rushworth’s angry reaction to Maria’s disappearance with Henry and is his confidante; she reads Rushworth and can soothe him, causing him to relent. This ability to read people and to know the behavior, thoughts, and desires of each allows Fanny to be useful and replace a variety of characters—she can be the daughter that Sir Thomas needs, the companion Lady Bertram wants, and the wife and sister that Edmund requires. Auerbach says of Fanny’s “outcast” role, “she hones it into a

spectator's perspective from which she can observe her world and invade it." [99] Fanny's ability to watch allows her to replace family members; rather than invade, Fanny is capable of entering the family at will, to partially integrate while maintaining her own separate space. The play illustrates the possibility of gaining importance through observing, and replicates Fanny's place in the family. Her sideline perspective permits her to learn all the parts and to understand why the play is inappropriate; she uses her solitude to read the entire text. She is a "quiet auditor" (Austen, 96) who sees beyond the pretenses of Maria and Crawford's excessive rehearsals, Julia's anger and hurt feelings, Rushworth's dislike of Crawford, and Edmund's motivations for acting. [100] Fanny understands that Edmund acts for Miss Crawford: "Edmund so inconsistent. Was he not deceiving himself? Was he not wrong? Alas! It was all Miss Crawford's doing" (Austen, 110). As at Sotherton, she sees more than the actors themselves.

As the idea of putting on a play begins to take shape, Tom tells Fanny, "we want your services" (Austen, 102). She does become of service: "Fanny began to be their only audience—and sometimes as prompter, sometimes as spectator—was often very useful" (Austen, 115). Because of her knowledge, she is sought to replace Edmund, Mary, and Mrs. Grant in the rehearsals. In serving, Fanny integrates herself into the action, just as she will do in the family. Also focusing on the play, Auerbach calls Fanny an "omniscient outsider,"[101] and suggests that as an observer Fanny has the power to control. Her role as observer is indeed powerful, but because of the ability it gives her to fill a variety of roles: "She was occasionally useful to all; she was perhaps as much at peace as

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[99] Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment*, 33.
[100] Auerbach points out that by being "backstage, she alone is in possession of each actor's secret grievance." Ibid., 26.
[101]Ibid., 27.

any" (Austen, 116). The theatricals exemplify Fanny's role in the family: as an outsider, she watches and learns all the roles as well as sees the unique situation surrounding each person. By helping all the actors rehearse she becomes central to numerous people at different times. The play demonstrates her fluid identity; she acts while always returning to her position as outside observer. She finds a place within the group as both actor and non-actor. As a spectator of the family she recalls the fear of the servant gaze.[102] In *Mansfield Park*, the destructive power of the observing servant is seen when the family cannot hide the fact that Maria ran away with Henry Crawford because a maid has witnessed her indiscretions and cannot be silenced. Rather than destroy the family, Fanny is useful and reconstitutes, even as she changes, it.

"She was useful, she was beloved; she was safe": The Use of Usefulness

As Austen closes *Mansfield Park* the idea of usefulness gathers force. The final chapter begins:

> She was returned to Mansfield Park, she was useful, she was beloved; she was safe from Mr. Crawford; and when Sir Thomas came back she had every proof that could be given in his then melancholy state of spirits, of his perfect approbation and increased regard; and happy as all this must make her, she would still have been happy without any of it, for Edmund was no longer the dupe of Miss Crawford. (Austen, 312)

"Useful" is the first adjective used to describe Fanny's return to Mansfield, a word that has been repeatedly associated with Fanny. Moreover, her being beloved and safe is brought about by her usefulness, as well as fulfills her novel-long goal of gaining love

[102] The gaze provides Thady and Caleb with a story.

and becoming necessary. Continuing the emphasis on usefulness, the third to last paragraph of *Mansfield Park* repeats the word useful or usefulness three times in reference to Susan who has become "a substitute" for Fanny. Not only are Susan, Fanny and Edmund useful to the well being of the family, but even Tom becomes "what he ought to be, useful to his father, steady and quiet, and not living merely for himself" (Austen, 313), suggesting Fanny has infiltrated and influenced the family; the ideology of service has permeated the family.[103] With the exception of Lady Bertram and Sir Thomas, who are not useful but are instead diminished, the family takes on the mantle of usefulness that has been Fanny's throughout the novel.

