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**Acting like a Lady: British Women Novelists and
the Eighteenth-Century Stage**

by

Nora Nachumi

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

1999

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Introduction

This dissertation examines the influence of the theater on late eighteenth-century British women novelists. As both a platform for acting out social conventions of the day and as a means of undermining those conventions, the theater played a crucial role in defining women's public representation. This study emphasizes the theater's feminist aspects, its function as an agent of women's identity and self-expression. As I show, over 30% of the women novelists writing between 1660 and 1818 were either actresses and/or playwrights, or they were related to, or closely associated with someone who worked in the professional theater. The theater, I demonstrate, offered women a far more complex model of womanhood than that found in the period's advice books about conduct that were written for women at the time. The central argument of this dissertation is that many late eighteenth-century women novelists learned from the theater. I focus especially on Elizabeth Inchbald, Frances Burney, and Jane Austen, three women writers who were connected to the theater in very different ways. Each of these writers, I demonstrate, appropriated theatrical images and practices in their fiction to challenge repressive ideas about women's nature and roles. I conclude that their novels empower women readers by dramatizing the theatrical nature of everyday life.

My dissertation makes two important contributions to eighteenth-century studies. First, it establishes that the number of eighteenth-century women novelists involved in the theater is greater than scholars have previously recognized.¹ The project

¹ This is due, in part, I believe to the fact that literary scholars tend to specialize in one particular genre. With few exceptions, most work on eighteenth-century women writers focuses on their work as either novelists or playwrights. Janet Todd's

consequently identifies a source of female literary agency which has not been fully explored by eighteenth-century scholars. Second, it takes issue with a Foucauldian view of the novel held by scholars like Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey which contends that late eighteenth-century novelists like Burney and Austen internalized definitions of gender found in books of advice about conduct written for women.² These novelists, they argue, encouraged women to conform to a standard of behavior that ultimately evolved into the Victorian “Angel in the House.” In contrast, I show that many women novelists involved in the theater were well aware that acting like a lady was acting a role. Their novels, I argue, work to denaturalize conventional notions about gender. I conclude that many late eighteenth-century women novelists actually authorize female agency by asking their readers to consider what it means to *act* like a lady.

otherwise invaluable The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660-1800, only briefly acknowledges that many mid and late eighteenth-century women novelists wrote for the stage. Likewise, Ellen Donkin, in Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829, spends little time discussing the fact that six of the seven playwrights she considers were also successful novelists. Only Judith Phillip Stanton, in “A Statistical Profile of Women Writing in English, 1660-1800” and “‘This New-Found Path Attempting’: Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800,” seriously notes the extent of women’s interest in noting both plays and novels. Stanton, however, does not discuss the ramifications of this cross-fertilization. Scholarship that does consider the relationship between women’s novels and plays fall into two categories. The first consists of single-author studies like Margaret Doody’s Frances Burney, The Life in the Works. The second group, which includes Paula Backscheider’s Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England and Catherine Gallagher’s Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820 does so when discussing early women writers like Aphra Behn.

² See, for example, Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel and Mary Poovey, The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen.

My project begins by considering how the woman novelist's engagement with two traditions – the didactic and the theatrical – forms a context for her work throughout the long eighteenth century. On one level, it seems that the theater actually helped reinforce what, by the end of the century, were conventional ideas about sexual difference and the place of women. During the period, England underwent a “cultural revolution” in which the middling classes consolidated around an identity of their own, an identity that helped them to successfully end a history of economic and ideological dependence upon the aristocracy (Kelly Women 3).³ As the home became distinct from the work place, advice books written for young women propagated models of feminine conduct that rendered lady-like women unfit for work outside the home. Gradually, their efforts to define certain qualities and certain kinds of learned behavior – like innocence and modesty – as both feminine and natural to women resulted in the construction of a feminine ideal, the middle class “lady.”⁴ Unlike her aristocratic counterpart, whose title depended on her family and fortune, the middle-class lady was a lady because of her quality of mind. Incapable of subterfuge, she was just what she seemed; her appearance and behavior were the direct and unmediated reflection of her quality of mind. Actresses, obviously, were exceptions to this norm. Like female playwrights, they “served as marginal cases, as

³ The concept of a middle class was slow to emerge and was not at all clear during the century. By middle-class I am referring to a large and varied group of people that included both gentry and tradespeople who began to differentiate themselves from both the working class and the aristocracy during the century.

⁴ Agreement about the construction of a feminine ideal is widespread. What I call the “lady,” is akin to Mary Poovey's “Proper Lady” (The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer). Gary Kelly refers to her as the “domestic woman” (Women, Writing and Revolution 7) as does Nancy Armstrong in Desire and Domestic Fiction.

others whose differences help[ed] to define dominant notions of sexuality and gender”throughout the century (Straub Suspects 89).⁵

In other ways, however, the theater undermined the definitions of gender it seemed to reinforce. From the moment the first professional actress stepped onto the stage in 1661, women involved in the theater were able to earn money in the public sphere. As members of a profession which required their public display, and as celebrities whose private lives tended to “go public,” actresses and women playwrights challenged the belief, implicit in the work of many conduct-book writers, that female sexuality was the private and passive opposite of male sexuality. Actresses’ costumes, roles which required they impersonate fictional characters, and the personal celebrity achieved by some performers all drew into question assumptions about the inherent nature of women’s identity. Contemporary debates about the propriety of private theatricals illuminate the problem: if actresses could be ladies, then the possibility existed that ladies could also be actresses. It was a possibility that the conduct material of the period strenuously, if ineffectively tried to deny.

In Chapter One, I show how actresses and female playwrights challenged conventional images of womanhood both on stage and off. These women, I argue, engaged in self-conscious forms of self-representation which simultaneously naturalized and undermined ideas about female nature found in conduct material. I demonstrate that many women novelists were not only involved in the professional theater, but engaged in

⁵ Straub only focuses on actresses in Sexual Suspects; however, her comment also describes the situation of female dramatists.

mode of self-representation that aligns them with actresses and women playwrights. I conclude that the respectability achieved by many late eighteenth-century British women novelists – a respectability that far exceeded that of women more overtly involved in the theater – may be read as a role, or cover story, that left them in a unique position from which to reinforce, criticize, or alter conventional models of womanhood in their fiction.

To illustrate my point, I consider the work of Elizabeth Inchbald, Frances Burney, and Jane Austen in the following chapters. In each case, I show how the writer's particular relationship to the theater colored her representation of female experience. In Chapter Two, for example, I show how Inchbald's work as an actress and playwright helped shape her depiction of her protagonists' suffering in A Case of Conscience and A Simple Story. Inchbald, I argue, drew on her knowledge of a standardized language of theatrical gesture to achieve a "silent" criticism of patriarchal structures that oppress and silence both men and women. I demonstrate that characters' bodies, in Inchbald's fiction, express emotions more immediately, and more authentically, than words alone. Her characters' gestures, I argue, thus work to create a sense of physical and emotional immediacy designed to provoke a sympathetic reaction in other characters and in the reader. By dramatizing the persuasive power of gesture, I contend, Inchbald suggests a way that those without power may achieve a limited degree of agency within a patriarchal society.

Chapter Three examines Burney's interest in contemporary debates about whether performers actually feel the emotions they express on the stage. I argue that Burney's friendship with David Garrick – a central figure in this debate – helped shape her view of

women's nature and roles. Focusing on Evelina and The Wanderer, I demonstrate that Burney transforms novelistic scenes into stages in order to undermine conduct-book writers' insistence on a direct and unmediated connection between a woman's countenance and character. Unlike Inchbald, Burney suggests that ladies, like actresses, are often not what they seem. I conclude that her novels offer women a way to evade the surveillance encouraged by conduct-book equations between a woman's appearance and her quality of mind.

In Chapter Four I consider the relationship between Austen's use of irony and her experience as a theatergoer. Like Inchbald and Burney, Austen, I show, was keenly aware of the theatrical nature of everyday life. In her novels, everyone – including the heroines – acts all the time. Austen, however, is less interested in women's skill as performers than in their agency as audience members. Focusing on Mansfield Park, I argue that Austen's use of irony endows her readers, regardless of gender, with a divided, ironic perspective; at the same time that we sympathize with her heroines, we evaluate their decisions in light of what we know to be true. Austen's use of irony, I conclude, helps her contest the notion that women's emotional susceptibility impedes their ability to rationally evaluate the social norms represented in novels and plays. I end the chapter by discussing the difficulties involved in translating the divided, ironic perspective in Sense and Sensibility and Emma to film. The project concludes with an appendix detailing the involvement of women novelists in the professional theater and in private theatricals.

Read together, these chapters move from a consideration of women who worked in the theater as actresses and/or playwrights, to Austen, whose involvement with the

professional theater was limited to her participation as an audience member. In each case, the novelist's use of theatrical images and practices is linked to her own particular theatrical experience. As an actress and playwright, Inchbald is primarily concerned with the agency of her heroine, whose body she envisions as she would a performer's. Burney, whose membership in a theatrical milieu, precedes her career as a playwright and novelist, is far more interested in dramatizing the theatrical nature of female experience in everyday life. In contrast to Inchbald, who suggests that women's bodies reflect their emotions clearly, Burney demonstrates that a woman's appearance and behavior are often misread or misleading. Austen does this as well. However, for Austen, women's agency is not a matter of performance, but of perception; her primary interest is in the way her heroines and her readers interpret what they see. Austen's novels thus require their readers to maintain a certain degree of critical detachment from the characters in order to objectively evaluate what they observe.

In examining the influence of the eighteenth-century stage on women novelists, my project contributes to current research on theatricality and the representation of gender in fiction. As scholars like Catherine Craft Fairchild, Joseph Litvak and David Marshall have demonstrated, theatrical images and tropes play a vital role in eighteenth and nineteenth-century fiction.⁶ My project, however, differs from theirs in the extent to

⁶ See, for example, Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess; Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century Fiction; Catherine Craft Fairchild, Masquerade and Gender: Disguise and Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century Fictions by Women; Joseph Litvak, Caught in the Act: Theatricality and the Nineteenth-Century English Novel; and David Marshall, The Figure of the Theater: Shaftsbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot.

which it relies on theater history. I am also indebted to the considerable body of scholarship detailing the influence of the theater on Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson.⁷ Richardson's work was especially important to the women writers who followed him, but my primary purpose in this dissertation is to establish both the degree and the relevance of women writers' own theatrical experience. Throughout the dissertation, I situate the writers I consider amidst the actual theatrical debates and practices with which they were engaged.

This project also has a somewhat vexed relationship to past and current discussions about the rise of the novel. Lennard Davis, J. Paul Hunter, Michael McKeon, and Ian Watt, I believe, underemphasize the relationship between novels and plays. In general, the four envision the novel as a move away from the drama. Watt, for example, spends little time on the theater; he is far more interested in tracing the novel's difference from the tradition of courtly romance. Davis, who argues that the novel developed out of what he calls the "novel-news matrix," neglects the theater entirely. Hunter, who does consider the relationship between novels and the theater, argues that the rise of the novel stemmed from a profound loss of faith in the kind of communal experience individuals experienced when watching plays. McKeon also believes that narrative replaced "dramatic form as the preeminent literary mode" in the eighteenth century (127). He

⁷ See, for example, Brian Corman, "Congreve, Fielding, and the Rise of Some Novels"; Margaret Doody, A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson; Ira Konigsberg, Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel; Leo Hughes, "Theatrical Convention in Richardson: Some Observations on a Novelist's Technique," Mark Kinkead-Weeks, Samuel Richardson, Dramatic Novelist; Ronald Paulson, "Life as Journey and as Theatre: Two Eighteenth-Century Structures" and Satire in the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England.

credits this shift to the fact that novels seemed more truthful than plays. Because plays attempt to present the physical representation of truth, they are, he explains, too vulnerable to disconfirmation (127). In contrast, he argues, printed narrative presents its readers with the illusion of “incontestable factuality, the typographical ‘fetish’ of documentary objecthood” (127).

Certainly reading a novel is a different experience than watching a play; however, I believe that these theories underemphasize the relationship between the novel and the theater. As previous work on theatricality has demonstrated, novelists like Richardson often used dramatic techniques to heighten readers’ emotional response to a scene and to foster their identification with a particular character. Inchbald, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, works in this vein. Conversely, like Fielding, Austen uses theatrical modes to prevent the reader from fully identifying with her characters. In both of these cases, the writer’s use of theatrical images and techniques is integral to the way the reader experiences the novel. I envision the novel as a literary form which often incorporates theatrical modes of expression.

Finally, this project contributes to a growing body of feminist scholarship that takes issue with the Foucauldian view of the novel proposed by scholars like Armstrong and Poovey. Over the past several years, critics like Paula Backscheider, Catherine Craft Fairchild, Claudia Johnson, and Ruth Yeazell have argued that many eighteenth-century women novelists use their work to question ideologically dominant notions of gender.⁸

⁸ See, for example, Paula Backscheider, Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England; Fairchild, Masquerade and Gender; Claudia Johnson, Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel; Ruth Yeazell, Fictions of

This project contributes to this endeavor by showing how the theatrical experience of women novelists helps them to challenge repressive ideas about women's nature and roles. Inchbald, Burney, and Austen, I demonstrate, dismantle oppositions between ladies and actresses. For these writers, I argue, acting like a lady was, above all, a matter of performance.

Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel.

Chapter One
The Woman Novelist and the
Theatrical Woman

In an oft-quoted passage from her Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796), Mary Wollstonecraft vividly describes the desolate fate of those who deviate from contemporary standards of appropriate conduct:

All the world is a stage, thought I, and few are there who do not play the part they have learnt by rote. And those who do not, seem marks to be pelted at by fortune: or rather as signposts, which point out the road to others whilst forced to stand still themselves amidst the mud and the dust (186).

What interests me here is Wollstonecraft's use of a theatrical metaphor to describe both herself and the human condition. Specifically, she revises Shakespeare's image of the world as a stage in order to call attention to the way most people automatically perform the parts they have "learnt by rote." People like herself, she complains, whose conduct deviates from the norm, suffer terribly. Their fate, she suggests, ultimately helps reinforce a dominant ideology that requires individuals to adhere to a variety of socially sanctioned roles. By using theatrical imagery, Wollstonecraft makes this process visible to her readers and condemns it. At the same time, she indirectly valorizes her own self-conscious conduct — which included bearing Gilbert Imlay's illegitimate child — by contrasting it to the mindless performance of socially scripted behavior.

Wollstonecraft's passage is but one example of the way many eighteenth-century women novelists use theatrical allusions to account for their deviation from contemporary

models of feminine conduct. As we shall see, the eighteenth century was a period which spent considerable energy defining what it meant to be female. Generally speaking, historians contend that a “transformation in the relative economic and social positions of men and women [took] place between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries” (Barker 10). This transformation, they argue, was especially relevant to the middling classes, who had the most to gain. “As middle-class men embraced and came to dominate a new aggressive economic world,” advice books about conduct written for women propagated notions of female nature that made women the repositories of whatever characteristics were considered inconvenient for business (Barker 11). Men were imbued with the “powers of close and comprehensive reasoning, and of intense and continued application” (Gisborne 21). Middle-class women, or “ladies,” were credited with an emotional susceptibility and an inherent innocence that rendered them unfit for work in the public sphere. Although historians like Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus caution that this material was prescriptive, rather than descriptive of eighteenth-century life, literary critics like Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey have argued that women novelists internalized and disseminated these definitions of female nature in their fiction. Eighteenth-century novels by women, they contend, consequently helped compel women to conform to a standard of behavior that ultimately evolved into the Victorian “Angel in the House.” This project also acknowledges the importance of the relationship between conduct material and the novel. However, unlike Poovey and Armstrong, I propose that another, equally important influence on novels by women enabled many women novelists to question conventional notions of the feminine ideal.

If we consider the fact that approximately 72, or over 30% of the 188 British women novelists published between 1660 and 1818 were playwrights and/or actresses, related to, or closely associated with someone who worked in the theater, the female novelist's relationship to conduct material becomes far more complex.⁹ This chapter looks at the way women novelists represented themselves in relation to contemporary models of femininity and to the rise of the professional theatrical woman in Britain. My hypothesis is that the didactic authority achieved by many eighteenth-century British women novelists stemmed not from their automatic acceptance of conduct-book ideology, but from a theatrical mode of self-representation. As we shall see, the more a woman novelist claimed that she was really a "lady," the more likely it was that she was assuming a role that only conformed to popular ideas about what a lady should be. To illustrate my thesis, I shall argue the following points: first, that the work of actresses and women dramatists drew into question conduct-book images of women's nature and roles; second, that actresses and female playwrights engaged in self-conscious forms of self-representation which simultaneously naturalized and undermined images of women found in conduct material; and third, that many late-eighteenth century women novelists were not only involved in the professional theater, but engaged in a mode of self-representation that aligns them with actresses and women dramatists. Ultimately, I conclude that the respectability achieved by many late eighteenth-century British women novelists — a respectability which far exceeded that of actresses and female playwrights — can be read

⁹ For me, as for most eighteenth-century scholars, the long eighteenth-century begins in 1660 with the end of the Puritan Interregnum and the restoration of Charles II to England's throne.

as a “role,” or cover story, that left women novelists in a unique position from which to reinforce, criticize, or alter conventional notions of female nature in their fiction.

The Feminine Ideal

Generally speaking, scholars agree that the model of gender that came to dominate eighteenth-century life can be envisioned as a shift from a hierarchical to a polar model of sexual relations.¹⁰ The hierarchal view prevailing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries held that “women were essentially similar to men, but inferior” (Spencer 15).¹¹ After the Restoration, however, this model was gradually replaced by a system which held that men and women were “‘naturally’ different and these differences not only shaped their characters but suited each sex to specific activities and roles in society” (Barker 1).¹² According to an early feminist like Judith Drake, just as man is

¹⁰ See Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud and Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800. Also see Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus’s introduction to Gender in Eighteenth-Century England, which provides an overview of relevant scholarship including Alice Clark’s Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century; Bridget Hill’s Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England; and Ivy Pinchbeck’s Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution.

¹¹ Spencer’s primary source for this observation is Thomas Laqueur. Also see Katherine Eisman Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood: Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress” (611-617).

¹² Through its elaboration of separate spheres ideology Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 has had an enormous influence on scholars of women’s history. However, as Barker and Chalus point out, historians who have adopted this model often over-simplify eighteenth-century society, reducing it to a system “where women and men lived in completely different worlds, and where women had no autonomy and were little more than passive victims and where men dominated personal relations, society, and

fortified with Courage and Ability to undergo the necessary Drudgery of providing Materials for the sustenance of Life in both; so [woman is] furnish'd with Ingenuity and Prudence for the orderly management and distribution of it, for the Relief and Comfort of a Family; and is over and above enrich'd with a peculiar Tenderness and Care requisite to the Cherishing of their poor helpless Off-[spring] (29).

While she insists that men and women are essentially different, Drake also insists that women's responsibilities are equal to men's. Mary Astell also believed the sexes were different but equal. "Sense," Astell writes, "is a portion that God himself has been pleased to distribute to both sexes with an equal hand" (41). Men and women's separate duties, she concludes, do not mean that women's understanding is inferior to men's.

Other writers disagreed. Despite the objections of eighteenth-century feminists, the polar model of sexual relations resembled its predecessor in defining women as men's subordinates. The primary difference lay in their ability to reason. Early in the century, as Betty Rizzo points out, women were described as emotional rather than rational beings; later it was thought that women's greater sensibility, manifested in their physiological responses to the affecting in art and in life, overwhelmed their capacity for rational thought.¹³ In The Lady's New Year's Gift (1688), George Savile, the Marquis of Halifax, focuses on women's lack of reason. "Your *Sex* wanteth our *Reason* for your

institutional life" (20). Davidoff and Hall's study specifically pertains to the formation of middle-class identity at the beginning of the nineteenth century and, in practice, demonstrates that "the actual separation of the spheres was often indistinct and subject to personal interpretation" (Barker and Chalus 19). See also Catherine Gallagher, Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women in the Marketplace, 1670-1820; and Janet Todd, The Sign of Angellica, Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800.

¹³ Betty Rizzo, personal communication, 14 January 1999. See also Janet Todd's Sign of Angellica (120-124; 215-216).

Conduct, and our *Strength* for your *Protection*,” he declares; “Ours wanteth your *Gentleness* to soften, and to entertain us” (8). According to Halifax, women must depend on men because they lack the capacity to govern their own conduct. The Earl of Chesterfield is even more blunt, informing his son that women “are only children of a larger growth . . . for solid reasoning, good sense, I never knew in my life one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially for four and twenty hours together” (K. Rogers Helpmate 178). For both Halifax and Chesterfield, women’s inability to govern their conduct through reason necessitated their dependence upon men.

A more insidious method of subordinating women to men was by crediting them with certain essentially feminine attributes. As the century advanced, behavior believed necessary to curtail “women’s appetites [was] increasingly considered to be natural” to women (Poovey 14). Writers like Richard Allestree (1697), the Reverend James Fordyce (1766), Dr. John Gregory (1774), and Thomas Gisborne (1797) worked to disassociate women from sexual agency by emphasizing their inherent modesty. Modesty, Allestree declares, is

a thing so *essential and natural* to the sex, that even the least declination from it, is a proportional *receding from Womanhood*, but the total abandonment of it ranks them among Brutes, nay sets them as far beneath those, as an acquir’d vileness is below a native (14, emphasis mine).

As Ruth Yeazell points out, Allestree’s passage is a deliberate attempt to change “women’s behavior by changing the prevailing definition of their nature” (14). Because modesty is natural to women, Allestree asserts, immodest women are not women at all. They are, he suggests, an unnatural species; they are lower than beasts.

Writing one hundred years later, James Fordyce goes even further. Specifically, he revises the story of the Fall so that Eve and her descendants remain free of sexual curiosity. “But what was it,” he asks,

that exposed [Eve] to the snare by which she was seduced? Passions, it must be owned, extremely culpable in their nature, and fatal in their consequences, but *not the passions for which her daughters have been indiscriminately blamed*. In reality, the resolute spirit and persevering vigilance, which with a great number of women preserve their honour . . . seem to me no slight proof that [they] possess a degree of fortitude well worthy of praise (II: 53 emphasis mine).

Rather than rampant sexual desire, other sorts of character flaws inspired Eve to eat the apple, Fordyce explains. Like her descendants, Eve possessed an inherent propensity to be over-emotional, frivolous, and vain.

Writers like Halifax, Allestree, and Gisborne helped to create a strange phenomenon in the conduct material of the period: the suggestion that lady-like behavior was natural to women quickly resulted in the supposition that women were naturally ladies. Lady-like behavior, these writers argued, can not be learned. Rather, it is the spontaneous manifestation of a woman’s inherently feminine nature. When the much-read Dr. Gregory, for example, tells his daughters that their “modesty, which I think so *essential to your sex*, will *naturally* dispose you to be rather silent in company,” he is presuming that his daughters’ quality of mind dictates their conduct (52, emphasis mine). Gisborne suggests a something similar when he collapses distinctions between women’s behavior and their internal qualities. “Delicacy, sympathizing sensibility, prompt and active benevolence, warmth and tenderness of attachment,” he remarks, are what “form the glory of the female sex” (23).

Contemporary theories of human physiology helped reinforce the idea that women were naturally ladies by envisioning a direct connection between the human body and mind. “For a while,” Janet Todd remarks, “there seemed really to be an art of reading the mind’s construction in the face” (*Angellica* 141). In much of the period’s conduct material, these theories manifest themselves in the assertion that a lady’s “countenance . . . bear[s] a perfect, indeed automatic [resemblance] to [her] interior self” (Poovey 24). “Women who did not act and appear like ladies consequently risked being labeled “unnatural” since their appearance and conduct seemed to reveal a lack of femininity that marked them as something other than an authentic woman.¹⁴ The notion of an unmediated connection between a woman’s external attributes and her internal self thus helped to make upper and middle-class women the objects of surveillance. The way a woman appeared and behaved was disciplined, in effect, by the assumption that the way she looked and behaved was the spontaneous manifestation of her essential self.