The redeemed or partially redeemed characters become useful, depicting the power of the servant, and suggestive of the possibility that the unchanged, lower class Fanny has brought other differences into the family. Of course her difference is acceptable; it is the Christian ideal, as evidenced by Edmund's upright determination to live in his parish, and it is part of the values of the middle-class with its focus on purpose and industry. Yet "use" as we see it in *Mansfield Park*, which requires Fanny to be useful for the sake of others while forsaking any desire, is what was required of servants. Roger Sales describes the servant's job as: "to perform useful actions and yet still to remain a spectator rather than an actor."[104] In other words, to remain invisible and exist for another person's needs. According to the OED the word "useful" is defined as: "having the ability or qualities to bring about good, advantage, benefit, etc.; helpful for any purpose;

[103] In contrast to Pamela or Caleb who take on the upper class identity (in one case successfully and in the other unsuccessfully), in *Mansfield Park* the family takes on the servant's identity.
[104] Roger Sales, "In Face of All the Servants: Spectators and Spies in Austen," in *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*. ed. Deidre Lynch (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 191.

serviceable."[105] In the theatre it is used to define those in the background; as an example the OED gives the following 1824 quotation: "I was enrolled among the number of what are called *useful men*; those who enact soldiers, senators, and Banquo's shadowy line."[106] This application of the word is appropriate considering function as substitute; it is also appropriate because of the importance of the theatre in the novel. Finally, the word useful can be "applied to an odd-job man,"[107] in other words to a type of servant. The various definitions capture Fanny's role in the novel—she benefits the family and is serviceable in her servant role which places her in the background ready to fill in.

The need to be useful is an important requirement for servants who are encouraged to always work diligently. Haywood's *A Present for a Servant Maid* tells servants: "if you really perform all the Duties of a Servant with the utmost Exactness, yet if you seem careless whether what you do is agreeable or not, your Services will lose great Part of their Merit."[108] It is more important to embrace the servant position and the desire to be of use than to serve well. Usefulness is even encouraged beyond the duties of a maid's specific job: "she who would endeavour to oblige her Mistress, or prove herself a good Housewife, should after the common Affairs of the Family are over, ask if she has any thing to employ her in, and if she answers in the Negative can scarce be without somewhat to do for herself." [109] Haywood says of sloth, "if indulged grows up into a Vice, and renders you incapable of doing your Duty either to God or Man,"[110] connecting a servant's duty to her master with her duty to God. Haywood threatens damnation but

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[105] [105] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "useful," http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/
[106] Ibid., http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/
[107]According to the OED this definition is " *Austral. colloq."* Ibid., http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/
[108] Haywood, *Present*, 8.
[109] Ibid., 41.
[110] Ibid., 9.

also promises happiness and spiritual fulfillment; in exchange for assiduousness, the servant is promised marriage but with a man of her class: "none but a Fool will take a Wife whose Bread must be earned solely by his Labour, and will contribute nothing towards it herself."[111] Conduct books attempted to maintain a balance between the advantages promised to servants and the maintenance of hierarchy.

When Fanny is told to be useful and submissive, mostly by Mrs. Norris, it is an attempt to find this same balance, which will maintain the Bertrams' preeminence. Sounding like a conduct book, Mrs. Norris prepares Fanny for her new home: "Mrs. Norris had been talking to her the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behavior which it ought to produce" (Austen, 12). Throughout she instructs Fanny to feel obliged and be obliging. When Fanny refuses to perform, she calls Fanny "very ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is" (Austen, 103). Additionally, Mrs. Norris is only satisfied that Fanny has a horse to use when it remains "in name as well as fact, the property of Edmund" (Austen, 280), leaving Fanny in the dependent status that requires gratitude. She tells her, "people are never respected when they step out of their proper sphere," warning her "to not be putting yourself forward, and talking and giving opinions as if you were one of your cousins" (Austen, 151). At all times, Mrs. Norris suggests subservience to keep Fanny from assuming the same social standing as the family.

Mrs. Norris's advice on how to be properly obsequious is ironic considering that her position is similar to Fanny's. She benefits from Sir Thomas's patronage when he gives Rev. Norris a living at the parsonage. This is the same parish that Edmund will take over and the parsonage that Fanny will occupy. Mrs. Norris claims to behave with

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[111] Ibid., 41.

appreciation, deference, and reticence and constantly touts her desire to be useful but is actually ineffective; she seeks worldly comfort, importance, and authority through the Bertrams. Mrs. Norris orchestrates Fanny's adoption and avoids contributing to the expenses but claims "I only wish I could be more useful" (Austen, 9). After her husband's death, Mrs. Norris avoids taking Fanny to live with her and claims its because she wishes to save her income for the Bertrams's benefit: "'My object, Lady Bertram, is to be of use to those that come after me.'" And then repeats: "my sole desire is to be of use to your family" (Austen, 23). The pretense of being useful allows Mrs. Norris to feel like a patron, to give orders and have control without offering anything.

She supports the play because it gives her a reason for moving into Mansfield: "she foresaw in it all the comforts of hurry, bustle and importance, and derived the immediate advantage of fancying herself obliged to leave her own house, where she had been living a month at her own cost, and take up her abode in their's, that every hour might be spent in their service" (Austen, 92). The play also provides a sense of importance. She "economizes" on the curtains, commands the servants, and supervises her nieces and nephews: "I am of some use I hope in preventing waste and making the most of things. There should always be one steady head to superintend so many young ones" (Austen, 100). When interfering and attempting to manage the family, Mrs. Norris assumes the patriarch's authority.

Throughout the text Mrs. Norris strives to be at the center of the family by replacing those that should be its models and leaders. She takes over for Lady Bertram by chaperoning Maria and Julia or making the necessary preparations for the ball. She takes "comfort" when she feels "She must be the doer of every thing" (Austen, 173). We are

told that “Lady Bertram would of course be spared all thought and exertion, and it would fall upon her. She should have to do the honours of the evening” (Austen, 173). The word “honours” is key because Mrs. Norris seeks distinction. Similarly seeking status, she replaces Sir Thomas when he leaves for Antigua, directing the family, and arranging Maria’s marriage. Mrs. Norris reveals that there is an empowering element to usefulness, an idea that can be extended to Fanny. Perhaps recognizing the power Fanny possesses, she does not see her as servile: “she likes to go her own way to work; she does not like to be dictated to; she takes her own independent walk whenever she can; she certainly has a little spirit of secrecy, and independence, and nonsense” (Austen, 219). Elvira Casal sees a rival relationship between Fanny and Mrs. Norris: “Both are outsiders who make themselves insiders. Both are pre-occupied with being useful, with justifying their place at Mansfield Park through their usefulness.”[112] While Mrs. Norris suggests the power in serving she seeks visibility and her main characteristics are volubility and officiousness.

Fanny serves quietly and invisibly. When Mrs. Norris seeks to appropriate the power or position of the servant, it is that of the butler, a male servant with authority, trying to assume the prestige that comes from his gender and his elite position on the servant hierarchy. Ultimately Mrs. Norris is unhelpful and damaging to the family, a point best exemplified by the marriage she forms between Maria and Mr. Rushworth. During the family crisis (Tom’s illness, Julia’s elopement, and Maria‘s infidelity) Mrs. Norris cannot “fancy herself useful” (Austen, 304). In contrast Fanny saves the family; she comforts and replaces. Unlike Mrs. Norris she is a good servant in accordance with the guidelines set for servants. By following the behavior that Mrs. Norris professes to

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[112] Elvira Casal, “The Many Mothered, Motherless Fanny Price,” *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 28 (2006): 37.

practice, Fanny gains the position Mrs. Norris seeks—that of useful and important insider, of authority through service. She is recalled from Portsmouth for Lady Bertram's sake, a turn of events that leaves Fanny "in the greatest danger of being exquisitely happy, while so many were miserable" (Austen, 301). At the conclusion we are told, "My Fanny indeed at this time, I have the satisfaction of knowing, must have been happy in spite of everything. She must have been a happy creature in spite of all that she felt or thought she felt, for the distress of those around her" (Austen, 312). Fanny thinks she feels for the family and as a good servant, she should, but her outsider position makes the family crisis an advantage for her. As recommended by Haywood, Fanny has a "strong desire to please." Fanny does not seek the center of the family, and she shies away from when it is imposed on her. The attic is meant to limit her but becomes a place of comfort and strength; similarly Fanny's service to the family is also meant to identify a clear subordinate role, but gives her agency; it gives her value so that she is not a charity case.