The Woman Novelist’s Role

Women novelists, of course, were not exempt from this equation. As the eighteenth century advanced, women writers were increasingly expected to manifest a number of positively valued feminine characteristics in their personal lives and in their writing. “A woman writer,” Todd remarks, “was expected not simply to express her sex

¹⁴ This is a difficult concept to describe. In *The Proper Lady*, Poovey argues that unfeminine women risked being designated “monster[s]” (23). Yeazell, in *Fictions of Modesty*, describes women who do not behave in lady-like ways as “women-who-are-not-women” (14).

but to also call attention to her femininity, her delicacy and sensitivity” (Angellica 126). This emphasis on women writers virtues helped legitimize their position in the literary marketplace but it also limited their choice of subject matter. The female novelist was expected to “write about women’s particular problems and desires, largely for an audience of middle-class women, looking not just for amusement in their idle hours but for fables that would lend attraction and meaning to the narrowed feminine sphere” (Spencer 22). If they addressed contemporary religious, social, and political issues, they were expected to do so indirectly (Spencer xi; Turner 56-57). Novelists like Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft, who did that and also overtly challenged stereotypes about women, risked public scorn. Far more successful were novelists like Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen, whose efforts to show that women were both emotional and rational empowered their readers without directly opposing conduct-book images of women’s nature and roles.

While British scholars like Jane Spencer and Janet Todd emphasize the practical reasons why many women writers overtly reinforced images of women found in conduct material, a number of American critics, influenced by Foucault, offer a different explanation for this phenomenon. As proposed by scholars like Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey, this view of the novel contends that women novelists unconsciously internalized contemporary models of female nature which they then naturalized and disseminated through their fiction. Ideology, Mary Poovey explains, is best understood as “lived experience” (xiii). As such, she argues, “it is inescapable: for, simply by living together, men and women establish priorities among their needs and desires and generate

explanations that ratify those priorities by making them seem natural” (xiv). Nancy Armstrong agrees. Conduct books, she argues, portrayed a “figure of female subjectivity. a grammar really,” which awaited the substance that the novel and its readers, as well as the countless individuals educated according to the model of the new woman would . . . provide” (60). Although both Armstrong and Poovey acknowledge that ideology is never static, both insist that the rules for feminine conduct found in didactic literature “took on the power of natural law, and as a result, presented . . . readers with ideology in its most powerful form” (Poovey 61).

Two assumptions about the novel buttress this argument. The first is Ian Watt’s notion that the novel, as developed by Richardson, acts as a transparent window that gives readers direct access to characters’ minds. The second is Foucault’s belief that ideology is invisible and inescapable. Together, these assumptions suggest that women novelists not only accepted socially prevalent definitions of womanhood, but represented them as “natural” in their fiction. Consequently, Armstrong argues, domestic fiction helped create a model of female subjectivity – embodied in the figure of the middle-class lady – that located value in a woman’s “quality of mind” rather than in her fortune and family (4). Although in practice, the idea of individual merit did not negate the importance of one’s class, fortune, or name, Armstrong nevertheless argues that domestic fiction helped the middle class contest the “reigning notion of kinship relations that attached the most power and privilege to certain family lines” (4).¹⁵

¹⁵Armstrong is extremely vague regarding the effect of such literature on actual practices within the middle class and on social mobility between the classes. According to Paul Langford in *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, social standing

This view of the novel makes one conclusion inescapable: the naturalization of conduct-book definitions of female nature in novels by women encouraged female readers to conform to a standard of behavior that ultimately evolved into the Victorian “Angel in the House.” If, as Armstrong and Poovey suggest, eighteenth-century domestic fiction truly validated the belief that a woman’s appearance and demeanor were the direct and unmediated manifestation of a her quality of mind, then it reinforced ideas about women that effectively disciplined their conduct. By rewarding the heroine’s feminine qualities like passivity and self-sacrifice, these novels also gave women specific reasons to conform to contemporary models of the feminine ideal (Armstrong 95, Poovey 38, Spencer 22). And finally, by providing their readers with “compensatory gratifications, ideal rewards and ideal revenges,” domestic fiction might very well have “discouraged them from seeking material changes in their actual positions” (Poovey 38).¹⁶

Although they take different routes, Armstrong, Poovey, and Spencer all arrive at the same conclusion: the reward of late eighteenth-century novels by women – at least in terms of a feminist agenda – must “be seen as qualified and limited” (Poovey 38).

Despite her strenuous efforts to illustrate how domestic fiction indirectly empowered

within the middling classes depended upon a number of considerations: “family (by birth or marriage), property (real and personal), profession or employment, and less definably, ‘connections,’ ‘politeness,’ and ‘breeding’ (which did not necessarily imply good birth or upbringing.” (62). Regarding mobility between the classes, he notes that for the very great majority, such mobility was out of the question. “In a very real sense class was meant to indicate a permanent, unchanging status: something which set its members aside, so completely that for all intents and purposes they could be treated as a separate category” (653).

¹⁶ Janice Radway also develops this argument in Reading the Romance.

middle-class women, Armstrong concludes that it naturalized a model of female nature that prevented women from direct participation in public and political life. Through domestic fiction, she explains, the middle-class woman, “*was inscribed* with values that addressed a whole range of competing interest groups and, through her, *these groups gained authority* over domestic relations and personal life” (19, emphasis mine). Spencer is even more blunt. “The gradual acceptance of the woman writer which took place during the eighteenth century considerably weakened [the] link between women’s writing and feminism” (x). Indeed, she concludes, “the terms on which women writers were accepted worked in some ways to suppress feminist opposition. Women’s writing,” she cautions, “is not the same thing as women’s rights” (xi).

...

The urge to prove one’s autonomy, however, is irresistible; at least it is to several scholars who argue that novels by women complicate, rather than disseminate, contemporary images of the feminine ideal. Despite strategic differences, critics like Paula Backscheider, Catherine Craft Fairchild, Catherine Gallagher, Claudia Johnson, Gary Kelly, and Ruth Yeazell have persuasively argued that many women novelists neither unconsciously internalized nor automatically naturalized conduct-book images of the feminine ideal. Situating women’s fiction in the context of the French Revolution, Gary Kelly argues that the conservative backlash against radical women writers led to a revised reification of the domestic woman which *merged* with the revolutionary feminism advocated by Wollstonecraft and with an earlier conduct-book tradition (Women 28). According to Kelly, women used their moral authority as wives and mothers to participate

actively in social and political debates. In Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel, Claudia Johnson investigates this “post-revolutionary” feminism, insisting that the backlash against overtly progressive rhetoric was so overwhelming by the end of the century that all women novelists, whether progressive or not, used conservative language and tropes. Women like Austen, she concludes, who wanted to criticize social structures that limited female agency resorted to “strategies of subversion and indirection” to avoid the backlash that ruined the careers and reputations of overtly radical women like Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft (19).

Johnson’s argument enables access to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women writers who discreetly challenged the codes of conduct to which they overtly conformed. In this sense, Johnson’s argument resembles Fairchild’s, Gallagher’s, and Yeazell’s, all of which suggest that some eighteenth-century women novelists possessed a distinctly modern sense of identity.¹⁷ In different ways, these scholars insist that women novelists like Behn, Manley, Burney, and Austen *denaturalize* the presumption that women are born with certain gendered characteristics. Whether they coopt, question, or openly criticize conduct-book notions of womanhood, these writers, they argue, dramatize the fact that acting like a lady means assuming a role. Although

¹⁷ In Masquerade and Gender, Fairchild argues that Behn, Haywood, Inchbald, and Burney dramatize the effects of patriarchal oppression on their heroines’ behavior and situations. In Nobody’s Story, Gallagher considers the way Behn, Manley, Lennox, Burney, and Edgeworth self-consciously construct their “author-selves,” which she defines as “the partly disembodied entities required by the specific exchanges that constitute their careers” (xix). In Fictions of Modesty, Yeazell argues that novelists used their heroines’ “temporary resistance to the body and its desires,” to “devote greater attention to the story of her consciousness (x).

Gallagher is the only critic to explicitly consider her subjects' theatrical experience, all of the eighteenth-century writers these scholars consider — Behn, Manley, Haywood, Lennox, Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen — were all connected to the theater. Except for Austen — an avid theatergoer — all were actresses and/or playwrights. These women, then, were theatrical women. As such, they both experienced and expressed compelling alternatives to ideologically dominant ideas about gender.

Actresses

Throughout the century actresses embodied a different, and more complex picture of female nature than that represented in conduct material. Unlike the middle-class lady, who was modest and retiring, actresses openly courted public attention. A contemporary metaphor that illustrates the difference between actresses and ladies declared that men belong in the sun while women look their best in the shade. Pope uses the metaphor in “Epistle II. On the Characters of Women,” in his Moral Essays (1731-5) when he writes, “But grant, in public men sometimes are shown/A woman’s seen in private life alone:/Our bolder talents in full light displayed;/Your virtues open fairest in the shade” (199-200). By praising women who avoid calling attention to themselves this popular metaphor helped to reinforce a system of erotic relations which envisioned female modesty as both an impetus and a restraint to male desire. “A fine woman shews her charms to most advantage when she seems to conceal them,” Dr. Gregory writes, “The finest bosom is not so fine as what imagination forms” (qtd. Yeazell 46).

Because they displayed themselves on stage, actresses seemed to possess a

sexuality that was emphatically denied to conduct books' feminine ideal. Generally speaking, conduct books caution that female desire is something that should only awaken after a suitor's proposal has been accepted. Indeed, Yeazell notes, "the idea that good women simply had no sexual feelings may well have been the final consequence of the culture's efforts to assure itself that female modesty was genuine, as the woman who knew nothing of desire blurred imperceptibly into the woman who had no desire to know" (57).¹⁸ Actresses, in contrast, seemed all too aware of their own desires. As Juliet Bair remarks, "a woman who can be observed in public, or by men who are not related to her by kinship or ties of marriage, is considered in many cultures to be provoking attention to her sexuality" (211). By exposing their bodies and the contents of their minds to theatrical audiences, actresses and women playwrights not only challenged the notion that modesty was an inherent female characteristic, but threatened an economic system that depended upon women's conjugal fidelity. Indeed, conduct book writers frequently suggest that the same feminine frailties that lead to adultery make women good actresses and playwrights. According to Gisborne, that "acute sensibility peculiar to women," combined with the "thirst for admiration and applause," leads to "sudden excesses" and "unmerited attachments" (34-50). Hannah More makes a similar connection when she warns men against women whom they meet at public assemblies:

If a man select a picture for himself among all its exhibited competitors and bring

¹⁸ Yeazell acknowledges that conduct books' insistence that modest women were unconscious of their own desires was highly problematic for female writers of didactic literature. In Chapter Four of *Fictions of Modesty* she demonstrates that many women — Mary Wollstonecraft among them — vigorously protested that true virtue stemmed not from ignorance, but from a rational and deliberate exercise of mind (58).

it to his own house, the picture, being passive, he is able to fix it there; while the wife, picked up at a public place, and accustomed to incessant display, will not . . . when brought home stick so quietly to the spot where he fixes her; but will escape to the exhibit-room again, and continued to be displayed there at every subsequent exhibition, just as if she were not become private property, and has never been definitively disposed of (Strictures 2: 166).

Immodest women, More suggests, are ill-suited for monogamy. Accustomed to public displays, the immodest woman is also “available for public use, a fact on which [she] does not have to elaborate” (Poovey 20).

Closely linked to the actress’s love of attention, her ability to assume fictional roles posed an even greater threat to notions of feminine chastity. First, and most obviously, the actress’s capacity to make love to different actors on different nights suggested a corresponding promiscuity in her off-stage behavior. Second, her ability to play different desirable women made her appear to be an expert in the art of seduction. In the widely publicized Sloper adultery trial of 1738, both assumptions played a key role.

According to the plaintiff, Theophilus Cibber, William Sloper had deprived Cibber of his means of support by conducting an affair with Theophilus’s wife, Susannah, a singer and actress at Drury Lane. Theophilus, who was also an actor, had actually had fostered the liaison after Sloper had agreed to pay the couple’s living expenses. Rather than deny Sloper’s affair with Susannah, Sloper’s lawyers cast their client as an innocent victim of a skillful whore and her husband. Theophilus they rightly described as a gambler and drunk. Susannah’s resistance to the arrangement was given little credit despite reports that Theophilus had physically intimidated her into admitting Sloper’s attentions. Sloper, they argued, had been caught in a snare by “two artful people” in order

to “take a sum of money from him” (Nash 144). Lest the jury wonder how a husband could pimp his own wife, Sloper’s chief counsel reminded his audience that

Players are a people who act and enter into all manner of characters; that their men and women are made to fall in love with each other, this day with one, tomorrow with another . . . this practice in variety must give them an uncommon propensity to love without any confinement of a passion to a particular subject (BD 3: 269).

The couple’s profession, Sergeant Eyre argued, renders them incapable of sexual and emotional fidelity. According to William Murray, Susannah Cibber was especially culpable: “She, being mistress of all the alluring arts of the stage, first engaged the young gentleman’s affections, then drew him in, and this with the husband’s privity and assistance” (Nash 143). Although she was innocent, Susannah was maligned as a mercenary seductress.

The defense’s strategy was as successful as it was inaccurate. Because adultery was easily proven, Cibber won his suit. The jury, however, only awarded him £10, substantially less than the £5000 he claimed as legal reparation for the loss of Susannah’s income. Meanwhile, Susannah’s reputation was terribly damaged.

The revelation that she was not bearing her personal unhappiness in sweet resignation, but grasping at carnal pleasures in the embraces of a married man, was a betrayal to those gentle ladies who had been her devotees. And the possibility that she had been in league with her appalling husband to milk Sloper placed her beyond the reach of their pity (Nash 147).

Susannah’s life-long fidelity to Sloper, who had formally separated from his wife, together with her skill as a tragedian, eventually helped to repair some of the damage to her reputation. However, during the trial, Susannah’s profession helped the defense to characterize her as a villain, rather than a victim, in this sordid triangle.

In 1739, when Theophilus sued Sloper again, Susannah's work was still an issue. This time it helped the prosecution. Mary Nash speculates that Sloper may have "tied his lawyers' hands by forbidding them to excite sympathy for him by calumniating Susannah" (162). Cibber easily won his suit and was awarded £500. Although the sum was considerably smaller than the £10,000 for which he had asked, it is significant enough to indicate that Sloper's peers had little patience for his affair with Susannah. "It was one thing for a young gentleman . . . to fall into the amorous cantrip of an actress. . . . It was another to continue his folly" (Nash 162). By awarding Theophilus £500 the jury was effectively telling Sloper to abandon Susannah, despite the fact that she had recently borne his child. As before, they had little sympathy for an actress. Regardless of both Theophilus's loathsome behavior and the lovers' profound sense of mutual commitment, Susannah Cibber was to be punished; after all, her ability to win and hold Sloper's affections posed a significant threat to the stability of domestic life.¹⁹

Actresses also threatened domestic harmony in other ways. Protestations of conduct books to the contrary, the theatrical woman's sex raised the unsettling possibility that *all* women could act and appear other than themselves (a point explored at length in Chapter Three). Not only did this suggest that all women possessed sexual appetites, but it offered women a way to evade the surveillance that disciplined their conduct. Writing of Aphra Behn, Catherine Gallagher notes, "if seventeenth-century texts often assume

¹⁹ A final, macabre, twist to the story dramatizes the power of the marriage contract. Sixty years after Catherine Sloper's husband left her for Susannah Cibber, William Sloper's grave was opened at Catherine's request and her body placed beside his in the family church (Nash 323).

that actresses are actual or potential prostitutes, texts about prostitution are altogether certain that whores were essentially actresses, or, more precisely, rhetoricians and actresses combined” (28). Like theatrical women, Gallagher explains, whores played theatrical parts; their success depended upon the ability to create the illusion of affection through their words and their actions (28-9). For whores and for theatrical women, she adds, this ability indicated a “gap between self-representation and the ‘real’ woman” (30). Both retained an indefinable self that remained inviolate regardless of how often their assets were sold. The possibility that ladies were no different than theatrical women consequently threatened the correlation between women’s characters and conduct that disciplined their behavior. It implied that every woman possessed a private “self” that remained hers even though her body and the contents of her mind belonged to her husband. This prospect exacerbated the fear that all women — regardless of marriage — were capable of sexual infidelity. Moreover, it questioned the logic behind the notion of *fem covert*, which suspended women’s legal identity after marriage, transforming her “into a kind of property . . . subject to the same laws as ordinary property” (Todd Angellica 111).

The theatrical women’s material success in the public arena also challenged a sexual economy that made women men’s property. Throughout the century, the majority of actresses were generally paid less than actors of similar stature. During the Restoration, for instance, an experienced actress earned thirty shillings a week while actors earned fifty (Elizabeth Howe 27). “A Covent Garden Theatre payroll for 1767-68 shows that the highest paid men received £2 15s daily; the highest paid women £1 15s 4d

daily — a great discrepancy” (Langhans 4). Exceptions abounded, however, especially among the stars. At different points in their careers the salaries of Elizabeth Barry, Mary Ann Yates, Susannah Cibber, Dora Jordan, and Sarah Siddons equaled or surpassed those of their male counterparts.²⁰ Initially created for Elizabeth Barry, the practice of theatrical benefits — which awarded the proceeds of a performance, usually after expenses, to a performer — also proved profitable for popular actresses.²¹ George Anne Bellamy, for example, claimed to have made £1,100 from her Covent Garden benefit in 1756 (Stone LS 4: cvi). Between her weekly salary, benefits, and summer touring, Sarah Siddons earned between £4000 and £5000 during the 1784-5 season (Manvell Siddons 117). Although these actresses proved the exception rather than the rule, their financial success helped qualify definitions of gender that deprived women of the ability to earn a living in

²⁰ In 1774-5, Yates earned “almost twice as much as the highest paid actor, William Smith” at Drury Lane (Langhans 8). During 1799-1800 . . . Dorothy Jordan received £31 10s weekly, the same as John Phillip Kemble. Kemble’s sister, Sarah Siddons, . . . was paid £31 10s *per night!*” (Langhans 3-4).

²¹ The actor’s benefit was created for Barry and until 1695, she was the only performer given an individual benefit. As designed, the benefit system provided certain actors, playwrights, theater personnel, and charities with the proceeds of an individual performance. Benefits for actors usually occurred from “mid-March until closing time in late May and were prepared for well in advance” (Stone LS 4: cii). For actors and playwrights, a benefit was usually either a “clear benefit” in which the beneficiary received the evening’s receipts in their entirety, or a “house charge” benefit, in which the beneficiary received the evening’s profits less the house charges. Both involved selling as many tickets as possible by the evening’s production. In a “partial benefit,” two or more people shared the evenings profits and the house charges and, in a “half-value-of-tickets” benefit usually for theater personnel, beneficiaries sold tickets at full price and remitted half to the theater management (Stone LS 4: ci). “Clear Benefits,” like the ones given to Barry, were usually reserved for individual performers who had been “instrumental in bringing [in] large sums on every night of his or her appearing” (Hogan LS 5: clxxxv). For a description of the playwright’s benefit see note ²⁶.

the public sphere.

Actresses' participation in the repertory system also helped complicate stereotypes about women's nature and work. London's theater companies regularly presented a mixture of old and new plays. As a result, the majority of eighteenth-century theatregoers were extremely familiar with many of the plays presented each year. Spectators generally went to the theater to see individual performers. As George Winchester Stone Jr. remarks, "[w]hat was played was, of course, of general interest, but since every spectator knew the plot line of Macbeth and The Provok'd Wife, *how* it was played became the crucial factor in drawing audiences again and again to the playhouse" ("Repertory" 204). Because audiences were able to compare the way two different actresses performed the same role, the repertory system consequently underscored the importance of actresses' technical skills. In this way, the repertory system helped communicate the *professional* nature of the actress's occupation. At the same time, it also called attention to the fictional nature of the actress's part.

An actress's individual performance could do so as well. As Ellen Donkin explains, "in spite of texts that reinforced an existing ideology about Woman, actual performances by women could maintain a certain degree of autonomy from that text and create a very different set of messages for the audience" ("Siddons" 278). Although audiences demanded that actresses' roles illustrate the "norms of Womanhood," they responded to the actress's individual subjectivity as manifested in certain theatrical moments, or "points," when the "actress could explode into a vitality and power that were absent from the rest of her role" (Donkin "Siddons" 278). These moments, Donkin

argues, functioned as “pry bars; they penetrated the ideological closure of representation and created a space in which women, not Woman, could be heard on stage, if only momentarily” (“Siddons” 278).²²

Without breaking from character, actresses also altered existing stereotypes about women by informing their fictional roles with qualities initially absent from contemporary notions of the feminine ideal. Speaking from the actress’s perspective, Bair explains,

the emphasis placed by the actress on expressing her ‘real’ self through interpersonal relationships — with an individual or an audience — may be thought of as an effort to translate her knowledge of the hidden interior life, and to gain public recognition of its existence and importance (222).

By imbuing their roles with their own personal experiences and character traits, Bair explains, actresses adjust audiences’ ideas about women in general. Catherine Burroughs’s analysis of Sarah Siddons’s remarks about acting demonstrates that the actress drew on her own sense of female experience in creating the role of Lady Macbeth. While Siddons “followed the eighteenth-century tradition of portraying Lady Macbeth as fiendish and hellish . . . in her written remarks, Siddons suggests that, when on stage, she enacted a kind of cultural critique by also envisioning the lady as a supportively agonized eighteenth-century wife” (54). By complicating her characterization of Lady Macbeth, Siddons broadened existing ideas about female subjectivity. Her complex

²² See also Paula Backscheider’s analysis of actresses in gothic drama in *Spectacular Politics* (205-217). Backscheider compares Mrs. Younge, Jane Powell, and Theresa De Camp to Sarah Siddons and Mary Ann Yates. “The fact that critics usually described their looks and Siddons’s and Yates’s performances suggests that they better served the purposes of gothic dramatists who needed to objectify the heroine” (205).

characterizations not only taught spectators to tolerate “the strange, the alarming, and the traditionally ostracized,” but also enabled a new concept of female heroism that allowed women “a wider range of qualities than those traditionally associated with ‘feminine’ strengths and virtues” (Burroughs 57; P. Rogers “Towering” 50).

...

Throughout the century, actresses helped destabilize conventional notions of womanhood; however, as we shall see, they ultimately proved less effective in doing so than the novelists considered in the following chapters. Ironically, their efficacy was limited by the very public nature of their challenge; their obvious differences from the feminine ideal made actresses the site of practical and rhetorical forms of containment. These strategies were only partly successful, however. Throughout the century actresses were regarded as essentially different from middle-class ladies. As a result actresses were never envisioned as acceptable role models for lady-like women.

Although an individual actress might be known for her virtue, the primary difference between actresses and middle-class ladies was the apparent difference in their sexual mores. As other scholars have noted, the Restoration actress was widely regarded as an object of desire. “It wasn’t just that the plays provided her with very limiting stereotypes of female behavior but that her very body on stage implicated her in a certain relationship with the viewing audience” (Donkin “Siddons” 277).²³ In performance, plays consistently demonstrated that the actress’s body was available to anyone’s gaze for

²³ See also Maus, “‘Playhouse Flesh and Blood.’”

the price of a ticket. Comedic actresses wore their décolletage unusually low and breeches roles — which revealed actresses' buttocks and legs — were wildly popular (Styan Restoration Comedy 97). Sex was ever present in the comedy of manners and a number of contemporary tragedies included scenes of torture and rape, which were staged to provide abundant displays of helpless, naked, female flesh (Howe 45).

Obscene prologues and epilogues also required that actresses actively reinforce their status as sexual objects by representing themselves as something akin to whores.²⁴ One famous example is Dryden's prologue to Tyrannic Love (1669), which clearly alludes to Nell Gwyn's off-stage affairs. Gwyn's character dies in the last act and, as her body is being carried off stage, Gwyn springs to life, reprimanding the bearer: "Hold, are you mad? You damn'd confounded Dog/I am to rise, and speak the Epilogue." Turning to the audience, Gwyn then introduces herself as "the Ghost of poor departed Nelly," who "walk[s] because I dye/Out of my calling in a Tragedy./O Poet, damn'd dull Poet, who could Prove/So senseless! To make Nelly dye for love" (1-4). The joke, of course, is that as a whore, Gwyn lives by love. The epilogue concludes with the following lines: "As for my Epitaph, when I am gone,/I'll trust no poet, but will write my own./*Here Nelly lies, who, though she lived a Slattern/Yet dy'd a Princess, acting in S. Cathar'n*" (27-30).

²⁴ Taking issue with Elizabeth Howe and John Harold Wilson, whom, she asserts, exaggerate the Restoration's "voyeuristic and sexual use of the actress," Deborah Payne argues that only ten — fewer than 1 percent — of the twelve hundred prologues and epilogues written between 1660 and 1700 compiled by Pierre Danchin "mention the sexual availability of the speaker or actresses in general" (18, 23). Payne, however, does not dispute the sexual exploitation of Restoration actresses (30). Her primary purpose is to show how the public's fascination with actresses' sexuality did not prevent them from achieving status as professionals.

Even when an epilogue did not explicitly refer to the actress speaking the piece, the material could still reinforce the notion that actresses were sexually available. Through the first three decades of the eighteenth century, actresses known for their scandalous behavior were often chosen to speak comic epilogues which followed tragedies. As practiced by actresses like Anne Oldfield, the actress — who usually played the heroine — stepped out of her role in order to ridicule the play’s characters and plot. Generally speaking, these epilogues typically “question whether the heroine’s virtue and suffering were not after all a little silly and perhaps hypocritical and are followed by indecent observations . . . all seeking to show that if the lady behaved naturally she would have encouraged her lover and tricked her husband” (Knapp 295). In the epilogue to the Distrest Mother (1712), for example, Oldfield, whose character has just lamented the death of her husband, comes forward and says,

I Hope you’ll own that with becoming Art
I’ve play’d my Game, and topp’d the Widow’s Part;
My Spouse, poor Man! Could not live out the Play,
But dy’d commodiously on our Wedding Day,
While I his Relict made at one bold Fling
Myself a Princess, and young Sty a King (qtd. Knapp 296).

Fielding was so disgusted with this convention that he ridicules the epilogue to the Distrest Mother in his epilogue to Orestes (1731):

Virtue by Theory taught in five dull Acts is,
The Epilogue reduces Vice to Practice.
Tho’ in his Play, the Greek or Roman Dame
Shuns the least Hint of an indecent Flame;
Tho’, rather than submit to naughty Wooing,
She laughs at Danger, and encounters Ruin;
Wait till the Epilogue, she stands confest
E’en One of Us, — her Virtue all a Jest (qtd. Knapp 300).

Despite Fielding's rather cynical view of human nature, the scandalous prologues and epilogues of the era also worked to differentiate between actresses and conventional notions of the feminine ideal. Like costumes and staging practices that exploited actresses' bodies, these pieces helped reinforce the belief that the actress was really a whore in disguise.

Although Deborah Payne points out that the public's fascination with the private lives of Restoration actresses is not the same thing as sexual objectification (35), the fact that many were known for their off-stage affairs also helped differentiate them from respectable women. According to Elizabeth Howe, of "the eighty or so actresses we know by name on the Restoration stage between 1660 and 1689, apparently only about a mere one-quarter led what were considered to be respectable lives" (33). Most actresses contented themselves with less-famous partners, but Moll Davis, Elizabeth Farley, and Nell Gwyn all became mistresses of Charles II. Elizabeth Barry's relationship with the Earl of Rochester was public knowledge, as was Hester Davenport's with the Earl of Oxford. Pamphlets, lampoons, and critical works from the period frequently comment on the sexual history of actresses. In "The Session of the Ladies," for example, Rebecca Boutell is she "whom all the Town f[ucks]" (Howe 35). The lampoon also notes Barry's off-stage adventures, as does Robert Gould's "The Play-House," (1709) which claims that Barry will "prostitute with any/Rather than wave the Getting of a Penny" (Payne 19).

In some ways, at least, the public's fascination with the Restoration actress's sexuality actually helped authorize her agency. From the time they were first allowed on the stage in 1660, actresses' proved a powerful lure to theater audiences (Pearson 27).

Actresses thus were a valuable additions to the theater companies. A few managed “to improve both their status and their earning power within the companies simply through their commercial success with theatergoers, Barry being the prime example” (Howe 27).

²⁵ Popular actresses like Barry also influenced dramatists, who wrote plays to showcase the specific talents of individual performers. Although plays which pitted actresses against each other, and factions supporting their favorites, tended to render actresses spectacles, they also “embued actresses with the authority that can only result from being ‘on stage’ in a Western culture moving towards the primacy of the visual” (Payne 31).

The public nature of the actress’s profession thus empowered certain women by making them stars. At the same time, it called attention to actresses’ technical skills.

“Professionalization,” notes Payne, “claims cultural authority for the actress by staging her unique (and painstakingly acquired) talents in the very public realm of the theater”

(31). Despite their status as sexual objects, early actresses were also often considered to be skilled professionals whose work was appreciated by the general public.

In other ways, however, the popular assumptions about Restoration actresses’ sexuality helped contain their challenge to conventional notions of the feminine ideal.

First, and most obviously, the objectification of women on stage helped to support a “technology of gender” which “reinforced an old set of power relations even as it

²⁵ In 1695, Thomas Betterton, Anne Bracegirdle, and Barry were the leaders of a group of players who left the United Company, under Christopher Rich, to form a new company at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Four actresses — Barry, Bracegirdle, Mrs. Bowman, and Mrs. Leigh — became shareholders in this new company, a privilege formerly denied actresses. For a full account of the episode, see Judith Milhous’s Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Also see Howe’s discussion of Barry in The First English Actresses.

appeared to give women a new place in representation” (Donkin “Siddons” 277).

Actresses might claim public space, but their authority in doing so was seriously compromised by their status as sexual objects. Secondly, knowledge of actresses’ lives helped contain the threat posed by their ability to act and appear other than themselves. Theoretically, at least, the public’s awareness of the personal conduct of actresses interfered with their ability to evade surveillance through the assumption of roles. And finally, the prevalent assumption that all actresses were whores helped prevent them from serving as effective role models for upper and middle-class women. During the Restoration at least, the notion that actresses were somehow essentially “other” than ladies actually helped to reinforce notions of femininity that relegated virtuous women to the domestic sphere.

By the 1700s, however, the drama had begun to play a significant role in disseminating middle-class notions of the feminine ideal. While actresses contributed to this process by representing models of virtuous femininity on stage, traditional assumptions about the sexuality of actresses often threatened to undermine the credibility of their performances. At the same time, actresses’ mimetic abilities raised the unsettling possibility that virtue could be feigned offstage as well. As a result, contemporary discourse about eighteenth-century actresses is characterized by an increasing tendency to represent actresses as respectable women.

One way to improve the status of actresses was to emphasize the improved morality of the theater and of actresses in general. Thomas Campbell’s 1734 biography of Siddons, for example, begins by asserting that “modern civilization has robbed the

Puritans of the strongest objection which they could allege against the theatre, namely the grossness of its language; so that the most delicate female need not now shrink from the profession on that account” (48). Moreover, he asserts, the theater has “a general tendency towards the good of society, which, if the theater be kept amenable to decency and public opinion, may make the drama directly promotive of good morals” (50).

Campbell’s contemporary, James Boaden, goes further in his biography of Siddons, crediting spectators’ morality for the theater’s improvement. “I am happy,” he notes, “in estimating the comparative purity of [England and France], to give the palm of virtue to audiences in my own country” (4). Boaden also compliments David Garrick, who, by mid-century, was not only the leading actor, but the manager of Drury Lane. “To the moral purity of his stage, this great man,” he notes, “paid the proper attention. There was little obnoxious in our *best* dramatic works, which might not be omitted without loss to the scene, or softened without injury to the dialogue” (5). As a result, he concludes, Siddons “started as an actress when the profession did not disgrace a woman of virtue” (5). Campbell concurs. “At present,” he writes, “after so many women who have been patterns of their sex, have been bred actresses, it may be safely affirmed that a young *débutante*, ambitious of first-rate rank as an actress, would find the greatest talents scarcely available without personal respectability of character” (49). Like Boaden’s, Campbell’s assertions thus work to render Siddons’s career respectable. At the same time, however, the fact that both writers feel the need to begin their biographies by defending the theater so vigorously suggests that concerns about the theater’s morality and about the virtue of actresses continued to thrive even after the close of the century.

Although many actresses continued to be publicly criticized for immoral conduct during the century, writers who wanted to render actresses respectable tend to excuse or overlook actresses' sexual liaisons. An early example comes from an issue of the Tatler (August 16, 1710). It is about Anne Oldfield, who was then living with her lover, Arthur Maynwaring. Oldfield is described as

ever well-dressed, and always the genteelst woman you meet; but *the make of her mind* very much contributes to the ornament of her body. She has the greatest simplicity of manners, of any of her sex. . . . Her beauty is full of attraction, *but not of allurement*. . . . however she is appareled, she is herself the same for *there is so immediate a relation between our thoughts and gestures that a woman must think to look well* (BD 11: 106, emphasis mine).

There are several possible reasons why Oldfield's relationship with Maynwaring is not mentioned. First of all, Addison and Steele were playwrights dedicated to the creation of moral drama. Secondly, the affair was illicit; to recognize it in a journal like the Tatler, would offend their respectable female readership. Third, as fellow members of the Kit-Cat Club, Addison and Steele were probably acquainted with Maynwaring, which may explain why the article fails to mention the affair.²⁶ Fourth, and most importantly, to note Oldfield's relationship with Maynwaring would undermine the author's efforts to represent Oldfield according to conventional models of the feminine ideal. Conversely, its treatment of Oldfield's body and mind works to make her seem chaste. Her beauty attracts, but it does not allure. Always "the same," she is incapable of subterfuge.

²⁶ The circumspection of the Tatler is even more striking given the publication of a broadside a year later entitled "A Justification of the Letter to Sir John Stanley, relative to his Management of the Play-house in Drury Lane" (Lafler 95). Oldfield's biographer, Joanne Lafler reports that the second half of the piece depicts Oldfield as a disease-ridden whore and speculates that the piece was really aimed at injuring Maynwaring (96).

Indeed, the passage insists that Oldfield's outward appearance is only the most obvious manifestation of her virtuous mind.

Because he desires to render Siddons's profession respectable, Campbell is another writer who works to recuperate the reputations of actresses maligned for promiscuous conduct. Not only does he champion Anne Bracegirdle, whose famed chastity Colly Cibber questions in his own autobiography, but he fails to mention Rebecca Boutell's scandalous behavior. Although he can not ignore Elizabeth Barry's liaison with Rochester, he questions the extent of the affair when he wonders whether Rochester truly tutored the actress. "I have difficulty," he writes, "in imagining the actress of Monomia or Belvidera drawing lessons of *refined* enchantment from a gentlemen so habitually *drunk and profligate* as Lord Rochester" (54, emphasis mine). By juxtaposing Barry's refinement against Rochester's moral degeneracy, Campbell's language suggests that there is an essential difference between the characters of the poet and his pupil.

Sometimes, when an actress's sexual conduct could not be overlooked, an author might compensate by representing her as an innocent victim of unscrupulous men. Although Sophia Snow Baddeley's affairs were notorious, Elizabeth Hughes Steele — who served both as her manager and as her procuress — renders Baddeley a dupe of vicious men in her memoirs. "Had Robert Baddeley, she thought, proved a kind and protective husband instead of a pimp; had Hanger, whom Baddeley deeply loved, not taken her money and decamped when it was gone; had others lived up to their engagements," Baddeley, Steele suggests, "would have proved faithful and never looked

elsewhere” (Rizzo Companions 215-16). Charlotte Charke uses a similar strategy in her own autobiography. “I must take this Opportunity,” she writes,

of referring myself to the superior Judgement of those who read my Story; whether a young Creature, who actually married for Love (*at least I thought so*; nay, was foolish enough to think myself equally beloved) must not naturally be incensed, when, in less than a Month after Marriage, I received the most demonstrative Proofs of Disregard, where I ought to have found the greatest Tenderness: To be even to my Face, apparently convinc’d of his insatiate Fondness of a Plurality of common Wretches, that were to be had for Half a Crown (77).

Had her husband not been addicted to whoring, Charke argues, she would have been a happy and monogamous wife. Another actress who wrote her own autobiography is George Anne Bellamy, who portrays her “out-of-wedlock liaisons with George Metham, Thomas Calcraft, and . . . West Digges . . . as the fate of an unprotected innocence” (Straub Suspects 115). Boaden takes a similar tack in his biography of Dora Jordan, whose affair with the Duke of Clarence — later William IV — certainly could not be overlooked. While still a virgin, Boaden claims, Dora was raped by a theatrical manager named Richard Daly. Daly thought himself above the law, Boaden explains: after all, “who would have believed in the virtuous resistance of an actress?” (Tomalin Mrs. Jordan 22).

Another partially successful strategy to render actresses respectable was to focus upon their duties as professionals. Although Campbell admits that there are persons “not puritanical, who think it derogatory to female delicacy to meet the gaze of spectators in impassioned parts,” he reserves his censure for women in *private* theatricals. since they are motivated by vanity (49). The “public actress,” he explains, “has a fair apology, and

her professional publicity is an additional challenge to her virtuous pride” (49).

Campbell’s difficulty in justifying actresses’ self-display here is obvious. On the one hand he distinguishes actresses from domestic women; their profession, he argues, excuses their conduct. On the other hand, Campbell wants to reassure his readers that actresses really are virtuous. Consequently, he suggests that actresses actually dislike public attention. Unfortunately, given his project, this supposition effectively compromises his insistence that acting is a suitable occupation for women who resemble the feminine ideal.

Actresses also attempted to negotiate the difference between their private lives and their professional conduct. Although Straub rightly insists that biographers often represent actresses’ desire to go on the stage as a perversion of normal feminine sexuality (Suspects 98), evidence suggests that, by the end of the century, some actresses were actively claiming the right to two separate identities. Dora Jordan, for instance, distinguishes her private from her professional self in a letter to the newspapers in 1791. The letter, which defends her absence from a performance at the Haymarket, also refers to criticism about her liaison with the Duke of Clarence — later King William IV. “I have submitted in silence,” she writes, “to the . . . abuse which . . . has been directed against me; because it has related to subjects about which the public could not be interested; but to an attack upon my conduct in my profession . . . I think it is my duty to reply” (Tomalin Mrs. Jordan 126). Not only does Jordan insist upon her right to speak *as a professional*, but she uses her authority to differentiate between herself as a woman and as an actress. As a professional, she argues, she is due a certain degree of respect. At the

same time she points out that her private affairs *as a woman* are unsuitable for public discourse. By chastising her readers for their comments about the affair, Jordan suggests the comparative propriety of her conduct under the circumstances.

Not surprisingly, Jordan's strategy was unsuccessful. Throughout the century the public's fascination with actresses' off-stage conduct invariably affected their reception as professionals. In some cases, however, actresses could use their talents to turn this tendency to their advantage. Susannah Cibber's ability to "wring tears from an audience," for example, helped generate sympathy for her troubles with Theophilus (BD 3: 274). During a Dublin performance of Messiah, one writer observed that Dr. Patrick Delany, then Chancellor of St. Patrick's Cathedral, "was so struck by the extreme sensibility of her manner, that he could not refrain from saying loud enough to be heard . . . 'Woman! Thy sins be forgiven thee!'" (BD 3: 270). Although Mrs. Delany later proved far less generous, Cibber's talents as a tragedian thus helped her recuperate both her professional and personal reputation.²⁷ "Dr. Delany's exclamation overstepped decorum," notes Nash, but "the feelings he expressed were shared by everyone in the hall. . . . She was Mary Magdalene and [the audience] marveled at the daring and magnanimous genius of Handel who had put the account of Christ's degradation and suffering into the mouth of a fallen woman" (176). Cibber's performance saved her career. Upon returning to London, she became England's leading tragedian. "On the day

²⁷ The well-known Mary Delany, whom the Dean married several years later, was one of a number of women who snubbed Cibber at Bath in 1760. As Nash notes, "for Mrs. Delany and [others] Susannah's transgression against marriage cast her beyond Christian compassion" (283).

of her death, Drury Lane closed its doors to pay homage to the greatest of its actresses” (BD 3: 281).

Other actresses’ talents earned them a place in aristocratic circles. Although Fanny Burney “fastidiously placed [Frances Abington] among ‘the frail ones’” for her “early affair with Mr. Needham and her subsequent acceptance of the ‘protection’ of the Marquis of Lansdowne,” Abington’s talent for playing fine ladies in sentimental comedies and her admired taste in dress made her a favorite of the “haute monde” (BD 1: 19).²⁸ By the time she retired, she was financially well-off, “entertained lavishly, was welcomed to the greatest houses, and conversed on terms of intellectual parity — in several different languages — with persons of dignity as different as Horace Walpole, the Duke of Dorset, General Paoli, and Dr. Johnson” (BD 1: 18). Elizabeth Farren was even more successful. Like Abington, Farren came from extremely humble origins and her skill at playing fine ladies helped her gain access to aristocratic circles. Eventually she met and — as rumor has it — refused to sleep with the married Earl of Derby. The pair waited almost twenty years for the countess to die so they could be legally wed. During that time, Farren maintained her reputation for chastity.²⁹ Farren expressed regret upon leaving the theater, but she tolerated no mention of her former career after she became the

²⁸ There are many different stories about Abington’s early years, all of which agree that, as a child, she experienced grinding poverty. Various stories have her working as a servant in a whorehouse, assisting a milliner, and selling flowers in Covent Garden. See The Biographical Dictionary of Actors and Actresses and the Life of Mrs. Abington.

²⁹ Although Farren was not linked to other men, she was rumored to be a lesbian. Hester Piozzi mentions the rumor in Thraliana (770); a passage in The Whig Club, or, A Sketch of Modern Patriotism (1794) notes that Lady M_____ is “supposed to be a formidable rival to Mrs. [Damer] for the affections of Miss [Farren]” (100).

Countess of Derby. This decision, of course, helped to naturalize her new identity.

Through their ability to portray fine ladies convincingly both on stage and off, Abington and Farren created and maintained off-stage identities that were as great a fiction as the roles they inhabited when they were actually performing in plays.

Although Farren was one of several actresses who married into the aristocracy, the middle-class model of domesticity was the standard to which actresses were ultimately referred (Straub Suspects 95). Arguably the greatest actress of the century, Sarah Siddons also provides the penultimate example of an actress who consciously worked to represent herself in accordance with the middle-class notion of the feminine ideal. Throughout her career, Siddons's apparent fidelity to her husband, her misuse at his hands (he apparently gave her venereal disease), and her overt displays of maternal affection lent a sense of integrity to her depictions of wronged wives and mothers. Conversely, when she played "fallen" women like Jane Shore and Mrs. Haller, the public's perception of Siddons's own virtuous character helped make her penitence credible.

As her family's sole support, Siddons could be excused for her self-display on the stage. In one memorable instance, Siddons gave her audience at Bath "three reasons" she was leaving the Theatre Royal at Orchard Street for Drury Lane. After performing The Distrest Mother, Siddons recited a poem she had composed herself. Initially, she thanked the audience for their support; then she posed a question:

Why don't I here, you'll say, content remain
 Nor seek uncertainties for certain gain?
 What can compensate for the risk you run?
 And what your reasons? Surely you have none.

Leaving the stage for a moment, Siddons returned with her three children in tow and continued:

These are the moles that bear me from your side;
Where I was rooted — where I could have died. . . .
Have I been hasty? Am I then to blame;
Answer, all ye who own a parent's name (Campbell 45-46).

At the time, Siddons was heavily pregnant with her fourth child. As Judith Pascoe concludes, “the actuality of those three children and her stable home life served to mitigate the extraordinary spectacle of female passion [Siddons] created on the stage” (240). However, in this instance, it also serves to remind us that Siddons’s private life was as much of a performance as her roles on the stage.

Despite the respectability achieved by actresses like Farren and Siddons, efforts to reconcile acting with contemporary models of womanhood were never completely successful. Although performers like Siddons and her brother, John Phillip Kemble, were “received everywhere with cordiality and respect,” much of the public still regarded acting and actors with suspicion (Hogan LS 5: cxx). Regardless of an actress’s conduct off the stage, her sexuality seemed a “public commodity and for sale no matter how privately virtuous she remained” (Straub Suspects 101). Although some actresses, like Siddons, managed to secure their own reputations, “the neat fit between actresses and prostitution” ultimately “rendered the ‘respectable’ actress a contradiction in terms” (Straub Suspects 27).

A well known tale that illustrates the resulting confusion appears in Boaden’s biography of Elizabeth Inchbald. According to Inchbald,

[o]ne evening about half an hour before the curtain was drawn up, some accident having happened in the dressing-room of one of the actresses, a woman of known intrigue, she ran in haste to the dressing room of Mrs. Wells, to finish the business of her toilet. Mrs. Wells, who was the mistress of the well-known Captain Topham, shocked at the intrusion of a reprobated woman, who had a worse character than herself, quitted her own room, and ran to Miss Farren's, crying "What would Captain Topham say, if I were to remain in such company?"

No sooner had she entered the room . . . than Miss Farren flew out the door, repeating, "What would Lord Derby say, if I should be seen in such company?" (1: 174).

The tale continues, Boaden remarks, "to a respectable *married* lady in the company of her *husband*; but Mrs. Inchbald believes not very accurately" (1: 174). Although Inchbald's intention is to point out the various "shades and degrees of female virtue, possessed at the Haymarket theatre," her story also suggests that all actresses — regardless of their conduct — were still defined in relation to their sexuality (Boaden 1: 174). After all, the story's humor depends upon the *public's* knowledge of the actresses' sexual conduct. Combined with contemporary prejudices against actors and acting, the public's fascination with actresses' sexuality thus limited their status through the end of the century.

Playwrights

Female playwrights provide an even more vivid example of professional theatrical women who consciously attempted to shape their public personae. Like actresses, their modes of self-representation change in response to alterations in the strategies used to regulate their presence and production in the public sphere. Early in the period, their efforts may best be understood as a necessary defense against attacks on their characters as women and professionals. Although early women dramatists received a great deal of

praise and help from their contemporaries, their incursion into what traditionally had been a male profession also generated vituperative efforts to limit their commercial success and artistic mobility.³⁰ During the early part of the period, “hostility to women playwrights expressed itself in terms of certain ideas that appeared over and over” (Cotton 184). Most frequently, female dramatists were equated with actresses and whores (Backscheider 81; Cotton 186; Gallagher 23; Howe 16; Pearson 9). After all, female dramatists not only shared the contents of their minds with the public, but they associated with players and theater managers in a place outside the home. To compete with their male counterparts, their plays had to be bawdy. Countless attacks on early women dramatists consequently took issue with their morals, echoing Robert Gould’s assertion that “Punk (prostitute) and Poesie agree so pat/You cannot well be this, and not be that” (Gallagher 23).³¹

Female dramatists were thus attacked for their literary pretensions in works that represented their sexuality as an aberration from the feminine ideal’s. Produced by Drury

³⁰ Dryden and Rochester, for example, collaborated with Aphra Behn; Delariviere Manley and Jonathan Swift worked together on political pamphlets; and, as Maureen E. Mulvihill demonstrates, Katherine Phillips’s career was almost completely enabled by the support of men like Dryden, Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, and Sir Charles Cotterell (81-95).