"Within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park": Fanny Remains a Servant

At the end of *Mansfield Park*, Fanny is necessary to the family; the many roles she fills permit the group to persist as if unchanged. Pollack argues that the incestuous marriage closes the family off from difference.[113] In actuality, the ending demonstrates that the family is not sealed; the Bertram family is permeable and open to both Fanny and

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[113] Ellen Pollack, *Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 163. Paula Marantz Cohen also sees Fanny as helping to save the Bertrams when she is absorbed into the family: "Her closing vision of the Bertram family as sealed and immutable is what the nuclear family, insofar as it defines itself as a closed system, aspires to be." Cohen goes on to say that Fanny "becomes necessary to the stability of their [the Bertrams] family life." Cohen, "Stabilizing the Family System at Mansfield Park," 670, 672. And similar to Pollack and Cohen, Joanna M. Smith suggests that with the final marriage, the family is "sealed off," and incest is a strategy "both for protecting the family from contamination by strangers and for maintaining a hierarchical family structure." Johanna M. Smith, "'My Only Sister Now': Incest in *Mansfield Park*," *Studies in the Novel* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 13, 3.

Susan. Critics who read the end of *Mansfield Park* and the marriage of Fanny and Edmund as incestuous and endogamous miss the way that Fanny has consistently been defined as an outsider. While Fanny maintains the family and its hierarchy, her role is protective; by fitting in, Fanny allows the family to seem the same. Simultaneously, Fanny brings difference into Mansfield and questions authority. In marrying Edmund she has done exactly what was prohibited. By maintaining the family through her replacements, Fanny has reversed the power dynamics that open the novel. When Fanny is adopted, the Bertrams have the power to relieve the Price family and to affect Fanny's future welfare; now she has the capacity to affect their stability and comfort. Cohen similarly notes a shift in power within the family and says that the traditional family hierarchy becomes ambiguous: "As the novel progresses, we begin to see Sir Thomas and Fanny as engaged in a dialectic of above and below in which these positions have only relative meaning and are always in the process of shifting."[114] Cohen sees an improvement and change in the family: "Fanny and Sir Thomas are brought together in this novel to actually make over in improved form the family that begins the novel."[115] Instead I argue that the family is changed but not improved. Sir Thomas is diminished and the patriarchal role loses its significance and importance, but it is not altered; the novel closes with a continuation of that role by ending with the idea of "patronage." The family seems unchanged because Sir Thomas retains the position of patron but Fanny has destabilized authority by being a better judge than the family. She questions as well as alters the hierarchy by marrying into the family.

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[114] Cohen, "Stabilizing the Family System," 683.
[115] Ibid., 684.

The end of the novel seems a conservative statement on Austen's part, a reconstitution of patriarchy. Sir Thomas is left comfortably at the center of his family; surrounded by his wife, remaining children, Fanny and Susan (each occupying their own place); and with the wrongdoers ostracized from the family. Although Fanny continues to serve the family, it does not necessarily follow that she is submissive, or a conservative vision on Austen's part. Challenging a conservative reading of *Mansfield Park*, Margaret Kirkham reads the end of the novel with the implied support of patronage and of Sir Thomas Bertram as ironic.[116] Claudia Johnson likewise reads *Mansfield Park* as attacking conservative values because Fanny is "betrayed by the same ethos she dutifully embraces."[117] This chapter adds to these subversive readings of the ending and the novel. With Susan and Fanny in the family, the Bertrams seem infiltrated. Fanny is both weak and strong, but that is exactly the servant's power. Fanny inserts her different social status, and alters Sir Thomas's initial prohibition of marriage to a Bertram son.