³¹ Writing of Gould’s attack on Restoration actresses, Payne argues that writers of such lampoons did not reflect the dominant cultural attitudes; “circulated privately in manuscript and anonymously printed, [lampoons] were usually written by alienated writers avenging their own disappointments” by fixating “on actresses, another social group on equally precarious footing” (20). Although Payne’s argument rightly insists on the danger of drawing broad conclusions based on one species of writing, the degree to which women playwrights engage (either positively or negatively) with the equation of whore and theatrical woman in their own work suggests that the equation was a widespread and particularly relevant cultural assumption.

Lane, The Female Wits (1693) is one example of several plays that portray women playwrights in this derogatory fashion. The play, which attacks Delariviere Manley, Mary Pix, and Catherine Trotter, centers around the rehearsal of a tragedy which parodies Manley's The Royal Mischief (1696). Based on Manley, the author, "Marsila," is morally suspect, untalented, and vain. Catherine Trotter, or "Calista," is a pretentious ignoramus and Mary Pix, "Mrs. Wellfed," is a good-natured sot. The point of the play, as Derek Hughes notes, is that these "women are creatures of the flesh, to be judged . . . by their appeal to the flesh" (449). Their literary ambitions are figured as the perversion of normal feminine sexuality and the play that Marsila, or Manley, produces, is held up to ridicule. Susanna Centlivre and Eliza Haywood are also lambasted in Pope's Dunciad as "slip-shod Muses' with unkempt hair. Haywood also appears in the Dunciad as a "Juno of majestic size,/With cow-like udders and ox-like eyes," offering her sexual favors as the prize in a urinating contest between the booksellers Edmund Curll and William Chetwood (Cotton 5). As in The Royal Mischief's description of Manley, Pope's treatment of Haywood links the author's literary ambition to her deviant sexuality. Even more blatantly than in conduct material, both pieces portray these unlady-like women as monstrous "others," as women who are somehow essentially different from those whose behavior accords with contemporary notions of women's roles.

Throughout the early part of the period, women writers responded to such defamation in various ways. One strategy, typified by Katherine Philips, was to "[adopt] a superfeminine persona and [avoid] competition with men" (Cotton 195). As Maureen E. Mulvihill notes, the myth of "Orinda," in which Philips is rendered a virtuous woman

leery of fame, was really a “remarkable literary campaign conceived and promoted by Phillips herself, her relatives, and some of the literary bosses of the Restoration old boys’ network” (73). Phillips, Mulvihill demonstrates, was not only ambitious but eventually possessed a “confident sense of herself as an important, independent presence in her day” (79). Paula Backscheider agrees, noting that Phillips “worked diligently and competitively . . . as a dramatist intent not only on publication but on production” (76). Phillips’s public persona, however, was shy and self-effacing, the author of such lines as “[I] never writ any line in my life with an intention to have it printed. . . . I am so little concerned with the reputation of writing [and] I am so far from expecting applause for anything I scribble” (Mulvihill 92). After her death at thirty two, Phillips was widely eulogized as the “matchless Orinda”; literary comparisons frequently praised her personal virtues to the detriment of writers like Behn and the Duchess of Newcastle. Her example had a paradoxical influence on women writers. While Phillips’s self-presentation helped make “it permissible for women to write, . . . it worked against self-assertion, a quality indispensable for a playwright” (Cotton 198). Phillips’s early followers generally represented themselves as graceful amateurs who wrote for pleasure rather than fame.

Originating with Behn, the other mode of self-representation popular at the beginning of the period was to directly engage with attacks on women’s status as *professional* playwrights. For some, this meant coopting the equation of women playwrights and whores. Behn, Gallagher argues, exploited the analogy to woo her audience (14-25). In The Adventures of Rivella; or, the History and Adventures of the Author of the Atlantis (1714), Manley transforms herself into a heroine whose virtue lies

in her generosity and integrity rather than her chastity. Haywood also embraced this strategy in her early work, prompting the approving James Stirling to write: “Read, proud Usurper, read with conscious Shame,/Pathetic Behn, or Manley’s greater name;/Forget the Sex, and Own when Haywood writ,/She clos’d the fair Triumvirate of Wit” (Cotton 204).

However, as Backscheider points out, “the images of the prostitute and the prostituted pen are hardly less restricting than the constraints of elevated gentility that imposed deliberate silences and a constricted range of subjects” (81). In the preface to The Lucky Chance (1686), Behn complains that sexual jests in plays by men “are never taken notice of, because a Man writ them;” however, she concludes, “such Masculine strokes in me must not be allow’d” (63, 64). Likewise, Delariviere Manley defends the “warmth” of her play, The Royal Mischief, by noting that “Aureng-Zebe [1675] and the Double Discovery [1680]. . . both by Dryden,” were equally explicit (Cotton 88). Nevertheless such attacks continued. Susanna Centlivre’s plays, Nancy Cotton remarks, were “genteel, relative to the taste of the times, for she seems to have been prepared for hostility against a woman’s writing like a man” (Cotton 136). Centlivre, however, was still subjected to prejudice against “women playwrights, per se” and defended herself accordingly in the preface to The Platonik Lady (1706). After castigating her readers for deserting a popular play merely because they discover “*It is a Woman’s*,” Centlivre asks, “why this Wrath against Woman’s Works? Perhaps you’ll answer; because they meddle with things out of their Sphere: But I say no; for since the Poet is born, why not a woman as well as a man?” (Cotton 137).

Although writers like Behn, Manley, Centlivre, and Haywood were more assertive than Phillips and her followers, the growing insistence upon the morality of the theater increasingly pulled women towards the strategy represented by Phillips. By 1710, “all women playwrights of the era except Jane Wiseman identified themselves publicly as stage reformers” (Cotton 96). The dissemination of middle-class notions of the feminine ideal further encouraged this process, as did the Licensing Act of 1737 which limited the performance of “legitimate drama” (as opposed to mime, burlesque, melodrama, farce, and operetta) to Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Additionally, the Act required that the political, religious, and sexual content of all new plays be approved by the Licensor of the stage (later the Examiner of Plays), who operated under the auspices of the Lord Chamberlain’s office (Burroughs 9). With the addition of the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, London’s legitimate theaters thus totaled three by the end of the century.³² Their managers exercised “absolute [power] in the matter of contributing scripts” (Donkin Act 5). Their reluctance to submit anything even remotely scandalous to the Lord Chamberlain’s office encouraged playwrights, regardless of sex, to practice a considerable degree of self-censorship. So did the demands of eighteenth-century gentility. By the middle of the century, female dramatists were expected to embody the

³² The New or Little Theatre in the Haymarket operated sporadically after the Licensing Act, “either by the subterfuge, occasionally, of a ‘Concern,’ or ‘Entertainment’ with a play given gratis during the intermission, or for one night stands ‘by permission’ or ‘by authority’ for benefits, or for a series of summer performances which would not compete with the business of the patent theatres” (Stone LS 4: lxx). In 1766 the Haymarket received a patent which allowed it to hold a summer season on a yearly basis.

feminine qualities they described in their plays.³³ Otherwise, they risked alienating an audience which demanded that plays dramatize ideologically dominant ideas about gender.

As in the case of actresses, this expectation effectively helped to contain the threat women playwrights posed to conventional notions of the feminine ideal. Although a great many women were writing plays during this time (see Appendix), theater managers wielded absolute power in determining which plays would be selected for production. Their choices were based on personal as well as professional preferences. From the managers' view, "women playwrights were useful because their presence demonstrated the generosity and benevolence of male patronage" (Donkin Act 185). Consequently, women like "Hannah Cowley, Dorothy Cilesia, and . . . Hannah More," who "created precisely the right combination of respect, gratitude, and compliance to underscore [Garrick's] own need for unchallenged power and leadership," found it far easier to get their work produced than someone like "Frances Brooke, who stood up to Garrick" (Donkin Act 185). Richard Sheridan, Thomas Harris, and George Colman were no less subjective. To succeed in getting one's work produced, women playwrights first had to secure the approval of the theater manager.

³³ There is considerable disagreement about whether female playwrights' work is more "feminist" than that of male playwrights. For a discussion of early women playwrights see Derek Hughes, English Drama 1660-1700; Kathryn Kendall, Theatre, Society, and Women Playwrights in London; and Jacqueline Pearson, The Prostituted Muse. In addition to her analysis of early women playwrights, Backscheider, in Spectacular Politics, also compares gothic plays by men and women and concludes that Hannah Cowley's and Sophia Lee's heroines are more active and complex than those of their male counterparts (202).

Generally speaking, this was usually accomplished by subordinating themselves and their work to a theater manager's authority.³⁴ Elizabeth Griffith, Betty Rizzo argues, "exploit[ed] her real helplessness to render male assistance obligatory" ("Depressa" 121). Griffith "flattered Garrick shamelessly, acknowledging his collaboration in her plays more than once in writing, and also both played defenseless and, when she could, heaped guilt upon him for having failed in chivalry" ("Depressa" 121). Time and again, Garrick found himself assisting Griffith, suggesting material she might adapt for the stage, criticizing her work, and offering editorial assistance. Placing herself firmly under his protection, Griffith acknowledges Garrick's assistance in her dedication to The School for Rakes (1769), rightly expressing her gratitude "for the great trouble you have taken with it." She concludes with more flattery, declaring in her dedication the indulgence "of a much higher vanity, than of being its author; by declaring to the world that you are my friend, and that I am, Sir, your much obliged and most humble servant" (dedication). Although such hyperbole is not unusual for the time, Griffith's concluding statement also serves to reinforce the dynamics of her relationship with Garrick. By publicizing her gratitude for Garrick's assistance, Griffith's dedication creates expectations about Garrick's subsequent conduct.

Sophia Lee's preface to The Chapter of Accidents (1780) makes a similar case for her debt to George Colman. Lee's play had already passed through the hands of

³⁴ A notable exception to this rule is Elizabeth Inchbald, whose position as an actress gave her both practical experience about stagecraft and access to theater managers unusual for women playwrights. Inchbald, Donkin demonstrates, not only avoided cultivating an exclusive relationship with one theater manager but sought outside criticism of her work (Act 121).

Thomas Harris, whom Lee accuses of substantial misconduct. Throughout the preface, Lee underscores her need to be guided, noting that she had cut out all the serious parts of the play at his suggestion. Finally, she explains, after Harris insisted upon further revisions, she “thought it time to consider what was due to myself and that the *character of mildness and complacency* would be rather dearly bought if I gave up all *merit* for it” and withdrew the play (emphasis mine). Despite her rejection of Harris’s suggestions, Lee asserts her desire to accommodate male authority. She was, she suggests, a mistreated innocent saved by George Colman. “What pleasure,” she writes,

do I feel in retracting the general aspersion cast on managers when I speak of Mr. Colman — obliged to get the piece represented if possible, lest the subject should be borrowed . . . I enclosed it with an anonymous letter to that Gentleman. . . . By his advice I cut out the songs, and lengthened it into five acts. Nor did his kindness end there. He gave me the benefit of his judgement and experience, both in heightening and abbreviating the business, with every attention in casting and getting it up, generously uniting the name of Manager with that of Friend, Mr. Colman has brought into notice a woman who with pride and pleasure will ever acknowledge the obligation (preface).

Lee’s gratitude towards Colman seems well justified given his attention and help, but her preface does more than express thanks to a colleague. Like Griffith with Garrick, Lee here asserts both her feminine weakness and the theater manager’s chivalrous conduct. Colman, Lee notes, not only accepted the play, but offered editorial suggestions and practical help in mounting the production. The implication is clear: regardless of Lee’s own talent’s, Colman’s active support is what made the play a success.

Although male playwrights also benefitted from theater managers’ help, such support, Donkin notes, was especially vital to women playwrights. Regardless of gender, playwrights had to familiarize themselves with the intricacies of stage mechanics. Unless

their prior experience included a theatrical career, playwrights thus had to spend a great deal of time backstage. Backstage, however, was still gendered space. Men “could tread there without penalty but women . . . ran the very real risk of not being treated as ‘ladies’” (Donkin Act 136). As a result, some women playwrights lacked practical knowledge about how to move their characters on and off stage; how to break up the action; and how to use scenery and props to best advantage.³⁵ Of course this was the kind of information that an experienced and willing theater manager could readily supply.³⁶

Rehearsals were another area in which women playwrights found themselves dependent upon theater managers’ good will. Although playwrights were generally expected to share the responsibility of rehearsing the players with the theater manager, attending rehearsals was an open display of unlady-like behavior. Women playwrights

³⁵ Frances Burney was one such playwright. Writing of Edwy and Elgiva, which closed after one night, Burney remarked, “[i]t was not written with any idea of the stage, and my illness and weakness, and constant absorbment, at the time of its preparation occasioned it to appear with so many undramatic effects, from my inexperience of theatrical requisites and demands, that when I saw it, I myself perceived a thousand things I wished to change” (D&L 5: 251). Joanna Baillie’s case is a bit more complex. Ellen Donkin points out that Baillie was extremely knowledgeable about stagecraft but that she hated attending rehearsals (Act 170-173). The result was that many of Baillie’s contemporaries, including John Genest, believed Baillie deficient in “a knowledge of the stage” (8: 333). “She has presented to the public much fine poetry in dramatic shape,” he argues, “without having written one single play which is well calculated for representation — as she wished her plays to have been acted, she should have frequented the theatre herself, or have consulted some person who was conversant with the stage” (8: 333).

³⁶ Interestingly, Burney and Baillie’s plays were produced by John Phillip Kemble and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the acting manager and manager of Drury Lane, respectively. Kemble and Sheridan, as Donkin has argued, were far less interested in offering editorial and practical support to women playwrights than Garrick had been (Act 57-76; 144-155;169).

also had far less authority than their male counterparts during rehearsals. As Donkin points out, male playwrights “carried with them an authority that came from being male in the culture” (Act 137). Even if the manager failed to show up, a male playwright was usually able to rehearse his cast, but, “in the absence of the manager, the woman playwright did not carry with her his vested authority” (Donkin Act 137). Although some women dramatists, including Frances Burney and Joanna Baillie, appointed male emissaries to attend rehearsals, doing so meant losing the opportunity to make vital last-minute adjustments to their scripts. Compared to male playwrights, then, female dramatists were under far more pressure to maintain a good relationship with the theater managers. Thus they were far less likely to confront them directly if disagreements arose regarding issues like casting, alterations to the script, and the matter of payment (Donkin Act 28).

Although it helped them gain access to the means of production, women’s reliance on theater managers and other male mentors often undermined their confidence in their own judgement and skills. Donkin has persuasively argued that Hannah Cowley and Hannah More both suffered serious setbacks after Garrick retired (Act 57-76). Although she ultimately refused, Sophia Lee almost turned The Chapter of Accidents into an afterpiece at Harris’s suggestion. Frances Burney’s theatrical ambitions were seriously thwarted when her father and her mentor, Samuel Crisp, forced her to withdraw The Witlings (1779) after it had been accepted for production at Drury Lane. To prosper as a playwright, Donkin concludes, a woman had to “survive the first stage of mandatory mentoring . . . and then . . . begin building a more independent career based on her own

reputation” (Act 27).

Even if they could survive this mentoring system, women dramatists were also hampered by an audience that limited their artistic mobility. By mid-century, women writers were expected to reveal their delicacy and sensitivity through their work. As Crisp remarks to Burney, most successful comedies contain “lively freedoms” that “Ladies of Character . . . perhaps would *shy* at *being* known to be the Authors of” (EJ&L 3: 187). Although Crisp eventually concludes that Burney may write a good play, he warns that “a great deal of management & Dexterity will certainly be requisite to preserve Spirit & Salt, & yet keep up Delicacy” (EJ&L 3: 238).

In order for their plays to succeed, female dramatists had to find ways to negotiate the difference between their own ambitions and cultural expectations regarding women’s nature and roles. One method was through the careful presentation of a public persona in the prefaces to their published plays.³⁷ Throughout the century, all dramatists —

³⁷ In “Playwrights Remuneration in Eighteenth-Century London,” Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume demonstrate that revenue from published versions of plays was a more significant part of the playwright’s income than was previously supposed. Although theater managers occasionally paid playwrights to delay publication or bought the play outright, produced plays were generally published shortly after the playwright’s benefit, which occurred on the third, sixth, and occasionally ninth nights of a play’s first run. As in the case of actors’ benefits, playwrights’ benefits were usually “house charge” benefits in which the playwright received the evening’s receipts less the house charges. Although playwrights stood to gain more from a benefit than from a published work, benefits were unpredictable; plays’ runs were short (twelve performances at most, usually) and a new play might close before the playwright’s benefit night. Much also depended on the company’s financial health (a play at Drury Lane under Sheridan, for example, was far less profitable than one at Covent Garden under Harris) and on the playwright’s ability to sell tickets to friends. “Prejudice against women playwrights was fierce” and, on average, they fared far worse than men (Milhous and Hume 43-45). For both men and women, selling one’s play to a publisher — who then owned the copyright for fourteen years — or to a theater company, consequently provided the playwright with

regardless of gender — used these prefaces to seek readers' approval of their work. As we have seen, women playwrights like Behn, Centlivre, and Manley used their prefaces to defend their participation in theatrical life. Like these playwrights, mid and late eighteenth-century women dramatists also used their prefaces to create “a sense of a ‘real’ person behind the play and thus contribute importantly to the development of a long-term relationship between the public and the playwright” (Gallagher 15). However, when they did so, the majority of mid and late eighteenth-century professional women dramatists took their cue from Philips's example, actively dramatizing their resemblance to conventional notions of the feminine ideal.

Although financial necessity often motivated women to write plays, publicly acknowledging one's poverty proved an effective way to justify a theatrical career. As Inchbald explains in her preface to Centlivre's Busy Body,

when a man follows the occupation of a woman, or a woman of a man, they are both unpleasing characters, if they are guided in their pursuits *by choice*; but, *if necessity* has ruled their destinies, they are surely the objects of compassion and mercy should be granted to their want of skill in their irregular departments (BT 11, emphasis mine).

According to Inchbald, a woman driven by poverty rather than ambition is still a lady.

Centlivre, she insists, “was driven to the poet's calling by the hardship of her fate”

(preface Busy Body BT 11). Likewise, Sophia Lee alludes to her poverty in her preface

a more secure source of income. Taking into account changes in publication fees and in average benefit remuneration to authors, Milhous and Hume estimate that publication fees for mainpieces between 1714 and 1794 (when the benefit system was discontinued in favor of a flat fee for the first nine nights of a run) amount to one-third of playwrights' total profits (21, 38). See also Shirley Strum Kenny's “The Publication of Plays” in The London Theatre World.

to the Chapter of Accidents when she remarks that “reasons very remote from the state could alone induce me to listen to [Harris’s] proposal” (preface).

Since a woman motivated by professional ambition could not be a lady, many women playwrights represented themselves as lucky amateurs. In preface after preface, women disavow any interest in fame. Frequently they blame their friends for dragging them into the light. Lee, for example, explains that she would have kept her play private had not “[s]ome valuable friends, I had long possessed . . . insisted I should be wanting to myself in consigning [my play] to oblivion, and offered me a recommendation to Mr. Harris” (pref. Chapter of Accidents). Women playwrights also, as we have seen, often downplay their professional talents, crediting managers for their success. Although I have previously argued that such maneuvers were undoubtedly designed to ensure the favor of theater managers, they also serve to point out the playwright’s lack of professional skills. By deflecting credit for a play’s success onto a manager, these prefaces reinforce a prevailing economy of gender in which women are financially dependent on the talents of men.

Women playwrights also conform to conventional notions of womanhood by demonstrating their humility. Griffith, for example, submits The Platonic Wife (1765) “to the candour and clemency of the public after having perhaps, too adventurously hazarded their criticism and censure” (preface). Likewise, Lee writes of her “awe” and “deference” in bringing her tragedy, Almeyda (1796), before the public (preface). Even Hannah More resorts to this “citadel of affectation” when she describes her “Sacred Dramas” (1782) as a “weak and imperfect effort” (Works 1: iii; preface “Sacred

Dramas”).

Many of these apologies were no doubt sincere. As Sophia Lee’s sister, Harriet, explains in her preface to The New Peerage (1787),

the apprehensions that must ever attend a woman on making a first Effort in the Drama become justly heightened when she thinks of committing it to the Press. Precluded by Sex from the deep Observation of Life, which gives Strength to Character, or Poignancy to Expression, it will be difficult, even in her own opinion, to supply the Deficiency; and it is from the Indulgence of the Publick only that she can hope, what she dares not expect from their Judgement (preface).

As this illustrates, eighteenth-century women writers occasionally suffered enormous anxiety regarding their lack of education and experience. However, the passage also demonstrates the way *revealing* this anxiety could assist the woman playwright. Lee, after all, blames the play’s faults on the fact that she conforms to contemporary notions of feminine conduct. Lee’s overt display of humility, then, does more than ask for the reader’s indulgence; it works to reconcile Lee’s status as a professional playwright with her identity as a middle-class “lady.”

Women also use their prefaces to place themselves within a didactic tradition that includes writers of conduct books and religious material. Hannah Cowley, for instance, echoes conduct-book descriptions of womanhood when she states that her purpose, in The Belle’s Strategem (1780) “was to draw female character, which with the most lively sensibility, fine understanding, and elegant accomplishments, should unite that beautiful Reserve and Delicacy, which, whilst they veil those charms, render them still more interesting” (preface). Likewise, Hannah More portrays herself as a didactic writer when she claims that she wrote her Pastoral Drama for Young Ladies in order to “furnish a

substitute for the very improper custom . . . of allowing plays, and those not always of the purest kind, to be acted by young ladies in boarding schools (Works preface 1: n. pag.). Despite her own career as a playwright, More here professes the common suspicion that plays are an immoral influence on young people. Read in light of Gisborne's assertion that women are supposed to form and improve "the general manners, dispositions, and condition of the other sex" and to "[model] the human mind during the early stages of its growth," More's statement of purpose underscores her adherence to conduct-book notions of ideal womanhood (23).

More, of course, was an extremely conservative writer; however, progressive writers like Inchbald also stress the educational purposes of contemporary drama.³⁸

³⁸ Marilyn Butler, Gary Kelly, Claudia Johnson, and Janet Todd have situated More's conservatism within a debate about women's rights which was exacerbated by the French Revolution. Like Jane West (another novelist and playwright), More took it upon herself to reify traditional patriarchal structures, including the family, whose stability seemed threatened by the events in France. Accordingly, Johnson argues that the "novels and conduct books by . . . More and . . . West advance the strictest programs for female subordination and the most repressive standards of female propriety to counteract the influence of progressive ideas about women" (16). While Mitzi Myers's examination of More and Mary Wollstonecraft does not necessarily alter this reading of More's political views, it does warn against creating a simple opposition between reactionary and radical women writers. "The drift of More's explicitly conservative message," she notes, "is toward a liberating reworking of feminine ideology" which advocates "women's capability to define their own sphere" and "their fitness for ethical stewardship" (339). In this sense, she argues, More's work not only differs from many conduct-book writers', but resembles Mary Wollstonecraft's overtly radical advocacy of women's rights (331). Myers also notes that, as "a female crusader," More was "infinitely more successful than Wollstonecraft or any other competitor. She furbishes her goals in palatable form and hones those ideals paid cultural lip service to achieve her own ends, playing within the rules of the game while taking on the substantive reorganization of the male culture's beliefs and values" (339-40). Although Johnson does not agree with Myers's reading of More, her belief that some women writers of the 1790s resorted to masking their radical ideas with conservative tropes in order to advance "modest but distinctly reformist positions about female manners" has resonance with

Comparing Centlivre to Cowley, Inchbald complains that the “happy effect of the moral dramas of [the present] era, in impressing those persons with just sentiments who attend no other place of instruction but a theatre, has not yet erased from the mind of the prejudiced the ill-consequences from former plays” (preface Bold Stroke for a Wife BT 19). Of August von Kotzebue’s The Stranger, she writes, “Mrs. Siddons, in Mrs. Haller . . . speaks in her turn at every married woman; and in pathetic bursts of grief — in looks of overwhelming shame — in words of deep reproach against herself and her seducer — ‘conjures each wife to revere the marriage bond’” (preface BT 19). Read together, Inchbald’s prefaces not only insist that the current theater improves its audience’s morals, but also demonstrate that women who work in the theater are crucial to this endeavor. By writing plays and by acting, Inchbald suggests, women are merely extending their capacity to provide moral guidance in areas outside the home.

Finally, women playwrights occasionally use their prefaces to defend themselves against attacks on their character. Sophia Lee, for example, uses the preface to the Chapter of Accidents to defend herself against charges of plagiarism. Hannah Cowley uses the preface to A School for Greybeards (1786) to counter the charge that she uses indelicate expressions. First, she demonstrates her feminine modesty by noting that “[a]gainst such a charge I feel it impossible to defend myself; for against an imputation like this even *vindication* becomes disgraceful” (preface). Next, she attacks her accusers. She asserts that the printed version of the play contains “EVERY WORD which was

Myers’s claim (22). The progressive import of Inchbald’s work is treated at length in the following chapter.

opposed the first night” and she hopes that “their *obvious* meaning will only be attended to, without the coarse ingenuity of strained expressions; which have been made by persons, who seem desirous to surround my task of dramatic writing with as many difficulties as possible” (preface). Cowley concludes her defense by accusing her audience of ruining the drama. Specifically, she condemns the practice of making assumptions about women playwrights based on the fictional characters the playwrights create. A “celebrated critic,” she argues, “more attended to for the discrimination and learning which appears in his strictures, than for his *lenity*” has praised her for representing “the language of [her] character[s] better than any of her dramatic contemporaries”; however, the audience, she notes, “resolve I shall have not claim” to that praise (preface). “They will allow me . . . to draw strong character,” she explains,

but it must be without speaking its language. I may give vulgar or low bred persons, but they must converse in a stile of elegance. I may design the coarsest manners, or the most disgusting folly, but its expressions must not deviate from the line of politeness. . . . In my case, it seems resolved that the point to be considered is not whether that *dotard*, or that *pretender*, or that *coquette*, would so have given their feelings, but whether Mrs. Cowley ought to so have expressed herself (preface).

Cowley’s frustration is palpable. Her artistic integrity, she complains, is compromised by the assumption that her fictional characters automatically reflect her own quality of mind. Although she may conceive of rough or immoral characters, she must portray them as genteel for fear of personal criticism. Cowley thus points out a problem that haunts all women playwrights. Regardless of its fictional nature, the content of her work is treated as evidence of her personal proclivities.

Obstacles such as these effectively served to limit the extent of women’s incursion

into the male-dominated world of theater production. Although thirty percent of the women who wrote and published novels between 1760 and 1818 were also playwrights, many of their plays were never produced (see Appendix). Only about seven percent of the playwrights produced between 1660 and 1800 were women, and that number dwindles after the close of the century (Donkin Act 1; 31). Donkin blames this decline on women playwrights' success. "As they developed their own momentum and achieved professional status," she argues, "the need for patronage began to atrophy. Ironically, as self-authorized artists, women no longer served any useful purpose" (Act 185). The success of women novelists, was another factor in this decline. By the last third of the century the novel, as a literary form, was far more accommodating to women writers' ambitions. Both Hannah Cowley and Elizabeth Inchbald — the most successful female dramatists of the 1780s and 90s respectively — wax eloquent on the novelist's comparative freedom. Unlike a playwright, "[t]he Novelist," writes Cowley,

may use the boldest tints; — seizing Nature for her guide, she may dart through every rank of society . . . display them in their strongest colours, and snatch immortality both for them and for herself! I, on the contrary, feel encompassed with chains when I write, which check me in my happiest flights, and force me continually to reflect not, whether *this is just?* But whether *this is safe?* (preface School for Greybeards.)

Cowley's primary complaint, as we have seen, centers upon the audience's assumption that the playwrights' characters reflect her own quality of mind. Here, however, she not only suggests that theater audiences are more conservative than novel readers, but also implies that playwrights are more vulnerable to their audiences' judgement than novelists are to their readers'.

Inchbald concurs. “The Novelist,” she argues,

is a free agent. He lives in a land of liberty whilst the Dramatic Writer exists but under a despotic government. — Passing over the subjection in which the author of plays is held by the Lord Chamberlain’s Office, and the degree of dependence he has on his actors — he is the very slave of the audience. He must have their tastes and prejudices in view, not to correct, but to humour them. . . . originality, under the opprobrious name of innovation might be fatal to a drama, where the will of [the audience] is the law and execution immediately follows judgement (“Artist” 16).

Like Cowley, Inchbald complains that the conservatism of theater audiences checks the playwright’s creativity. But Inchbald, unlike Cowley, suggests that the novelist’s comparative freedom also stems from a difference between reading a text and watching a play. In performance, she notes, plays provoke immediate, emotional reactions. To be successful, she remarks, a playwright must shun innovation and avoid criticizing popular beliefs. To do otherwise, she warns, may provoke an audience into condemning a play, thus ending its run. Reading, in contrast, is a private endeavor that forces one to “patiently listen” (“Artist” 16); with few exceptions, a reader’s individual response to a text has no immediate repercussions for the author. As a result, she concludes, the novelist is far less constrained than the playwright. “The mighty and the mean, the common-place and the extraordinary, the profane and the sacred. all are prostrate before [the novelist’s] muse” (“Artist” 19).

Novelists

As these comments suggest, by the end of the century, many women writers regarded the novel as a more accommodating venue for their literary ambitions than the

professional theater. Not only was the novelist free from the tyranny of theater audiences and the Licensing Act, but the mechanics of novel writing proved substantially less threatening to contemporary assumptions about women's nature and roles. Moreover, unlike the drama, the novel, by mid-century, had been divided into two distinct, gendered strands, a move which helped legitimize women novelists' presence in the literary marketplace (Spencer 90; Todd Angellica 141). Compared to female playwrights, women novelists thus had an easier time asserting their adherence to contemporary definitions of female conduct. As a result, women novelists' had a far greater degree of didactic authority, placing them in a unique position from which to comment on ideologically dominant notions of gender.

Compared to plays, writing novels was far more easily reconciled with contemporary strictures concerning feminine modesty. While playwrights had to frequent public places and associate with people of questionable repute, novelists could work at home. Unlike playwrights, novelists could use their male relatives as intermediaries between themselves and their publishers without missing vital opportunities. Novelists who chose to remain anonymous were far less likely to jeopardize the quality of their work or its reception. Although many signed their novels, "by a Lady," others used more creative pseudonyms like "Eugenia De Acton," and "Ellen of Exeter." As anonymous authors, women could publish for profit without appearing to seek public notice.

Writing prefaces also helped women novelists reconcile their professional aspirations with contemporary strictures concerning feminine conduct. Prefaces of novels, like those of plays, provided women authors with the opportunity to establish a

personal relationship with their readers. Like women playwrights, women novelists frequently use these prefaces to represent themselves according to contemporary notions of ideal womanhood. However, as we shall see, the novel proved more far accommodating to this strategy than the theater. Although the theatrical affiliation of many of these novelists begs us to read their prefaces as a kind of theatrical performance, we first need to examine these prefaces at face value, noting where they resemble and differ from those belonging to plays.

Like female dramatists, women novelists used their prefaces to stress their humility and lack of interest in fame. Echoing her preface to The Platonic Wife, for example, Elizabeth Griffith introduces The Delicate Distress (1769) with “infinite timidity and apprehension, as it is a species of writing, which I had never attempted before, from a consciousness of my own deficiency, in that principal article of such compositions, namely invention” (4). Charlotte Lennox — who was also a playwright — writes of the “Dread which a Writer feels of the public Censure . . . which is impressed by the Consciousness of Imbecility” in her dedication to The Female Quixote (1752). Inchbald begins her preface to A Simple Story (1791) by noting that “[i]t has been the destiny of the writer of this story to be occupied through her life, in what has least suited her inclination or capacity” (1). Even Charlotte Smith, already a successful novelist, introduces Desmond (1792) with “that apprehension which an Author is sensible of on first publication” (I).

Unlike plays, novels could be completed at home; as a result, novelists had a much easier time reconciling their literary ambitions with their domestic responsibilities.

“Preface after preface finds the female author writing at the bedside of a dying husband or rocking the cradle of a fatherless child” (Todd Angellica 126). Mary Ann Haney, for example, explains that Elinor (1796) was “begun . . . to draw off her mind from dwelling too poignantly on a recent calamity” and was continued “to amuse the langours of a sick chamber” (ii). Ann Yearsley’s preface to The Royal Captives (1795) speaks of the “clouds that hang over [Yearsley’s] fortunes” (iii), while Inchbald insists that “NECESSITY” not only forced her to act professionally, but is the sole motivation for her literary career (preface SS 1). Charlotte Smith is the most explicit. “It is in the *observance*, not in the *breach* of duty, I became an Author,” she writes, because “the affairs of my family” are “most unhappily in the power of men” who are withholding financial support (Desmond iv-v). Even Mary Brunton, who has no sad story to tell, uses her preface to Self Control (1810) to resolve the disparity between fulfilling her domestic duties and writing a novel. “This little tale,” she modestly notes. “is published that I may reconcile my conscience to the time which it has employed, by making it in some degree useful” (vii). So common were domestic justifications like Brunton’s and Smith’s, that Jane Austen ridicules the convention in her private correspondence: “And how good Mrs. West c^d have written such Books & collected so many hard words with all her family cares, is still more a matter of astonishment! Composition to me seems impossible, with a head full of Joints of Mutton & doses of rhubarb” (JAL 321). For Austen, at least, the successful woman writer who claims that her primary interest is in her household tasks is telling a tale. Compared to actresses and woman playwrights, women novelists appeared far more committed to the home. As a result, they were able to assert a degree of moral

authority in domestic matters impossible for women more directly involved in the professional theater.

The final reason women novelists achieved a greater degree of respectability than their theatrical counterparts is that their work, after mid-century, was more closely associated with the didactic tradition. Much of the credit for this belongs to Samuel Richardson, whose “concentration on female characters and feeling and his exemplary morality” were quickly defined as the “feminine” mode of writing (Spencer 90). As Todd remarks,

[t]he importance of Richardson for the feminine novel cannot be exaggerated although his isolation from what went on before certainly can and has. The moral purpose he gave to the novel was already there in Elizabeth Rowe . . . and Penelope Aubin . . . while the centralising of female consciousness was in Behn and Manley, the exploitation of the epistolary form in Haywood, and the archetypal plot of virtue in distress in all these women. But the combination was new, as was the Puritan moral seriousness of the endeavour which, in the case of Clarissa, lifted the common story out of the merely entertaining into the almost mythic (Angellica 142).

The didactic value Richardson gave to the feminine novel enabled women writers to claim a place in the literary marketplace based on contemporary expectations about their nature and roles. Specifically, the notion that women were men’s moral superiors in domestic matters and were responsible for raising the young, authorized them to educate their readers by illustrating what as Frances Burney defined as “morals in action” (J&L 3: 177).

Initially, at least, the fact that women novelists wrote *fiction*, rather than memoirs or true histories helped them establish their didactic authority. At mid century, notes Gallagher, “the novel still needed to be cleansed of its association of libelous criminality”

as manifested in the work of less respectable women like Behn, Manley and Haywood (278). Nor did the fact that a work was fiction necessarily mean that it was regarded as untrue. If we accept, as Gallagher does, Michael McKeon's argument that the work of mid eighteenth-century novelists manifests an epistemological shift from the notion of "history-as-truth to the idea of truth-as-mimetic-simulation," then "the task for the novelists of the 1750s [was] to convince readers that their characters were truly fictional in order to suppress scandal and facilitate a sentimental response" (164; 278). Henry Fielding's preface to Sarah Fielding's David Simple (1744) illustrates the value mid-century novelists placed on mimetic representation when it praises the novelist for her "*vast Penetration into human Nature*" (5). The "*Incidents*," Fielding remarks, are not only "*natural*," but the "Characters [are] . . . as wonderfully drawn by the Writer, as if they were by *Nature* herself" (5, 7).

Regardless of its instructive value, however, fiction was also entertaining. As it was earlier in the century, fiction's ability to engage its readers' emotions, imaginations, and time continued to be blamed for diverting women from the practical concerns of everyday life. During the last third of the century, this concern was further exacerbated by two related factors. First, the idea of sensibility — in which the body was thought to experience a physical reaction to the affecting in art and in life — became the predominant model of human physiology (a point explored at length in Chapter Two). Emotionally and physically, women were considered more responsive than men. As a result, they were thought especially susceptible to the power of fiction. "The main fear," Todd notes, was that reading novels would cause a "loss of mental and physical chastity

which would ruin marriage chances or prevent the proper fulfillment of domestic duties” (Angellica 145). Contemporary conduct books consequently caution female readers about the novel’s ability to inflame their passions. Herself a staunch advocate of women’s ability to reason, Hester Chapone, for example, admonished her female readers that “[w]hatever romantic notions . . . [you] *read of* . . . those matches that are happiest are made on rational grounds” (174, emphasis mine). Fordyce is even more cautious when he warns of “that fatal poison to virtue, which is conveyed by Profligate and Improper Books” (1: 144).

Although Fordyce is not specific, his insistence that some books are more dangerous than others points to a second, related factor which exacerbated fears about the novel’s effect on its readers. As Spencer explains, “[d]idactic novels and conduct books tended to agree on every point but one: romantic love, disparaged by moralists, was essential to most novels” (186). Two kinds of novels, however, were considered especially dangerous. Extremely popular in the 1760s and 70s, novels of sensibility not only glorified their heroines’ bodily sensations, but actively worked to arouse a corresponding response in their readers. “These novels,” notes Todd, tend to “purvey a common fantasy: of passive femininity sometimes made powerful through death but more usually through the extremely reverential attitude of others towards it” (Angellica 177). Gothic fiction, which blossomed in the late 1780s, also focused on the heroines’ responsiveness; additionally, it took their heroines “into an imaginary world of adventure, and widened the fantasy of female power offered by romance by exploring other kinds of power than the heroine over her adoring lover” (Spencer 192-3). Both kinds of novels

were feared to destroy women's contentment with the realities of their lives. Their popularity helped female sentimental and romantic fiction fall into disrepute. "By the 1790s," Todd remarks, "[h]ardly any person had a good word to say for it and . . . [writers] vied with each other to hurl abuse at the escapist, self-indulgent, immoral fantasy which they believed that the women's novel had become" (Angellica 227). Women who wanted to write respectable fiction consequently resorted to various strategies to insist on the didactic value of their work.

Unlike playwrights, who had no choice but to defend the educational purpose of the drama, late eighteenth-century women novelists often denied that they were writing novels. Sophia Lee, for example, resorted to the well-worn convention of calling herself an editor. The Recess, she claimed, was actually a translation of an obsolete manuscript. Although she can not, she admits, prove that the events in the manuscript really occurred, she argues that "a wonderful coincidence of events stamps the narration at least with probability" (preface)

Others likened themselves to biographers. The hero of The History of George Ellison (1766), Sarah Scott claims, is based on a real person "to whom I have given the name Ellison" (3). So is the heroine of Self Control. While Brunton acknowledges that her portrait of Laura is "indebted to fancy" for her "drapery" and attitudes, she nevertheless insists that "I have had the happiness of witnessing, in real life, a self-command operating with as much force, permanence, and uniformity, as that which is depicted in the following volumes" (ix-x). Elizabeth Griffith is even more adamant about the status of The Delicate Distress. "[T]he stories and incidents . . . did . . . certainly

happen, in the various contingencies of real life,” she explains; thus “NOVEL READERS may . . . be disappointed in not meeting with any extraordinary adventure or uncommon situation” (4).

Some novelists admit that their work is fiction, but insist on the educational value of truth-as-mimesis. Like Griffith, these writers tend to defend the quality of their work by denigrating what they consider to be “typical” novels. Mary Ann Hanway does so when she differentiates Ellinor (1798) from gothic romances. Ellinor, she remarks was drawn

from life and truth guided the pencil; having long been convinced that the most baneful consequences must result in the rising generation from reading those monstrous productions that for some years past, have issued from the press, the creation of romantic visionaries, forming a junction between valourous knights and goblins dire; to aid which, charnel houses have given up their dead — monks have become devils, and devils assumed the form of yielding beauty. By those artful, seductive, inflated descriptions, the young and susceptible heart is tempted to tread the flowery mazes of *vice*, while the timid imagination is terrified by demonic incantations! (iii-iv).

Unlike gothic romances, Hanway explains, Ellinor was written in the hopes that her “fair country-women” may gain “some information and instruction . . . by a sketch of *The World as it is*” (ii). Hanway thus insists on the instructional value of realistic representation. So does Burney, who remarks in her preface to Evelina (1777) that “all attempts to contribute to the number of [novels] which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury, ought rather to be encouraged than contemned” (5). Like Hanway, Burney contrasts the educational value of her work to the novel, as popularly defined. Her low opinion of the novel is made abundantly clear when she notes her reluctance to call Camilla (1796) a “*Novel*; it gives so simply the notion of a mere

love story, that I recoil a little from it” (J&L 3: 117). Although Burney’s comment may indicate her disapproval of novels, a close reading suggests that her concern actually stems from the way the term “novel” was figured in the public’s imagination. The word “Novel,” she adds, “was long in the way of” Cecilia (1782); “it was not permitted to be read by the Princesses, till it was sanctioned by a Bishop’s recommendation” (J&L 3: 177).³⁹

By the early 1800s, however, the strategies of women began to alter; instead of distancing themselves from other novelists, many defend the didactic value of the genre as a whole. Writing in 1811, Mary Brunton insists that “a work of fiction is not necessarily unprofitable to . . . readers. When the vitiated appetite refuses its proper food, the alternative may be administered in a sweetmeat” (Self Control viii). Even Burney defends novels when, in her preface to The Wanderer (1814), she commands her readers to

[d]ivest, for a moment, the title of Novel and say! What is the species of writing that offers fairer opportunities for conveying useful precepts? It is, or ought to be, a picture of supposed, but natural and probable human existence. It holds, therefore, in its hands, our best affections; it exercises our imaginations; it points out the path of honour; and gives to juvenile credulity knowledge of the world, without ruin or repentance; and the lessons of experience without its tears (7).

In contrast to the preface of Evelina, Burney here works to redefine the genre as a whole. Good novels, she claims, are realistic portraits of human life which teach without inflicting real injury. Novels, she concludes, have been unfairly maligned.

And is not a Novel . . . in common with every other literary work, entitled to

³⁹ From 1786 to 1791 Burney lived at court where she was Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte.

receive its stamp as useful, mischievous, or nugatory, from its execution? Not necessarily in its changeless state to be branded as a mere vehicle for frivolous or seductive amusement? If many turn aside from all but mere entertainment presented under this form, many also, may unconsciously, be allured by it into reading the severest truths, who would not even open any work of graver denomination (7).

Like Brunton, Burney specifically addresses those who criticize the novel for engaging readers' emotions, attention, and time. Instead, she argues, the novel's power to entertain is what makes it a perfect vehicle for educating readers.

The most eloquent defense of the novel appears in Northanger Abbey (1818), where Austen takes issue with novelists like Griffith, Hanway, and the early Burney for "degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding" (58).⁴⁰ Unlike Brunton and Burney, Austen does not explicitly define the didactic value of novels. Instead, she subtly dismantles the equation between the novel's ability to entertain and its power to corrupt readers' morals. "Our products have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than any other literary corporation in the world" she writes. However, "[f]rom pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers" (58). With typical precision, Austen's language undermines her opponents' authority. She implies that those who deny reading novels yet proudly produce The Spectator with its "improbable circumstances, unnatural characters. [old-fashioned, irrelevant] topics . . . and . . . language frequently coarse" are either fools

⁴⁰ Originally entitled Susan, Northanger Abbey is Austen's earliest mature novel (early versions of Sense and Sensibility (1811) and Pride and Prejudice (1813) probably predate its composition but Austen drastically revised both novels before their publication). In 1803 Austen sold Susan to the publisher Crosby & Co. where it remained, unpublished, for six years. Austen eventually bought back the copyright and the novel was published posthumously with Persuasion (1816) in 1818.

or hypocrites. The novel, she insists, is a respectable genre which edifies and entertains the discerning reader.⁴¹

...

Perhaps because scholars tend to specialize in one genre, the fact that many mid- and late eighteenth-century women writers wrote both plays and novels has largely gone unrecognized.⁴² Nevertheless, evidence of women novelists' involvement in the professional theater throughout the century is abundant. After cross-referencing Gary

⁴¹ Although both Austen and Brunton defend the novel as a genre, Austen would not have included Brunton in her list of aesthetically accomplished novelists. Self-Control, she believed was "an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it. I declare I do not know whether Laura's passage down the American river is not the most natural, possible, every-day thing she ever does" (JAL 234). Austen also uses Brunton's novel to make fun of a gentleman's taste after he found fault with her own work: "I will redeem my credit with him," she declares, "by writing a close Imitation of 'Self-Control' as I can; — I will improve upon it; — my Heroine shall not merely be wafted down an American river in a boat by herself, she shall cross the Atlantic in the same way, & never stop till she reaches Gravesen[d]" (NA 9).

⁴² This omission is surprising given the attention paid to the theatrical experience of women writers during the Restoration and the early part of the eighteenth century. Although some studies of individual writers like Margaret Doody's Frances Burney, the Life in the Works and Gary Kelly's chapter on Elizabeth Inchbald in English Jacobin Novelists discuss the novelist's work in light of her involvement in the theater, most survey's of mid and late eighteenth-century British women novelists either ignore, or skim over women novelists' theatrical experience. An important exception is Judith Phillip Stanton's "Statistical Profile of Women Writing in English, 1660-1800." Stanton lists 157 women novelists and 48 women playwrights writing between 1760 and 1800. Stanton does not list individual authors so there is no way to tell how many of the novelists she cites were also playwrights. Stanton, however, does note that about half the novelists and two-thirds of the playwrights wrote in other genres in this essay and in "'This New-Found Path Attempting': Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800" (251-2). Jane Spener, Dale Spender (Living By the Pen), Janet Todd (Angellica), and Cheryl Turner also note that many mid and late eighteenth-century women novelists were involved in the theater. However, none of the four explore the ramifications of this connection on the novels of the period.

Kelly's list of Romantic Women Dramatists, 1790-1830, the Index to the London Stage. Allardyce Nicoll's Hand-List of Plays from volumes one through four of A History of British Drama, Dale Spender's list of women writers in Mothers of the Novel, and Cheryl Turner's list of British women novelists in Living By the Pen, I have found that 72 of the 188 women novelists published between 1660 and 1818, were playwrights and/or actresses or closely associated with some one who worked in the professional theater. Fifty four of these women published after 1760. Private theatricals were extremely popular during the century and women as different as Jane Austen and Viscountess Craven, the Margravine of Anspach, wrote for and acted in these productions.⁴³ Finally, if we take into account regular theater attendance in and outside of London, as well as access to strolling companies of players, the number of women who had contact with some kind of theatrical activity further increases.⁴⁴

⁴³ The term "private theatricals" encompasses a various types of productions including expensively produced plays at aristocrats' private theaters, intimate performances mounted by families like the Burneys and Austens, activities at private clubs, school productions, and military theatricals. Although plays had been staged for private amusement well before the 1750s, the interest in private theatricals became a veritable mania during the 1780s and 90s. See Evelyn Howe's "Amateur Theatre in Georgian England"; chapter one of Wilhelmina Q. Ramas's unpublished dissertation, "Private Theatricals of the Upper Classes in Eighteenth-Century England"; Sybil Rosenfeld's "Jane Austen and Private Theatricals" and Temples of Thespis; some private theatres and theatricals in England and Wales, 1700-1820 for an overview of the type of amateur performances popular in eighteenth-century Britain.