Fanny is not as some critics argue, the center or the head of the family; she is powerful in her usefulness, in her servant role. Duckworth describes Fanny's trajectory in the novels as a "journey from circumference to center, from limited to primary significance," but he sees her as changing her position in the family.[118] Fanny moves closer to the center then when the novel begins because she no longer stands out as an outsider, but hers is not a permanent move to the center, but a mixture of centrality and

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[116] Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism, and Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 110.
[117] Claudia L. Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 96.
[118] Alistair M. Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 73. Michael Karounos suggests that Mansfield Park is concerned with creating order in both the estate and its hierarchy and that the result is the elevation of Fanny. Karounos elevates Edmund and Fanny, reading them as: "rulers for the estate as Burkean correlatives of the spirits of gentility and religion." Michael Karounos. "Ordination and Revolution in *Mansfield Park*." *SEL* 44, 4 (Autumn 2004): 716.

marginality. She is always both inside and outside the family. As Edmund's wife Fanny is part of the family but leaves Mansfield, and she and Edmund are its beneficiaries. Kirkham similarly notes, "Fanny does not, as some critics have said, inherit Mansfield Park, for she marries a younger son, the heir being pointedly restored to health."[119] I would add that in her preference for Edmund, Fanny favors ambiguity.

As a clergyman's wife, Fanny has accepted a life on the margins. According to Judith Frank, "those gentlemen who had to labor also occupied a tricky space in relation to the poor, who were by definition linked to labor."[120] As a younger son Edmund is most like the poor who can gain education and socially elevate themselves, the equivalent of the servant in my discussion. By choosing the church Edmund is valuing service. Moreover, as Anna Despotopoulou points out, Mary's "reason for objecting to Edmund's choice of a vocation is that the position of a clergyman denies both the man and also his potential wife opportunities for the desired visibility."[121] Mary complains, "For what is to be done in the church? Men love to distinguish themselves, and in either of the other lines [lawyer, soldier, sailor], distinction may be gained, but not in the church. A clergyman is nothing" (Austen, 67). She also says of clergymen, "One does not see much of this influence and importance in society" (Austen, 66). Edmund is a servant of God and of people, but also a servant because of his obscure social identity. When Fanny marries she accepts this status. Her life at Thornton Lacey and later the Parsonage replicates her simultaneous insider and outsider position. She remains on the periphery with access to the center of the family, moving between Mansfield and the parsonage.

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[119] Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism, and Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 111.
[120] Frank, *Common Ground*, 15.
[121] Anna Despotopoulou, "Fanny's Gaze and the Construction of Feminine Space in *Mansfield Park*," *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 3 (July 2004): 577.

Through her replacements Fanny continues to serve the needs of the family, and continues to be a socially ambiguous figure with ties to both the family's social status and her own lower-class social status. This link to the lower class is highlighted through Fanny's trip to Portsmouth. While Fanny is not a member of the Portsmouth family, she fits in and they are part of her identity. Fraser Easton reads Fanny as "the nature of plebian identity and social resistance,"[122] and notes Fanny's servant role. He says of Fanny's return to Mansfield at the end of the novel: "Her return signals a change of regime at Mansfield, a change requiring the acceptance by Sir Thomas of what is truly foreign about her."[123] Ferguson also acknowledges Fanny's social difference from the Bertrams but concludes, "Fanny Price attains the status of an insider because she mirrors Sir Thomas's values and rather coldly rejects her origins."[124] Yet Fanny is neither aligned with the upper class, as Ferguson would suggest, nor the lower class as Easton suggests. At Mansfield and Portsmouth, she is different and an outsider, although she simultaneously fits into both social milieus. She belongs to the Bertram family because she marries in and replaces so many. However Susan's presence is a constant reminder of Fanny's biological family; moreover her trip to Portsmouth, so close to the end of the novel, emphasizes her lower-class ties and is a reminder of why the marriage that closes the novel was Sir Thomas' greatest fear at the opening of the novel.