⁴⁴ Theater attendance is difficult to ascertain. Charles Beecher Hogan estimates in the preface to volume 5 of The London Stage that, in a city of approximately 900,000, the average of nightly attendance in London at the end of the century was about 1,500. William Pedicord, however, notes that the enlargement of Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the 1790s increased daily capacity above 6,600 (251). "This raised the potential weekly audience to 4.4 percent (up from 3.2 percent in the 1780s) (251-2). These estimates, however, do not consider suburban playhouses or the fact that almost

Many women novelists actually began their careers as professional actresses or playwrights. Some were members of theatrical families. Colley Cibber's daughter, Charlotte Charke, for example, began her varied career with her debut as Mademoiselle in The Provok'd Wife at Drury Lane in 1730 (BD 3: 167).⁴⁵ The daughter of an Irish actor, Elizabeth Griffith debuted as Juliet on October 13, 1749 at the Smock Alley Theater in Dublin (BD 6: 374). Frances Sheridan's husband, Thomas, played Romeo.⁴⁶ Harriet and Sophia Lee were the daughters of the actor and playwright John Lee; their mother, an actress, died while they were young. The Lees had five daughters and one of three — Harriet, Sophia, or a sister born between the two — played Cordelia on March 23, 1776 at their father's benefit (BD 9:195).

Others were infatuated with the theater from an early age. Elizabeth Inchbald's family were enthusiastic theatergoers; by the time she was seventeen, her brother, George, had already joined the theater company at Bury and Inchbald herself had developed a serious, but unrequited crush on Elizabeth Griffith's brother, Richard, who managed the theater at Norwich. Amelia Opie never acted professionally; however, she gave dramatic recitations while still a child. She herself played the heroine in a tragedy she wrote called

every city, by the end of the century, had at least one theater. Especially during the summer months, strolling companies of players mounted productions in smaller towns. See Rosenfeld's Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces, 1660-1795.

⁴⁵ Colley Cibber was then one of the managers of Drury Lane. Theophilus was in the company as was Susanna Cibber. As she describes in her autobiography, Charke's career included several jobs in which she lived and worked disguised as man.

⁴⁶ Frances and Thomas Sheridan had five children, one of whom became the dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan who assumed management of Drury Lane after Garrick retired.

‘Adelaide,’ which was acted for the amusement of her friends, when she was about eighteen (DNB 14: 1121). Frances Brooke’s primary ambition was to write plays. Prior to her first novel, The History of Julia Mandeville, Brooke wrote two plays which remained unproduced. Despite her success as a novelist, Brooke continued to write for the stage. In 1773, “she and the actress Mary Ann Yates jointly assumed the management of the King’s Theatre in the Haymarket” where they mounted several successful seasons of ballet and opera (DLB 39: 70). Meanwhile, in The Excursion (1777) – whose heroine is a playwright – Brooke lampooned Garrick “as a man who rejects the plays of aspiring dramatists without even glancing over their work” (DLB 39: 70).⁴⁷ Brooke finally achieved theatrical success in the 1780s with the performance of her tragedy, The Siege of Sinope (1781). Two comic operas, Rosina (1782) and Marian (1788) were also well-received.

Like other novelists, many women who began their careers in the theater came from impoverished families. Sophia Lee, for example, wrote the first part of The Chapter of Accidents while in prison with her father, who was convicted, she notes, “by the perjury of an enemy and the injustice of a judge” (preface). Mary Robinson’s father, a sea captain, returned to England after two years’ absence, penniless and accompanied by a mistress. “He spurned his wife, over-saw the selling-up of his house and possessions, and sailed again for America” (BD 13: 31). Although Mary and her mother opened their own school for a time, the return of her father, “who found his pride was wounded by the

⁴⁷ For a detailed account of the relationship between Brooke and Garrick see Chapter 2 of Donkin’s Getting Into the Act.

idea of a working wife,” forced them to abandon their project (BD 13: 31). For Robinson, as for Inchbald — who lacked a dowry — acting was a glamorous and potentially lucrative alternative to other kinds of labor.

Others acted or wrote plays to support their husbands and children. Already a published poet, Charlotte Lennox tried acting after her marriage to Alexander Lennox in 1747 (DLB 39: 307). A “disastrous failure . . . [she] then turned to writing novels” (DLB 39: 308). Although Elizabeth Villa-Real “was left an heiress following her father’s death, an unhappy arranged marriage to William Gooch “resulted in her abandonment in France, where she attempted to survive on a dwindling annuity” (Turner 61). In 1787, while imprisoned for debt in England, Gooch “began to write about her experiences to earn her release” (Todd Dictionary 137). Gooch is known primarily for her writing, but a Mrs. William Gooch was also acting, both in and outside of London (BD 6: 349).⁴⁸ These two women are probably one and the same. Eliza Fenwick began writing after she separated from her alcoholic husband, producing a novel, children’s stories, and translations of stage pieces for print (Grundy 13).⁴⁹ Hannah Cowley’s marriage seems to have been a happy one; however her letters “leave little doubt that [she] began writing to supplement the modest income of her husband, who made fifty pounds per year in a

⁴⁸ Gooch’s acting career is not mentioned in neither Janet Todd’s Dictionary of British and American Women Writers or Cheryl Turner’s Living By the Pen. Conversely, Highfill does not mention Gooch’s career as a writer in the Biographical Dictionary of Actors and Actresses.

⁴⁹ Fenwick’s daughter, Eliza Anne, who began her acting career in private theatricals, was, by 1811, a professional in the Drury Lane company. See Grundy’s introduction to Secresy and the entry for Fenwick in Janet Todd’s Dictionary of British and American Women Writers.

stamp office and an additional fifty pounds writing dramatic reviews for a newspaper” (East 67-8). The mother of two small children, Elizabeth Griffith was also married when she began to write for a living (DLB 39: 248). Anne Yearsley’s husband was an illiterate worker; however, Yearsley earned enough money from her poems, plays, and novel to open and operate a circulating library at the Colonnade, Hot Wells, Bristol (DNB 21: 1225).

Although the vast majority of women novelists involved with the theater began as playwrights or actresses, others turned to the stage later in their literary careers. Elizabeth Blower, for example, was already the author of two novels, The Parsonage House (1780) and George Bateman (1782) before becoming an actress. Harriet Lee published a novel called The Errors of Innocence (1786) before writing a play, The New Peerage, in 1787. Eliza Parsons already had written The History of Miss Meredith (1790) when The Intrigues of a Morning debuted at Covent Garden in 1792. Likewise, Eliza Helme, Maria Edgeworth, Margaret Holford, Sidney Owenson (Lady Morgan), Anne Plumptre, Ann Radcliffe, Frances Sheridan, and Charlotte Smith all published novels before they began to write for the stage.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Between the publication of her second novel, The Rector’s Son (1798) and her third, Something New ((1801), Plumptre translated seven of August von Kotzebue’s plays for the English stage: The Count of Burgundy (1798); The Natural Son (1798); The Force of Calumny (1799); La-Peyrouse (1799); The Virgin of the Sun (1799); The Horse and the Widow (1799); and Pizarro (1799). During this time she also published a translation of Kotzebue’s autobiography, his miscellaneous writings, and translations of three works by other authors (McLeod xiv). Plumptre’s The Natural Son, which was never produced, thus appeared at the same time as Elizabeth Inchbald’s translation of the same play — Das Kind der Liebe (1788) — which premiered at Covent Garden on October 11, 1798 as Lovers’ Vows.

While some women eventually gave up one of their careers, a large number managed to juggle their various occupations. Elizabeth Inchbald, for example, continued to act until 1789, several years after establishing herself as a successful playwright. After the success of A Simple Story (1791) she produced one more novel as well as several plays and a substantial body of criticism. Lady Dorothea Dubois, whose father renounced his marriage, declared her illegitimate, and left her penniless, wrote both a play and a novel in 1770. Jane West was proficient in so many genres that, in the course of her career, she wrote three novels, several volumes of poetry, a comedy and two tragedies, two conduct books, a translation, and a volume of scriptural translations (Todd Dictionary 319-20).

While many women novelists were directly involved in the theater, others were related to people close to the stage. Sarah Fielding's brother, Henry, not only began his career as a playwright, but managed the Little Theatre in the Haymarket between 1736 and 1737 (BD 5:253). The novelist Sarah Harriet Burney was Frances Burney's half-sister. Eliza Fenwick's daughter was an actress. In addition to writing novels, Susannah Gunning's daughter, Elizabeth, also translated a play. The novelist Eliza Mathews was married to Charles Mathews, an actor. Frances Sheridan, a novelist and playwright, was married to the actor Thomas Sheridan, who also managed the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. In addition to her novel, The Shrine of Bertha (1794), Maria Elizabeth Robinson also wrote a biography about her mother, Mary Robinson.

There was also a great deal of cross-fertilization between Britain's literary and theatrical worlds. Sarah Fielding collaborated with Jane Collier and Sarah Scott. Collier

knew Henry Fielding and Scott may have as well. Anne S. Damer, a sculptor and novelist, produced an amateur production of Mary Berry's play, The Fashionable Friends. Amelia Alderson was courted by the actor and writer Thomas Holcroft, a close friend of Inchbald's, before marrying the painter, John Opie. Elizabeth Fenwick, Mary Hays, Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Opie, Mary Robinson, and Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft all knew one another.⁵¹ Although she herself was neither an actress nor playwright, Williams conducted a series of interviews with Dora Jordan during the last two years of the actress's life.⁵² In addition to her friendship with the Opies and Williams, Anne Plumptre met Sidney Owenson, Lady Morgan, a novelist and playwright, during a visit to Ireland in 1814 (McLeod xi). Although they never met, Mary Brunton dedicated Self Control to Joanna Baillie after reading the dramatist's Plays on the Passions. Other women, like Mary Berry, Elizabeth Inchbald, Hester Piozzi, and Sarah Siddons also admired Baillie's work, commending her creation of female characters "whose independence of spirit they could admire" (Burroughs 116).⁵³ Frances Burney, Hannah Cowley, and Hannah More were all close friend's of David Garrick's. Maria

⁵¹ Wollstonecraft herself was the author of an unpublished play. According to Claire Tomalin, Wollstonecraft wrote an autobiographical comedy which was rejected by two different producers. Godwin later destroyed the manuscript (Life 237). While Fenwick, Hays, Opie, and Williams regarded Wollstonecraft as a friend, Inchbald was severely critical of Wollstonecraft's liaisons with Gilbert Imlay and William Godwin.

⁵² The interviews appear in certain editions of an anonymously written memoir called The Great Illegitimates, or the Public and Private Life of that Celebrated Actress, Miss Bland, otherwise Mrs. Ford, or, Mrs. Jordan, Late Mistress of H.R.H. the D. of Clarence, now King William IV (Burroughs 59, 193; Tomalin Mrs. Jordan 382).

⁵³ Also see Donkin, Act (164-165).

Edgeworth and Elizabeth Inchbald admired each other's work and corresponded for many years. Austen, as we have seen, respected both Burney and Edgeworth. She was familiar with Inchbald's play, Lovers' Vows, which figures in Mansfield Park (1814) (See Chapter Four). The small sample above only begins to suggest the great extent to which women novelists associated with people involved in the theater.

...

As we have seen, actresses and female playwrights embodied a more complex model of female nature than that found in conduct material. Through the roles they assumed and the parts that they wrote, women involved in the theater contradicted the notion that a lady's appearance and demeanor were the direct reflections of her quality of mind. These women knew from experience that acting – and writing – like a lady meant performing a role. Women novelists who were connected to the theater knew this as well. Like playwrights, they used their prefaces to stress their modesty, lament their poverty, and insist upon their didactic intentions. Yet considered in light of both their theatrical experience and their representation of gender in novels, their prefaces suggest that these women may have been self-consciously representing themselves in accordance with ideologically dominant assumptions about women.

Like actress's roles, novelists' prefaces tend to depict their authors as conventionally feminine. But just as the actress's performance encompasses a division, or split, between the actress and her part, writing a preface involves a division between the author and the woman-as-novelist who appears on the page. Certainly Elizabeth

Griffith's decision to present herself as a moral writer appears to be a self-consciously theatrical decision in light of her friendships with "flamboyant actresses like Kitty Clive and Peg Woffington" (Todd Angelica 127). Charlotte Lennox's apparent timidity in the dedication to the Female Quixote also seems suspect when one takes into account her early career as an actress. So does Elizabeth Inchbald's claim to dislike acting and writing given her avid pursuit of a theatrical career (see Chapter Two). In the preface to her collected works, Hannah More questions the woman writer's apparent lack of interest in fame. "Desire of Friends," she complains, "is now become a proverbial satire; the poet is driven from that once creditable refuge, behind which an unfounded eagerness [to be] in print used to shelter itself" (Works 1: iii). Although More herself sincerely believed that women ought to conform to conduct-book models of feminine conduct, here she nevertheless suggests the theatrical nature of women writers' efforts at self-representation.

While the vast majority of authors strive to conceal the dramatic impulse behind their introductory self-portraits, two striking exceptions actually call attention to their prefaces' theatrical nature. The poems that preface Charlotte Smith's Emmeline (1788) and Anne Plumptre's novel, Something New (1801) are designed to resemble prologues to plays. Like theatrical prologues, which were intended to cajole the audience into a pleasant state of mind from which to enjoy the play, both prefaces attempt to win over their readers. As in her other, less dramatic prefaces, Charlotte Smith does so by working on her readers' sympathies. The author, we learn, is: "O'erwhelm'd with sorrow — and sustaining long/ 'The proud man's contumely, the oppressor's wrong'" (1-2). She

declares herself “robb’d . . . of all that Fortune gave,/Of every hope — but shelter in the grave”; however, she continues to “dress the cave of Care with Fancy’s flowers” in order to support her children (5-6, 8). “Maternal love,” she explains, is what guides her hand (9).

Anne Plumptre’s preface reads like the prologue to a late eighteenth-century comedy. After noting that all heroines in novels are beautiful, Plumptre challenges the primacy of this convention.

But shall our breasts, by love of freedom warm’d,
Still bow to laws by Despotism form’d?
When from the civil throne, where long the world
She rul’d at will, we see the monster hurl’d;
Shall Learning’s sons still at her alter bend?
No, we’ll the RIGHTS OF AUTHORS here defend,
And in these pages place before your view
An UGLY heroine — Is’t not SOMETHING NEW?

Writing in the tradition of dramatists like George Colman and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Plumptre recounts British virtues in order to gain her readers’ support. However, Plumptre does so in order to garner enthusiasm for a novel that calls into question contemporary notions of what a heroine should be. Like the authors considered in the following chapters, Plumptre consequently uses theatrical techniques in order to destabilize conventional notions of women’s nature and roles.

Inadvertently, perhaps, Plumptre and Smith also call into question the authenticity of their own self-representations. When performed in a theater, prologues, like epilogues, require performers to step out of the frame of the drama in order to address the audience directly. Unless the piece requires that the performer stay in character, prologues and

epilogues consequently dramatize the difference between the performer who speaks the piece and the role he or she performs in the play. Overtly, of course, prologues and epilogues thus create the illusion that the performers addressing the audience are doing so as “themselves.” At the same time, however, every eighteenth-century theatergoer knew that these pieces were scripted. Although the actor or actress speaking the piece might not seem to be playing any particular part, the audience consequently knew that he or she was still, to some degree, acting. Plumptre and Smith’s prefaces create a similar kind of confusion. On one level, they seem to reveal the authors as themselves. On another, however, their clearly dramatic nature calls the authenticity of that revelation into question, transforming the writer’s self-presentation into something resembling a theatrical performance.

The theatrical nature of women novelists’ self-representation becomes even more apparent when one looks at their fiction. Many mid- and late eighteenth-century women novelists connected to the stage created heroines and plots which overtly reinforce conduct-book definitions of the feminine ideal. In contrast to fiction by openly radical writers like Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft, these novels create the impression that their authors are ladies. At the same time, however, many of these novels also contain theatrical images and tropes which subtly undermine the images of womanhood they seem to uphold. In the following chapters I examine the work of Elizabeth Inchbald, Frances Burney, and Jane Austen in detail. As we shall see, their use of theatrical images and practices effectively complicates ideologically dominant assumptions about gender. In various ways, these three novelists dramatize the theatrical nature of everyday life. By

dismantling oppositions between ladies and actresses, Inchbald, Burney, and Austen all pose the question: “what does it really mean to *act* like a lady?”

Chapter Two

“Those ‘Simple Signs’”: Elizabeth Inchbald and

The Performance of Emotion

In an oft-quoted letter to Elizabeth Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth analyzed the emotional impact of A Simple Story. “I am of the opinion,” she writes,

that it is by leaving more than most other writers to the imagination that you succeed so eminently in affecting it. By the force it is necessary to repress feeling we judge of the intensity of that feeling and you always contrive to give us by intelligible but simple signs the measure of this force (Boaden Inchbald 2:152-53).

Edgeworth’s opinion about the power of silence and “simple signs” draws our attention to the way in which Inchbald dramatizes her characters’ emotions through their bodies, a technique that points to an important connection between many eighteenth-century novels and the eighteenth-century stage. As critics like Michael Fried and Alan McKenzie have noted, novelists were profoundly influenced by non-literary modes of representation, including painting and theatrical performance.⁵⁴ Like her peers, Inchbald came of age at a time when these sister arts had trained audiences to recognize that every emotion “had its . . . recognized manifestation in outward behavior” (Donohue Kean 68).⁵⁵ While all of

⁵⁴ Michael Fried, Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot; Alan T. McKenzie, Certain Lively Episodes: The Articulation of Passion in Eighteenth-Century Prose. See Martin Meisel’s Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England; Janet Todd’s Sensibility: An Introduction, and Edgar Wind’s Hume and the Heroic Portrait: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Imagery.

⁵⁵ Scholars have differentiated between acting styles popular during the century. See Lily Campbell’s “The Rise of a Theory of Stage Presentation In England during the Eighteenth Century” and Alan Downer’s “Nature to Advantage Dressed: Eighteenth-Century Acting.” In The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of Eighteenth-Century Acting and Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age, Dene

the period's writers were influenced by this cross-fertilization to some degree, those most obviously affected were those like Inchbald who began their careers upon the stage. In her plays, novels and criticism, Inchbald repeatedly demonstrates that people's bodies express emotions more authentically and persuasively than their words alone. This chapter looks at the way in which her knowledge of a widely recognized system of theatrical gesture manifests itself in her criticism and fiction. In Inchbald's case, an examination of gestures in her novels and plays shows that her theatrical imagination helped her to criticize contemporary notions of gender and power in ways that would have resonated with eighteenth-century audiences and readers.

Inchbald's Theatrical Experience

Despite Inchbald's claim, in the preface to *A Simple Story*, that she disliked acting and writing, evidence suggests that she was drawn to the theater from an early

Barnett and Joseph Donohue respectively argue for a more unified view of the period. Barnett demonstrates that the meaning attached to particular gestures remained consistent throughout the century. Donohue argues that Garrick, Kemble, and Kean, despite differences in style, all belong to a romantic school of acting. For the argument for differences in acting styles in the period see Aaron Hill's "Essay on the Art of Acting," (1753) and John Hill's "The Actor; or, a treatise on the art of playing" (1750). Aaron Hill argues that actors should emulate the outward signs of the passions, which will then cause the actor to experience the actual emotion; John Hill argues that actors are incapable of emulating feelings they lack. Translated into French as *Garrick ou les acteurs anglais* (1769), John Hill's book provoked Denis Diderot's *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1773), which argues that great actors remain emotionally detached from their roles. The Hills' work, and Diderot's are discussed at length in Chapter Three of this dissertation, pp...

age.⁵⁶ Inchbald was born in 1753. Her parents were, “substantial farmers and Roman Catholics, part of a considerable society of yeomen and gentry of that faith in the locality” (BD 8: 78). The Simpsons’ farm in the village of Standingfield was five miles away from the town of Bury St. Edmonds, host to Bury Fair and the Bury theater. The more famous theater at Norwich was forty miles away. The Simpson family were avid theatergoers. As a child and a young woman, Inchbald attended the theater often. After John Simpson’s death in 1771, Mrs. Simpson continued to visit the theater in Bury and in Norwich in the company of her children. In 1770, Elizabeth’s brother George joined the Bury company and, Boaden notes, he rehearsed his parts at home for his family when he came to visit. Elizabeth was also allowed to attend rehearsals. Meanwhile, she developed a serious, though unrequited crush on Elizabeth Griffith’s brother, Richard, who managed the Norwich theater.

Reading plays formed a significant part of Inchbald’s early education. While the two Simpson boys were sent off to school, Elizabeth and at least two of her six sisters, learned to read and write at home. Inchbald had a speech impediment that caused her to stammer and Boaden speculates that it encouraged her to be a solitary child who relied on

⁵⁶ Unless otherwise noted, biographical material is based on James Boaden. Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald. A friend of Inchbald’s, Boaden had access to her papers, most of which were later lost or destroyed. For her PhD dissertation, “A Feeling Mind: The Early Career of Elizabeth Inchbald, 1753-1821,” Cecilia Macheski located half a dozen Inchbald pocket memorandum books at the Folger Library. Roger Manvell’s biography, Elizabeth Inchbald: England’s Principal Woman Dramatist and Independent focuses on her literary career. Also see Samuel Littlewood, Elizabeth Inchbald and Her Circle. Important shorter pieces include Gary Kelly’s chapter on Inchbald in The English Jacobin Novel: 1780-1820 and Katherine Rogers’s “Britain’s First Woman Drama Critic: Elizabeth Inchbald,” in Schofield and Macheski’s Curtain Calls.

reading and writing for companionship (1: 7). “Reading seems to have been a common resource,” Boaden remarks, “and we find that the readings were commonly dramatic” (1: 10). At some point, Inchbald discovered that the measured style of theatrical declamation then in vogue on the stage helped her to control her stammer. “[B]eing a raised and artificial thing,” stage declamation “afforded more time for enunciation” (Boaden 1: 7). Inchbald’s determination to act was apparently connected to her desire to speak without impediment.

By the time she was sixteen, Inchbald was clearly interested in pursuing a career as an actress. While her interest in Griffith and her love of the theater were factors in her decisions, another motive was money. The Simpsons’ limited means restricted her options. For women of Inchbald’s class, marriage more often than not

was a business partnership — the wife’s portion was often the means of setting her husband up as a master. It was only the well-to-do shopkeeper’s wife whose dowry had been a large one who was considered entitled to be relieved from the obligation of work in house or shop (George 168).

Without a large dowry, Inchbald had very little chance of marrying a man who could afford to support her; eventually she would need to earn her own living.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Over the past several years, scholars of women’s history have called into question traditional suppositions about women and work in eighteenth-century England. Drawing on the work of Peter Earle, Olwen Hufton, Richard Wall, and on her own research on women in the printing trades, Hannah Barker concludes, “it is clear that industrialization in England was a gradual process that began long before the supposed watershed of the late eighteenth century, and that throughout the eighteenth century as a whole, the British economy was far more industrial than was once thought. In this context, the image of women working solely within the domestic setting in the period before the industrial revolution is likely to be a distortion. It seems probably that throughout the century, substantial numbers of women, whether single or married, went out of the home to work for wages” (“Women” 84).

For a woman alone, however, supporting oneself was a difficult proposition. Adequate training was rare. Women often received “a limited education which made them literate but did not train them in cheese making, bookbinding, or a host of other possible areas of paid employment” (Turner 69). Women who worked in the printing trade, for example, tended to concentrate on the retail rather than on the manufacture of books (Barker 89). Teaching was “an important source of female employment in eighteenth-century England,” but opening one’s own school required a significant investment of capital and a substantial amount of risk.⁵⁸ In all fields of employment, women who lacked

a portion or another source of finance, faced the difficulty of acquiring the initial capital necessary to buy an apprenticeship, or to purchase or rent suitable premises and equipment. Once established, they required sufficient working capital and business acumen to survive in the face of competition (Turner 69).

Inchbald lacked both money and training. Trades open to women paid considerably less

⁵⁸ See Susan Skedd, “Women Teachers and the Expansion of Girls Schooling in England, 1760-1820.” There are no census statistics for female occupations between 1760 and 1820. According to the table of female occupations compiled by Ivy Pinchbeck from the census of 1841, teaching was the fifth most common occupation after domestic service (712,493), cotton manufacture (115,425), dressmaking and millinery (89,079) and agricultural labour (35,262) (Skedd 103). Although operating a successful school was a means by which some women were able to achieve financial independence, many schools failed. Of the women mentioned in this dissertation, Hannah More and the Lee sisters owned and operated successful schools. Mary Wollstonecraft was less fortunate. Wollstonecraft, Susan Skedd notes, was “not alone among schoolmistresses in her failure to find enough pupils to make the school viable” but adds that she was “particularly handicapped by her ignorance of the practicalities of running a school and by her inexperience in teaching” (111). Mary Robinson’s mother, Mrs. Darby, also opened a school, and appointed fourteen-year-old Mary as English teacher. However, just as the school seemed to be on the verge of success, Mrs. Darby’s absent husband returned and demanded that she close the school.

than those open only to men. Although it is difficult to generalize about wages, M. Dorothy George concludes that a male laborer's wages, before 1765, "varied from 9s to 12s a week" (164). The wages of an artisan without his own shop "in the less well-paid trades were then from 12s to 14s or 15s" (164). In women's trades, workers made less and were often subjected to sweatshop conditions. Until the end of the century, for example, women weavers faced considerable opposition from the male weavers while the female silk winders and throwsters were "the poorest of the poor" (George 183). As Richard Connors notes, over 80 per cent of those classed as poor in mid eighteenth-century England were women (127). Prostitution — as the fate of Inchbald's own sister Debbie proves — was sometimes the only means by which an undertrained and underpaid woman could avoid starvation.

Given her options, acting was a promising and potentially lucrative source of income for Inchbald. In contrast to artisans, actors made significant gains throughout the century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, some actors "were earning about five times as much as artisans and laborers" (Macheski "Feeling Mind" 80).⁵⁹ One must, however, keep in mind that variations between articles of agreement and the status of different actors make it difficult to draw generalizations about actors' salaries. There was

⁵⁹ Working with figures from M. Dorothy George's London Life in the Eighteenth Century, concludes that "the average yearly income per family provided 1803 for artisans and laborers with between four and five persons per family was about 55 pounds . . . similar statistics calculated for 1688, when the equivalent was about 40 pounds suggests that income for a member of the artisan class rose at a modest rate" ("Feeling Mind" 80). See also, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 and Cheryl Turner, Living By the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth-Century.

a “vast disparity in salaries between the top and bottom; players in the highest rank — some paylists show four ranks — did very well indeed [while] poor players at the bottom must have had trouble just surviving” (Langhans “Tough Actresses” 4). Inchbald, however, was determined to succeed as an actress. In 1770, the seventeen-year-old Inchbald secretly applied for a position in Griffith’s company and was rejected by letter. In 1772, she left home for London without her mother’s permission, having resolved to pursue a theatrical career.

Despite her determination, Inchbald’s success as an actress was minor. According to Boaden, her beauty greatly outweighed her talent. Although her golden-red hair and striking figure sparked the interest of theater managers, Inchbald refused to trade sexual favors for employment. In one instance, she flung a tub of hot water in the face of a theater manager named James Dodd. To some extent, her marriage to Joseph Inchbald — an established actor fifteen years her senior — was motivated by a need for protection.⁶⁰ Another reason was Inchbald’s desire to act; unable “to get a theatrical engagement on her own . . . [she] needed small encouragement to marry into the theater” (Manvell Inchbald 11). The marriage took place on June 11, 1772 and, in September, Elizabeth

⁶⁰ After Joseph’s death in 1779, Inchbald was again forced to defend herself against theater managers’ assaults. Sometime after joining the Covent Garden company in 1780, Thomas Harris tried to rape her but she escaped by pulling his hair. According to her friend, John Taylor, Inchbald then rushed out of [Harris’s] house and proceeded in haste, and under great agitation, to the green-room of the theatre, where the company were then rehearsing. . . . She hastily related what had happened as far as her [speech] impediment would permit her, and concluded with the following exclamation: ‘Oh! If he had wo-wo-worn a wig, I had been ru-ruined.’” (qtd. Donkin Act 112). In 1782, Inchbald successfully defended herself against Richard Daley, the manager of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin who had raped Dora Jordan the preceding year. See Tomalin, Mrs. Jordan’s Profession (21-22).

played Cordelia to her husband's Lear in Bristol.

All told, Inchbald's career as an actress spanned seventeen years. Until Joseph's death in 1779, the Inchbalds spent the majority of their time in theater companies outside of London. From October 1772 through June 1776 the Inchbalds were members of West Digges's company in Scotland where Elizabeth was "decidedly . . . the leading performer of her sex" (Boaden 1: 50). From August through November of 1773, for example, she acted in twenty nine different plays. Lead roles included Cordelia in Lear, Juliet in Romeo and Juliet, Jane Shore in Nicholas Rowe's Jane Shore, and Belvidera in Thomas Otway's Venice Preserv'd. During this time, Boaden speculates. Inchbald "began to revolve the chances of becoming a writer as well as an actress, and, deeming the French language indispensable, she began her study of it on the 9th of January, 1774, in her twenty-first year" (1: 52). In 1776, after a brief sojourn in France, the Inchbalds joined Joseph Younger's company in Liverpool. There they became friends with Sarah Siddons and her brother, John Phillip Kemble, who, as we shall see, was profoundly important to Inchbald's literary development.⁶¹ With considerable circumspection, Boaden notes an attraction between Inchbald and Kemble; the romance, which was never consummated, formed the basis for a life-long friendship (1: 75). Encouraged by Kemble, Inchbald began to write what became the first part of A Simple Story in February of 1777. In October of 1777, they joined Tate Wilkinson's York company at Hull where they remained until Joseph's sudden death, probably from a heart ailment (Boaden 1: 95). In

⁶¹ Kemble and Siddons were the products of a mixed marriage between a Catholic father and Protestant mother. Following the tradition of the day, Siddons was raised Protestant, while Kemble was brought up as a Catholic.

1780, the now-widowed Inchbald joined the repertory company at Covent Garden where she continued to work during the regular seasons until her retirement from the stage in 1789.⁶² From 1782 through 1789 she also worked at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, then under the management of George Colman the Elder, during the summer season. Occasionally, she also acted outside of London; in 1782, for instance, she played in Dublin, with Kemble, in The Count of Narbonne.

Despite her considerable beauty and acknowledged wit, Inchbald was never a star at Covent Garden. Her debut was greeted with lukewarm reviews by the London newspapers but, Boaden assures us, “she had not been announced as a star of magnitude, and was content to twinkle in her humble sphere” (1: 127). At no time did her salary exceed three pounds a week; occasionally it dipped to under two pounds. Macheski remarks that three pounds a week was very respectable, “being on average three times that of a skilled tradesman” (“Feeling Mind” 81). Certainly Inchbald had earned considerably less in the provinces where poverty, in one instance, had forced the Inchbalds into the field to eat turnips for dinner (Boaden 1: 48). However, the cost of food and of modest lodgings, and the financial assistance required of her by various family members was considerable.⁶³ Certainly Inchbald was justified in perceiving

⁶² Apparently Kemble’s failure to propose factored in Inchbald’s decision to join the Covent Garden company. An entry in her memorandum book shortly after Joseph’s death reads “Kemble no lover — determine on London” (Boaden 2: 234).

⁶³ Until her mother’s death, Inchbald regularly sent money home. She also helped support her stepson, George, as well as her sisters Debbie (d. 1794) and Dolly (George Inchbald apparently had a brother or half-brother named Robert who was also an actor (BD 8: 86)). Inchbald’s brother, also named George, who had originally joined the theater at Bury, failed as an actor, returned to manage the farm at Standingfield, and

herself to be in somewhat straitened circumstances.

Inchbald's financial worries as well as her desire for fame were two of the primary reasons she turned to writing plays after the publisher, Stockdale, turned down an early version of A Simple Story in 1779. With exceptions like Frances Burney and Ann Radcliffe, the majority of women novelists sold their copyrights directly to publishers for an average sum of about five guineas a novel (Turner 114).⁶⁴ Between a successful benefit and selling one's copyright, a successful playwright consequently could earn far more for her play than the average novelist earned for her novel. However, as we have seen, breaking into the theater was extremely difficult for most novice writers. Conversely, the public's hunger for novels created a large demand for new material. Unlike getting a play accepted for production, selling a novel, Turner notes, "was not necessarily dependent upon social status, personal contacts, or funds, or even literary talent" (113). Inchbald, however, was no ordinary novice. She was an insider at Covent Garden and at the Haymarket. "Should one script be turned down, she could try a second manager, or a second or third script, until finally someone said yes" (Donkin Act 114).

suffered severe financial difficulties. Inchbald helped him financially until his death in a duel in 1795.

⁶⁴ Frances Burney sold the copyright of Evelina to Lowndes for £20. Its success inspired Payne and Cadell to pay her £250 for the copyright to Cecilia, Camilla (1796), which was published by subscription, supposedly earned Burney £2000-3000 and, provided it sold 8000 copies, The Wanderer was to have earned Burney £3000 (Turner 109-115). The novel, however, was not well-received; a first printing of 3,000 copies sold out quickly, but publishers failed to sell out a second printing of 1,000 (Doody The Wanderer xxxviii-xxxix). Ann Radcliffe was supposedly paid £500 for The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian, while Charlotte Smith "usually secured about £50 a volume" (Todd Angellica 114).

Inchbald's early diaries, notes Donkin, "record countless instances in which she ran into a manager backstage, in between rehearsals or during a performance and offered him a script or reminded him about one which she had submitted" (Act 114). In 1784, after the refusal of two early farces, Inchbald's A Mogul Tale was accepted by Colman and produced at the Haymarket, where it earned her 100 guineas. I'll Tell You What and Appearance is Against Them followed in 1785. From 1786 through her retirement from the stage in 1789, Inchbald saw seven additional plays performed. By the time of her death in 1821, Inchbald had written twenty-one plays; eleven were original compositions; the rest were adaptations from various dramatists. Except for The Massacre (1792) and A Case of Conscience (1800) all were produced during her lifetime. Sixteen were published.⁶⁵ Most were successful. "Fourteen of her . . . plays ran ten or more nights in their first season, and six ran twenty or more" (Backscheider Plays xi).

Inchbald's success as a dramatist was followed by other kinds of literary success. In 1791, with the publication of A Simple Story, Inchbald also began to earn money for writing novels and criticism. Probably due to her success as a playwright, Inchbald's publisher, Robinson, paid £200 for A Simple Story and, in 1796, he paid £150 for her second novel, Nature and Art. The novels were a major success and Robinson paid "six

⁶⁵ In addition to A Case of Conscience and The Massacre, which Boaden appends to his memoirs, All on a Summer's Day (1787), The Hue and Cry (1791), and Young Men and Old Women (1792) were not published during Inchbald's lifetime. All on a Summer's Day and The Hue and Cry were unsuccessful. The first lasted only one night at Covent Garden; the second was performed once at Drury Lane and once at Covent Garden; Young Men and Old Women ran five nights at the Haymarket (LS Index 444-5).

hundred pounds for their extended copyright before they were sold again in 1810 to Longman. In total, Inchbald earned over £1000 for the two novels” (Turner 115). By the first decade of the nineteenth century, Inchbald’s literary reputation was so well established that she declined to become a regular contributor to the newly-established Quarterly Review and turned down the editorship of La Belle Assemblée (BD 8: 85). She did, however, contribute critical articles to several journals including the Edinburgh Review and Prince Hoare’s journal, The Artist. In 1806 she agreed to write biographical and critical prefaces to the twenty-five-volume collection, The British Theatre (1806-1809). In 1809 she edited a ten-volume collection of plays entitled The Modern Theatre and a seven-volume Collection of Farces and Afterpieces. Financially as well as artistically, Inchbald’s career was an unqualified success. At the time of her death, her estate was valued between £5000 and £6000.

Inchbald and the Language of Gesture

Inchbald’s insider status certainly worked to her advantage in getting the theater managers’ attention, and her experience as an actress proved invaluable to her literary endeavors in other ways as well. As an actress, Inchbald knew that what worked on the page was not necessarily what worked in performance. Especially at the end of the century, accommodating the physical characteristics of the London theaters was extremely important to the success of a play. By the last third of the century, Covent Garden and Drury Lane were already large, and growing larger. Alterations in 1792 increased the seating in Covent Garden from 2,200 to 3,000 (Langhans “Theatres” 61).

Drury Lane was even bigger. In 1791, the theater seated 2,300; the rebuilt theater in 1794 seated 3,611 (Langhans “Theatres” 62). Compared to these giants, the Little Theatre at the Haymarket with its capacity of 1,500 was relatively intimate (Langhans “Theatres” 63). The increasing size of the stages, an emphasis on elaborate scenery and spectacle, and the use of a proscenium arch to frame the actors, all challenged the performer’s ability to connect with the audience. “Garrick,” George Colman the Younger remarked.

would not probably have risked his powers in theatres of the present magnitude. . . his talents must have suffered a paralysis, a loss of half their vitality, when the rapid and astonishing transition of his eye and his features could not instantly, by their close fidelity to nature, electrify all who witnessed them (qtd. Manvell Siddons 188).

The expansion of London’s theaters required that actors exaggerate their gestures.

Meanwhile, the growing enthusiasm for spectacle, elaborate scenery, and costumes which characterized productions at the end of the century placed an additional emphasis on the physical aspects of the actor’s art.

Inchbald frequently foregrounds the importance of what the audience sees in her prefaces to The British Theatre. Writing of Know Your Own Mind, she discusses the importance of gesture, action, and staging:

Millamour and Lady Bell are both admirable persons on the stage; although the reader, who never saw them there, many not conceive them to be so; for these whimsical lovers and all the occurrences in which they are concerned, are such as *depend upon action more than upon words*. The exposure of Millamour’s verses by three different females at the same time — his pleasant unsteadiness of resolution upon every new desire that assails him, and his final rapturous submission to the melody of Lady Bell’s vocal talents, all are incidents highly to be improved by *countenance and gesture* — in which the actors’ colouring alone, brings forth the author’s true design (BT 15, emphasis mine).

To appreciate the play, Inchbald suggests, one must see it performed. The actors’

gestures, she argues, are as necessary to the meaning of the play as the words in the script.

Often, as in her comments on Macbeth, Inchbald reserves her greatest admiration for the actors' ability to portray specific emotions:

The scenery, costumes, music, and above all, *above all*, the fear, the terror, the remorse — the agonizing throbs and throes, which speak in *looks, whispers, sudden starts, and writhings* by Kemble and Mrs. Siddons . . . render this play one of the most impressive moral lessons the stage exhibits (pref. BT 4, first emphasis mine).

Although Inchbald asserts that Shakespeare's plays suit both the stage and the closet, she is primarily interested in performance: "Plays of former times were written to be read," she declares. "Now, plays are written to be seen" (pref. The Dramatist BT 20).⁶⁶

Inchbald's respect for the interpretive power of physical gestures is particularly evident in her remarks on The Gamester. Like Know Your Own Mind, The Gamester, she notes, has a different effect when read and performed. Those who see the play, she explains, are, "deluded into pity by the inimitable acting of a Mrs. Siddons or a Mr. Kemble" (pref. BT 14). As a result, the audience "weeps with her; sighs with him; and conceives them to be a most amiable, though unfortunate pair" (pref. BT 14). However, a *reader* of the play, "blessed with the common reflection a reading should give, calls the husband a very silly man, and the wife a very imprudent woman; and . . . the punishment of the author is rather expected with impatience than lamented as severe" (pref. BT 14). Reading, to Inchbald, is a very different kind of activity than watching a play. A reader, she suggests, can contemplate the material from a detached perspective; the audience, in

⁶⁶ For a discussion of Inchbald's feminist sympathies as they appear in the prefaces to The British Theatre see Anna Lott, "Sexual Politics in Elizabeth Inchbald."

contrast, reacts spontaneously to the performance. Good acting, she implies, provides an emotional immediacy that evokes a sympathetic reaction in the audience.

A contemporary view of the relationship between actor and audience underlies Inchbald's opinion. In the Restoration, explains Joseph Roach, "it was widely believed that the spirits, agitated by [the actor], generate a wave of physical force, rolling through the aether, powerful enough to influence the spirits of others at a distance" (45). By mid-century, however, the philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith, and the dramaturges Aaron Hill and John Hill had replaced this material connection with one forged by the spectator's imagination. "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel," remarks Smith,

we can form no other idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is on the rack, as long as we ourselves are at ease, our senses will never inform us what he suffers. . . . it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception what are his sensations. . . . By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body and become in some [sense] the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them (9).

Despite the lack of a natural element binding spectator and spectacle, the spectator's reaction is still physical, but now it depends on his ability to imagine himself in the place of the person observed.

Key to this process was the assumption that the human body reacts in consistent, easily recognizable ways. During the first half of the century, a Cartesian model of human physiology bifurcated the individual into cognating ghost and insensate machine. This theory held that the passions were located in the soul, which was itself located in the

brain. External signs of the passions were thought to occur when the “‘rational soul’ pushes on a gland in the center of the . . . brain, and nerves, which resemble hollow tubes,” convey “this pressure by a subtle fluid or current called animal spirits” to the body (Roach 63). Then, like parts of a machine, the muscles of the body were thought to swell and contract, transforming the subject into the universal manifestation of a particular passion.

In the theater, as well as in painting, sculpture, and oratory, this assumption revealed itself in the use of a conventional language of gesture.⁶⁷ Despite disagreements about terminology and style, texts on acting, painting, and rhetoric are quite consistent when they describe the meaning of specific gestures. Surprise, for example, is conveyed when the eyes and the mouth open up, and the nostrils widen; the subject stands stock-still with arms away from the body with fingers spread out and legs together (Barnett 44-47). According to Gilbert Austin,

Aversion is expressed by two gestures, first the hand held vertical is retracted towards the face, the eyes and the head are for a moment directed eagerly towards the object and the feet advance. Then suddenly, the eyes are withdrawn, the head is averted, the feet retire, and the arms are projected out extended against the object, the hands held vertical (Figure 1; 487).

Writing almost one hundred years earlier, Charles Gildon describes aversion in a similar fashion: “we reject with the right hand at the same time turning the head away to the left” (qtd. Barnett 60). On stage, actors were lauded for their ability to effect a series of tableaux depicting the quick succession of distinct, clearly legible emotional states.

⁶⁷ See Chapter Three for a discussion of the debate about whether actors experienced the emotions they represented through gesture.

Descriptions of Garrick, for example, stress his ability to vary “his looks into young, old, sick, vigorous, downcast, or frolicsome at his personal volition; as if his face and even his form had been put into his own hands to be worked upon like Man á Machine” (Burney Memoirs 1: 170).

Apart from the theater, knowledge about conventional gesture was widespread. Throughout the century, rhetoric remained a fundamental subject in school, and numerous texts were published on gesture and elocution.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the codification of gesture by the French Academy under Charles Le Brun in 1698 “put the passions at the disposal of a public so wide that their signifying could be taken for granted by painters, actors, and writers alike” (McKenzie 6). Decades after its publication, painters as varied as Hogarth and Reynolds continued to draw on the Conférence de M. Le Brun sur l’expression générale et particulière.⁶⁹ Aaron Hill and Henry Siddons incorporated Le Brun’s descriptions into their works; along with actors such as Kemble and Siddons, they recommended the study of historical paintings and classical sculpture as models. On stage, actors schooled audiences in the language of gesture, while writers such as Addison and Steele discussed the passions as they manifested themselves in society. Conduct-

⁶⁸ For discussions concerning the close ties between rhetoric and acting, see, for example, Roach pp. 28-9, and George Taylor, “Theories of acting in the Age of Garrick.”

⁶⁹ Originally a lecture delivered before the Académie Royale in 1668. The essay was published in 1698. Translated into English by 1701, it remained popular throughout the century. An abridged version entitled Le Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions (1702) is the text Hogarth described in 1753 as “the common drawing book,” something that every student knew (qtd. Roach 66). See also Brewster Rogerson, “The Art of Painting the Passions,” (75).

book writers drew on this shared knowledge of gesture when they described the downcast eye and the blush of the modest young lady, and novelists did so when they wrote fiction. By the time Inchbald began her career as a writer, she could confidently assume that most of her readers knew “exactly how anguish and rapture looked because they had seen so many clear examples of them — on walls and stages, as well as on the faces with whom they lived and dealt” (McKenzie 5).

While this system of gesture remained relatively consistent throughout the century, the widespread acceptance of the notion of sensibility during the last third of the period substantially altered the relationship between actors and their audience. The concept of sensibility – which insisted on the body’s innate capacity for responsiveness – held that the nerves, now known to be solid, resonated with emotion “when struck by Ideas,” thereby transforming mental impressions into muscular motions (Roach 104). Like the Cartesian theory of human physiology, the notion of sensibility held that the relationship between a person’s body and mine was direct. The concept of sensibility, however, differed from the Cartesian model in its emphasis on the physical basis of sentience. On stage, actors such as Siddons and Kemble popularized a slower, more fluid style of acting that was punctuated with impassioned crescendos designed to illuminate the body’s capacity to experience varying degrees of emotion. Audiences responded to performances with their own displays of sensibility. Contemporary accounts of Siddons’s performances, for instance, regularly describe how she moved her audience to

impassioned displays of sorrow and fear.⁷⁰ A close friend of both Siddons and Kemble, Inchbald witnessed at first hand the way in which the physical representation of the passions by a master affected the feelings of others.

...

As a playwright Inchbald consequently relied on her actors' physical skills to elicit the audience's sympathy. As Paula Backscheider explains "Inchbald wrote acting pieces above all. She knew that gesture and expression could be more important than dialogue" (Plays 1: xxiv). Although her plays rarely describe individual gestures, Inchbald's stage directions insist that actors physically illustrate their characters' emotional states. "Enter Irwin, pale, trembling and disordered," she writes of a character who contemplates suicide in Everyone Has His Fault (II.ii).⁷¹ Fear is signaled by pallor; tears indicate sorrow; remorse and supplication are inevitably accompanied by the direction to throw oneself on one's knees. Through their gestures, Inchbald's characters signal their emotions more clearly than by words alone.

When Inchbald is at her best — as in A Case of Conscience — characters' gestures often qualify the dialogue.⁷² The crux of the play is the Marquis of Romano's

⁷⁰ See, for example, James Boaden, Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons, Interspersed with Anecdotes of Authors and Actors; Thomas Campbell, Life of Mrs. Siddons; William Hazlitt, "Mrs. Siddons."