The visit to Portsmouth suggests the way Fanny should be read at the end of the novel because it shows how the servant position can work for Fanny, reminds us that

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[122] Fraser Easton, "The Political Economy of *Mansfield Park*: Fanny Price and the Atlantic Working Class," *Textual Practice* 12, no. 3 (1998): 459. Also noting Fanny's class difference, Wiltshire writes of her surname, "'Price' is used in fictions of the period to signify a lower-class person." Wiltshire, Introduction to *Mansfield Park*, xlvi

[123] Ibid., 482.

[124] Moira Ferguson, *Colonialism and Gender Relations from Mary Wollstonecraft to Jamaica Kincaid: East Caribbean Connections* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 83.

Fanny is not of the Bertram family but an outsider who lives inside the family, and it shows that Fanny is not like her Portsmouth family. She exists on the borders of social categories and can cross those boundaries. Duckworth describes Fanny as being "expelled from the center to the circumference."[125] Sir Thomas's intentions are to remove her from the luxuries of Mansfield and "teach her the value of a good income" (Austen, 250), but it is empowering. Portsmouth further functions as the margins because it is physically distant from Mansfield and isolates Fanny, but also puts her back in a position to observe. Through letters, Fanny is able to know what occurs with the family in Mansfield and in London. Also, by going to Portsmouth she escapes the central and elevated social status she was in danger of gaining through Henry's attentions and through the interest this awakens in Sir Thomas. When she returns to the Bertram home, it is not in an elevated position as some have suggested; this is clear from the letter Edmund writes to recall Fanny to Mansfield: "He is anxious to get you there for my mother's sake…. My Father wishes you to invite Susan to go with you, for a few months…. I am sure you will feel such an instance of his kindness at such a moment" (Austen, 300). Fanny returns to serve and be grateful for the invitation extended to Susan.

Portsmouth emphasizes Fanny's socially ambiguous identity. When getting ready to go visit her family, she looks forward "to be in the centre of such a circle, loved by so many, and more loved by all than she had ever been before, to feel affection without fear or restraint, *to feel herself the equal of those who surrounded* her" (Austen, 251 emphasis mine). But Mansfield has changed her. William announces Fanny's difference and says that Fanny "is not used to rough it like the rest of us" (Austen, 264). She comes to understand: "What right had she to be of importance to her family? She could have none,

[125] Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate*, 77.

so long lost sight of!" (Austen, 260). At Portsmouth she is lower than the servant Rebecca because she does not belong to the domestic space. Rebecca's similarity to the Prices emphasizes the idea of the servant's family-like role. Moreover, Rebecca exemplifies the way a servant can threaten the boundaries of class when Mrs. Price is annoyed that her servant is wearing a flower in her hair, vying with her social status.

Fanny realizes her home is not with her biological family: "When she had been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been very dear to her; and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield" (Austen, 292). This latter sentiment is not true, since in contrast to Maria and Julia, when Tom gets sick she must wait to be recalled to Mansfield. Fanny belongs nowhere. As Auerbach writes: "Her ideal home is her homelessness. She belongs everywhere she is not."[126] Fanny's unclear class status is evident in the reaction that others have to her in Portsmouth because she is not as elevated as they expect, but she is also unlike them: "The young ladies who approached her at first with some respect, in consideration of her coming from a Baronet's family, were soon offended by what they termed 'airs'—for as she neither played on the piano-forte nor wore fine pelisses, they could, on farther observation, admit no right of superiority" (Austen, 268). Fanny is a mixed figure that can fit in with either family but is socially unlike both.

Portsmouth also shows the subversive power of serving and the way Fanny can use service to integrate into the family as well as to level authority. William tells Fanny that because their family "seem[s] to want some of your nice ways…. You will set things going in a better way, I am sure. You will tell my mother how it ought to be, and you will be so useful to Susan" (Austen, 252). William makes evident Fanny's potential for

[126] Auerbach, *Romantic Imprisonment*, 32-3

leveling the family hierarchy and elevates her to a position of authority. Instead Fanny wants to "be what mother and daughter ought to be" (Austen, 252). She turns to her usefulness to find a space in her new environment: "Fanny was very anxious to be useful, and not to appear above her home, or in any way disqualified or disinclined, by her foreign education, from contributing her help to its comforts, and therefore set about working for Sam immediately" (Austen, 265). Fanny negotiates the line that servants always negotiate, of being like the family without being too similar; "fearful of appearing to elevate herself as a great lady at home" (Austen 269),[127] service helps her fit in.

As it will in Mansfield, serving tampers with the family hierarchy. Usefulness makes Fanny central because her family could not have managed without her (265). She becomes authoritative by buying a knife for Betsey, resolving a conflict her mother has been unable to control. Further assuming maternal authority, she educates and advises Susan, making herself "useful to a mind so much in need of help" (Austen, 270). Portsmouth sheds light on the way Fanny can be authoritative while retaining her servant identity. Just as she replaces her mother by showing herself more capable, Fanny replaces Mary, Maria, and Mrs. Norris. In all cases she serves the interests of those around her. At Portsmouth her actions establish peace, send William off in a timely manner, and benefit a younger sibling. At Mansfield her replacements are equally beneficial to the family. Fanny occupies many roles but in all she serves. She remains a useful servant.

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[127] Samuel Richardson's Pamela has the same fear that she will not be able to fit in with her parents if she leaves service and goes to returns to live with them.

"Refuse Mr. Crawford!": Women's Authority, Imagining Alternatives

Belinda and Fanny begin their respective novels in precarious social situations—they are women without families that can assure their subsistence and safety. It is assumed that their only hope is to marry well, which as Rizzo explains was the only choice really available to women: "it was never intended that women should be provided with money sufficient to allow them to live independently; they were always intended to be dependent on father, husband, brother, or son."[128] Likewise, Elizabeth Bergen Brophy explains, "In practice marriage was usually the only way that women could achieve some measure of economic security."[129] But Belinda and Fanny refuse this option at first; Belinda turns down a marriage with Sir Phillip and gives up the chance to go into public with Lady Delacour, and Fanny turns down Henry Crawford's offer of marriage. Instead both heroines turn to the servant position as a source of power that allows them into the family and gives them authority separate from marriage. Although Belinda probably marries, and Fanny definitely marries, they first acquire power independent of marriage.

Belinda has maternal power and recreates the role of wife, acquiring independence and authority without becoming a wife; ultimately, although she has exercised power over the family, it is unclear what she accomplishes for herself. Fanny's ability to fill many roles puts the structure of the family unit in her power; ultimately she possess the patriarch's power even as she remains a servant, questioning and altering who has a right to power. In each case the servant-like heroine uses her power over the family to preserve the family, at least to an extent. These endings may seem ameliorative,

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[128] Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, 33.
[129] Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, *Women's Lives and the 18th-Century English Novel* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991), 139.

allowing the servant a kind of power as long as it's used for the benefit of the master, but in fact both alter the status quo they seem to uphold.

The ability to be both, passive and subversive, is the dangerous ability possessed by the servant. As discussed in the first chapter, Thady's loyalty makes him a threat because it brings him into the family; the same loyalty gives Caleb access to his master's secret, which threatens to displace Falkland. Multiplicity also allows the women in Chapter Two to imagine different social relationships in utopian communities. And for Belinda and Fanny the multiple subject positions allow them to simultaneously be like the servant and mistress, to adhere to the traditional social structure and undermine it. Belinda reunites the Delacour marriage guiding the couple to accept a traditional domesticity, but Lady Delacour retains her power as a wife, following the pattern created by Belinda of a simultaneously submissive and authoritative woman. Similarly, Fanny seems to help assure the continuation of the traditional patriarchal family, but she too has changed the form of the family with her presence, the inclusion of her sister, and through her acquisition of the Sir Thomas's authority. Fanny fulfills the threat presented by Thady and Caleb, and succeeds where they fail. She replaces the master without having to adopt the master-class ideology. Furthermore, she revises the family, the goal of the women in Chapter Two. Like Belinda, Fanny goes further than the mistress-servant communities of *Maria* an *Adeline Mowbray* by erasing class boundaries and leveling the hierarchy, but she does so within the family, rather than in separate communities.

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