⁷¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Inchbald's plays are from The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald, ed. Paula Backscheider. References are by act and scene.

⁷² Inchbald wrote A Case of Conscience around 1800 for Sarah Siddons and John Phillip Kemble. The play was never performed "because of Kemble's extended trip to the continent and disruptions in the theatres' managements" (Backscheider Plays xviii).

mistaken belief that his wife, Adriana, has been unfaithful. At one point, believing his son dead, the Marquis resolves to pursue Adriana, who has fled the castle with the evil Count of Cordunna. Stage directions call for “despondency and other expressions *wholly opposed to the words*” as he exclaims, “I long to behold the agony that will rend their hearts!” (CC V.i emphasis mine). Gestures, not words, make the Marquis’s misery apparent. As every actor would know, Inchbald was requesting the hanging head and lax muscles that were used to indicate sorrow (figures 2, 3 & 4).⁷³

Employed thus, gestures help delineate the psychological makeup of the characters and create dramatic tension. The Marquis’s pride and confusion manifest themselves to the audience in the contrast between his words and his gestures. Conversely, the correspondence between Adriana’s words and gestures signals her integrity. Cordunna’s duplicitous nature appears in his ability to disguise himself and feign appropriate gestures which are transparent to the audience but fool the other characters within the play. In one instance, stage directions refer to Cordunna’s “*pretended* look of deep concern” (CC III.iii, emphasis mine). The Marquis’s misreading of Cordunna illustrates his own honest nature. It also creates suspense and furthers the plot. Misled by Cordunna, the Marquis almost loses his wife and his son. As a means of creating psychologically complex characters, as a means of shaping the plot, and as a means of communicating characters’ motives and emotions to an audience, gestures could not be more important.

⁷³ See Hill, V:348; Gildon as quoted in Barnett, 42; Austin, 482; Siddons, 180.

Inchbald's familiarity with the styles of individual actors was also integral to the success of her compositions. Her ability to "write for Quick, Lewis, and Kemble testifies to her versatility and understanding of the players' strengths" (Bakscheider Plays xxv). For Lewis, who had the ability to "appear debauched while retaining the foundation of good character," Inchbald created the roles of Sir Robert Ramble in Everyone Has His Fault, Claransforth in The Wise Man, and Bronzely in Wives as they Were and Maids as they Are (Bakscheider Plays xxvi). For Elizabeth Farren, who excelled at playing fine ladies, Inchbald wrote the part of Miss Dorillon in Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are.⁷⁴ The role of the Marquis of Romano was written for John Phillip Kemble. Like Garrick before him, Kemble punctuated his performances with effective pauses and passionate crescendos. His asthmatic tendencies, however, forced him to adopt a more restrained pace than Garrick. In contrast to Garrick's lightning-quick shifts in demeanor, Kemble "chose . . . to minimize the sudden transition in favor of a slower and more elaborate technique, designed to reveal the hidden workings of a mind in the grip of passion" (Donohue Dramatic Character 253). Kemble's height, his dark good looks, and his acting style made him well suited for such noble roles. Kemble cannot "paint the passion of love . . . in water colours," Inchbald wrote; he needs roles that allow him

⁷⁴ Farren also may have been a model for Miss Milner, the heroine of A Simple Story. In her remarks on the play in The British Theatre Inchbald compared Miss Dorillon to Miss Milner, noting that Miss Dorillon "appears to have been formed out of the same matter and spirit that compose the body and mind of the heroine of the 'Simple Story' — A woman of fashion with a heart — A lively comprehension, and no reflection; — an understanding but no thought — Virtues abounding from disposition, education, feeling; — vices obtruding from habit and example" (pref. BT 23). The suggestion that Farren was a model for Miss Milner complicates arguments by Boaden and Kelly, who maintain that Inchbald's portrait of Miss Milner was largely autobiographical.

“materials for a bold picture . . . he must be struck to the heart’s core, or not at all; — he must be wounded with grief, despair, or madness ” (pref. Wheel of Fortune BT 28). As the Marquis, a man so embittered that he condemns his son to the Inquisition, and as Dorriforth, Lord Elmwood — who exiles his wife and daughter in A Simple Story — Kemble would have excelled.

A Simple Story

The general belief that Inchbald used Kemble as a model for Dorriforth reinforces the sense that her novels and plays are closely entwined. From the first, critics have followed Boaden’s lead in noting a resemblance between the actor and Inchbald’s hero. Both, for example, studied for the priesthood in France; Kemble spent six years at the college at Douai before he turned to acting while Dorriforth was educated at St. Omer’s. At thirty, Dorriforth is nine years older than Kemble when he first met Inchbald; however, Inchbald’s description of Dorriforth — his height, his dark eyes, and mobile features — strongly resemble portraits of the young actor. According to J. M. S. Tompkins, Inchbald may also have been influenced by Kemble’s portrayal of the Count of Narbonne. Inchbald, she suggests, drew on Kemble *in performance* when writing A Simple Story (xiv-xv). Gary Kelly concurs. Inchbald, he argues, “translated the naturalistic style of acting introduced by the Kembles . . . into the techniques of fiction” (Jacobin 79). Although Kemble’s use of a codified language of rhetorical gesture makes the term “naturalistic” somewhat misleading, Inchbald’s first novel was certainly influenced by her theatrical experience. When Miss Milner throws herself at her

guardian's feet to prevent a duel; when she glows with joy to see him safe; or when, seventeen years later, their daughter, Matilda, faints in her father's arms, Inchbald is using her knowledge of theatrical gestures to illuminate the interior lives of her characters and forward the plot.

As in A Case of Conscience, the eloquence of the characters' bodies is crucial to A Simple Story because suppressed feelings animate the novel. Written between 1776 and 1779, the first half of the novel concerns the love between Miss Milner, a Protestant, and her guardian, Dorriforth, a Roman Catholic priest. Until Dorriforth inherits the title "Lord Elmwood" and is released from his vows, he is unable to acknowledge his love for Miss Milner. Meanwhile, the Church, the family structure, and social custom all require Miss Milner's silence about her feelings for Dorriforth. Without the Catholic education that would have "precluded [her love] as by that barrier that divides a sister from a brother," she nonetheless knows that Dorriforth, as a priest, would avoid her love with "detestation and horror" (SS 74). To seduce "*Father* Dorriforth," Fairchild notes. "would [be to] defy . . . all patriarchal boundaries" (86). In a world where virtuous women were supposedly immune from sexual desire, to express desire, and to express it first, would be a serious deviation from standards of appropriate feminine conduct. Throughout much of the story Miss Milner consequently attempts to conceal her feelings from Dorriforth. Although the two eventually marry, the marriage ends in disaster.

Written between 1780 and 1791, the second half of the novel takes place after a seventeen-year gap, inspired, Boaden speculates, by Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale (1: 277). This portion of the novel tells the story of their couple's daughter, Matilda. As a

living reminder of her deceased, adulterous mother, Matilda has been banished from Lord Elmwood's presence. The forces Matilda faces, however, are ultimately more manageable than those which destroy Miss Milner. Her passion is filial, its expression sanctioned by social convention. Although Elmwood retains Sandford, his advisor and priest, he is less closely bound to the Catholic Church. Matilda spends much of the story unable to speak to Lord Elmwood, yet her virtuous resistance to Lord Margrave's advances and Elmwood's own reactions to Matilda's physical presence eventually lead to a permanent reconciliation.

Although both halves of the story foreground the physicality of suffering, denial, and redemption, the feminist content of Inchbald's novel remains a matter of debate. According to Katherine Rogers, Mary Ann Schofield, and Jane Spencer, the second half of the novel ultimately reinscribes patriarchal authority. Conversely, Terry Castle argues that the characters in the second half of the novel merely internalize the transgressive energy symbolized in the first half of the novel by Miss Milner's insistence upon attending a masquerade. The two halves of the novel, she argues, function as a liberatory fantasy in which both mother and daughter "triumph over masculine prerogative" and various forms of "male domination" (292). Catherine Craft Fairchild, Cecilia Macheski, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Janet Todd and Eleanor Ty take a third approach to the novel, noting that Inchbald criticizes masculine forms of authority by implication. Spacks, for example, reads the ending "not as a narrative of female freedom and power, but one of necessary acceptance and limited reconciliation" (199). Similarly, Ty concludes that "the contrast between the stories of the mother and daughter shows the limited subject-

positions open to eighteenth-century women” (100). A Simple Story, Fairchild explains, “is subversive . . . not because it succeeds in undermining patriarchal authority but because it questions and probes the psychological underpinnings of that authority in subtle and sophisticated ways” (77).

Acknowledging Inchbald’s familiarity with the theory and practice of rhetorical gesture supports this third view of the novel. If Fairchild, Macheski, Todd, and Ty are correct that the novel dramatizes the way individuals suffer under patriarchal authority, then attention to characters’ gestures helps explain *how* this dramatization occurs. However, I would emphasize that characters’ gestures also do more than illustrate the brutal effects of institutional power. In A Simple Story, gesture is also integral to the performance of social agency. As if on the stage, the protagonists’ gestures create a sense of physical and emotional immediacy designed to elicit a sympathetic response from other characters in the novel and from the reader. Within the novel, the sympathy elicited by the expressive power of the heroines’ bodies helps transform Dorriforth from guardian to lover and from tyrant to father. Inchbald’s use of gesture in A Simple Story thus suggests the way those without power may achieve a limited degree of agency within a patriarchal society.

...

Throughout A Simple Story, bodies frequently express forbidden desires. Miss Milner’s body, for example, eloquently communicates her love for Dorriforth. Upon learning he is to fight in a duel, for instance, her reaction is physical:

Mrs. Horton exclaimed, “If Mr. Dorriforth dies, he dies a martyr.”

Miss Woodley cried with fervour, "Heaven forbid!"
 Miss Fenton [Dorriforth's fiancée] cried, "Dear me!"
 While Miss Milner, without uttering one word, sunk speechless on the floor (SS 67).

As in Inchbald's plays, the dramatic climax of Miss Milner's swoon is one of several instances in which gestures, rather than narrative exposition or dialogue, indicate the characters' emotions to the reader. In this particular instance, Miss Milner's swoon suggests that she feels more for Dorriforth than the women who speak. Dorriforth's behavior also communicates his emotional state. When Dorriforth feeds the ailing Miss Milner as if "he were a tender hearted boy, and she his darling bird" or when he presses the unconscious Matilda just "once . . . to his bosom" he expresses a love he refuses to utter (SS 134, 274). Throughout the novel, Inchbald's theatrical imagination manifests itself in the way she uses gestures rather than words to indicate her characters' emotions. In these scenes and in others, what characters do with their bodies is more expressive and more reliable than words alone.

Characters' bodies also express emotions that are too profound to be spoken.

When Dorriforth, now Lord Elmwood, learns that Miss Milner loves him, crucial information is conveyed by the way the characters' bodies react.

The rapid emotion of varying passions which immediately darted over [Lord Elmwood's] features informed Miss Woodley that her secret had been discovered — she hid her face while the tears that fell down to her bosom, confirmed the truth of his suggestion, *beyond what oaths could have done*. A short interval of silence followed, during which, she suffered tortures for the manner in which he would next address her — two seconds gave her this reply:

For God's sake take care what you are doing — you are destroying my prospects of futurity — you are making this world too dear for me (SS 130, emphasis mine).

While Dorriforth's words concisely express the depth for his love for Miss Milner, his body shows how he feels about being in love. Miss Woodley, "caught the eye of Dorriforth: she saw it beam expectation, amazement, joy, ardour, and love -- Nay, there was a fire, a vehemence in the quick fascinating rays it sent forth, she had never before seen" (SS130). Rather than embarking on a long description about how he feels, Dorriforth reveals his delight through his body.

Because gestures often convey forbidden or inexpressible emotions, they also call attention to the brutal effects of institutional power.⁷⁵ When Miss Milner learns that Dorriforth plans to marry Miss Fenton, his fellow Catholic, her reaction is physical. "She leaned, pale as death, on the shoulder of Miss Woodley, her eye fixed with apparent insensitivity on all that was said" (SS 112). In addition to her pallor, Miss Milner's apparent lack of response is the correct way to express sorrow upon the stage. As Henry Siddons remarks: "grief . . . should in fact be motionless [as the] soul fixes . . . on this solitary idea, the whole body . . . preserves a fixed and single attitude" (182). Miss Milner's anguish is even more striking when Elmwood ends their own engagement by letter.

She uttered not a word — there was, however, a paleness in her face, a deadness in her eye, and a kind of palsey over her frame which Miss Woodley . . . had never seen before. 'I do not want to read your letter,' said Miss Woodley, 'Your looks tell me its contents'" (SS 176).

Literate in the language of the body, Miss Woodley recognizes the extent of Miss

⁷⁵ This point is made by Fairchild who insists that the rendition of intense female suffering in *A Simple Story* "defamiliariz[es] and poignantly emphasize[s] the problems inherent in the existing structures of late eighteenth-century society" (77).

Milner's grief. In this particular instance, Miss Milner's demeanor resembles theatrical representations of suicidal despair (figure 5). As someone familiar with the sympathetic relationship between actors and audience, Inchbald relies on her heroine's gestures to elicit her readers' compassionate response.

Inchbald's careful rendition of the bodily articulation of pain underscores the fact that most of the suffering in the novel stems from the way bodies — conduits to the emotions — are withheld or managed. As Fairchild notes, Elmwood grieves the heroines by preventing their access to himself (76, 85). While Elmwood is still her guardian, Miss Milner is crushed when he threatens to depart overseas. Once they are married, his trip to his West-Indian plantation leads to breached trust when — reluctant to alarm her — he conceals a dangerous illness. Elmwood's journey, however, does more than remove his body in a practical sense; his refusal to write about his body amounts to a different, no less painful, kind of withholding. Miss Milner, says Inchbald, received his "frequent apologies for not returning, with a *suspicion and resentment they were calculated*, but not intended to inspire" (SS 96, emphasis mine). Although Inchbald remains vague, the wording here suggests that Miss Milner may suspect Elmwood of an affair. Elmwood's intentions are pure, Inchbald points out; but Miss Milner's feelings of anger and distrust are reasonable responses to her husband's behavior. By withholding the truth about his physical condition, Elmwood has denied his wife access to his emotions and thoughts. He has deprived her of *emotional* as well as physical intimacy.

Since bodies are means to emotional intimacy, Miss Milner's affair is not simply

due to boredom and an inability to control her desires.⁷⁶ Rather, it is a futile attempt to fulfill an emotional need.

The dear object of her fondest, truest, affections was away; and those affections painted the time so irksome that was past; so wearisome that which was still to come; she flew from the present tedious solitude to the dangerous society of one, whose every care to charm her, could not repay her from a moment's loss of him, whose absence he supplied (SS 196-7).

Although Inchbald criticizes Lady Elmwood's choice of distractions, she also suggests that her feelings of sorrow and anger are justified. By sleeping with Lord Frederick Lawnley, Lady Elmwood ratifies a lack of intimacy that Elmwood has created. Indeed, there is more than a hint of irony in Inchbald's remark that "[l]anguage affords none, to describe Lady Elmwood's sensations on being told that her lord was arrived, and that necessity only had so long delayed his return" (SS 197). Overtly, the sentence underscores Miss Milner's feelings of guilt; however, the wording also invites speculation about the other emotions she might have experienced when she learned that Elmwood had concealed the reason for his delay. Her subsequent flight from Elmwood's presence merely sustains an emotional distance that already exists.

Since Elmwood is least emotionally vulnerable when physically isolated, he spends considerable time wielding authority from afar. Three decrees illustrate the distance he imposes between his words and his body. His first act is a letter that ends his engagement with Miss Milner. By writing to his ward instead of facing her, Elmwood prevents her from swaying his resolution. His second decision is the renunciation of his

⁷⁶ Miss Milner's inability to control her desires is a point emphasized by Kelly in his chapter on Inchbald in *Jacobin Novelists*, and Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* (256, 325) in order to emphasize Inchbald's interest in female education.

wife and daughter upon his return from the West Indies. Lady Elmwood has fled but Elmwood's agents actively banish Matilda. Elmwood, Inchbald explains, was too busy dueling with Lawnley to personally attend to Matilda's eviction. With considerable irony, Inchbald calls fighting Lawnley an "affair of still weightier importance" than the eviction of his six-year-old child (SS 198). The third decree is by letter, written by proxy, exiling Matilda, now seventeen, from Elmwood Castle. In each case, Elmwood's proclamations both demand and enact physical separations. The letters discourage epistolary response and his physical distance prevents discussion. Most important, his absences also avert the possibility that he might undermine his decrees by experiencing and expressing contradictory emotions. He avoids witnessing and reacting to the behavior of his wife and daughter. For Elmwood, maintaining his physical distance is a necessary part of his ability to lay down what Lacan calls "the law of the father" in non-negotiable terms.

In a larger context, Elmwood's need to distance himself from the heroines helps clarify Inchbald's position regarding late eighteenth-century debates about gender. Like contemporary theories of acting, ideas about gender were profoundly influenced by the notion of sensibility. Earlier in the century, as Janet Todd notes, the belief that the "external world was processed . . . through sensation and feeling" seemed to challenge notions of women's intellectual inferiority; according to Locke's model of the mind, women's intellects were no different from men's (Sensibility 23). As G. J. Barker-Benfield explains, however, the promise this notion had for women's equality was "short-circuited" by the restoration of a model of innate *physical difference*: "Not only were

women's nerves interpreted as more delicate and more susceptible than men's, but women's ability to operate their nerves by acts of will . . . was seriously questioned" (xvii-xviii). Compared to women, men were believed to have the power to control their emotions and were therefore to be capable of more serious intellectual pursuits.

Inchbald's use of gesture helps collapse this distinction by showing that both men and women must respond sympathetically to the language of the body.⁷⁷ Despite Elmwood's efforts to maintain an emotional distance, the heroines' intrusive bodies constantly undermine his emotional reserve. Of the numerous examples where this takes place, Lady Elmwood's posthumous letter to Elmwood is the most important. After asking Elmwood care for Matilda, Lady Elmwood asks him to "cast [his] imagination into the grave where [she is] lying" and to

reflect upon all the days of my past life-- the anxious moments I have known, and what has been their end. Behold *me*, also--in my altered face there is no anxiety--no joy or sorrow--all is over.--my whole frame is motionless--my heart beats no more. Look at my horrid habitation too,--and ask yourself whether I am an object of resentment? (SS 211-212).

Unlike Clarissa, whose posthumous letter to Lovelace suggests a disembodied consciousness, Lady Elmwood dwells on her body as the visible and final symbol of her mortal pain. There is no suggestion of a residual awareness in the phrase "all is over." Instead, through its synthesis of word and image, the letter emphasizes the indivisible nature of Lady Elmwood's body and mind. In fact, Lady Elmwood's vivid description of

⁷⁷ See Gary Kelly's chapter on Inchbald in [The English Jacobin Novel](#) for a discussion of the way the juxtaposition of the heroines' different educations helps Inchbald demonstrate that women, when properly educated, are capable of controlling their emotions through reason.

her body creates a physical immediacy that emulates the effect of embodied speech. Like Inchbald's descriptions of characters' gestures, Lady Elmwood's letter is an example of what, for want of an established term, can be called embodied writing — writing that uses the body to elicit a sympathetic reaction from the reader. Elmwood is moved to tears. Lady Elmwood's letter provokes and demonstrates the indivisible nature of his physical and emotional reactions even as it persuades him to shelter Matilda on the condition that she carefully avoid his sight.

As this stipulation suggests, Elmwood sees Matilda's body as a stand-in for her mother's and recognizes his vulnerability to it. When Matilda faints, her death-like demeanor recalls the image of Lady Elmwood lying dead in her grave. Attempting to rouse her, Elmwood cries out. "Her name did not, however, come to his recollection — nor any name but this — 'Miss Milner, Dear Miss Milner'" (SS 274). In his conflation of mother and daughter Elmwood — perhaps — perceives his culpability in his wife's death. Certainly Matilda's swoon shows Elmwood his effect on his daughter, an effect that wrests a physical reaction from Elmwood in turn. Although he hands his "apparently dead daughter" to two passing servants without "one word of any kind," his face is "agitated with shame, with pity, with anger, with paternal tenderness" (SS 274). Despite his reserve, Elmwood's body automatically responds to the external signs of Matilda's emotions. The variety and violence of Elmwood's gestures, like the Marquis of Romano's, dramatize his inner turmoil. The heroines' bodies, then, and the sympathetic reactions they invoke in Lord Elmwood, help reawaken Elmwood's capacity to love.

Although Matilda's abduction by Lord Margrave may, as Fairchild notes, make

Elmwood aware of his daughter's "commodity value," his own reaction to Matilda's physical peril also forces him to recognize his stake in her emotional well-being (114). Elmwood, after all, reacts to the external signs of Matilda's *emotional* anguish. "She screamed . . . for help," a witness reports, "and *tore her hair* in distraction" (SS 324, emphasis mine). Literate in the language of Matilda's body, Elmwood experiences a sympathetic reaction. When informed of the situation, he turns "white as death," and demands more information in a "tremulous voice" (SS 323). In the lexicon of theatrical gestures, Elmwood's pallor signals his fear; his subsequent haste and severity denote virtuous wrath. "The soul," remarks Henry Siddons, "agitated by [the] desire to [remove or destroy an evil], manifests . . . ardour and resolution; to which, perhaps, the expression of the other affections associates itself; such, for example, as those of fear, terror, and displeasure" (116). Here the newfound congruence between Elmwood's words and his gestures signals his intentions. When Sandford asks him if he will rescue Matilda, Elmwood's simple "yes" confirms his determination to "prove himself a father" (SS 324).

While the conclusion of A Simple Story has been read by some critics as an endorsement of patriarchal authority, attention to the characters' gestures offers a richer understanding of the end of the novel.⁷⁸ As Fairchild explains, Elmwood's conversion does not challenge his powerful legal authority as husband and father (117). Indeed, Elmwood tells Margrave, "the law shall be your only antagonist" (SS 329). Matilda, moreover, remains afraid of Elmwood through the end of the story. As if in answer to her

⁷⁸ Specifically I refer to the readings by Rogers, Schofield, and Spencer cited earlier in this chapter.

prayers, Elmwood appears as Matilda is about to be ravished. Imitating a gesture frequently used by Sarah Siddons, she has just “wrung her hands and lifted her eyes up to heaven in the last agony of despair” (SS 323) (figure 6).⁷⁹ Although he saves her from Margrave, the “apprehensions to which [Matilda] had been accustomed, kept her timid and doubtful — she feared to speak, or clasp him in return for his embrace, but falling on her knees clung round his legs, and bathed her feet with her tears” (SS 329). Even as they dramatize her joy, Matilda’s gestures also remind the reader that patriarchal power prohibits free speech. Her gestures illustrate the comparative eloquence of physical forms of expression.

The novel’s conclusion clearly reaffirms gesture’s persuasive power. Having learned that his nephew is in love with Matilda, Elmwood orders Sandford to banish Rushbrook. However, Matilda — who is unaware of Rushbrook’s affection — throws her arms around Sandford so he cannot leave the room. Then she pacifies Elmwood by taking his hand and kneeling while she pleads for Rushbrook in a “pathetic voice” (SS 336) (figures 7 & 8). As before, Matilda’s gestures elicit a sympathetic response from her father which is revealed through external signs. Moved, Elmwood’s “impending frown” alters and he “turns aside to *conceal his sensations*” (SS 336, emphasis mine). Ultimately he grants Matilda the “power to give or refuse” Rushbrook “at [her] own pleasure” (SS 337). Therefore, as the novel concludes, Elmwood gives Matilda the authority to speak for herself and, regarding Rushbrook, the control of her body. Just as the actress’s

⁷⁹ Although Matilda’s gesture is a standard one that signals fervent supplication, an illustration that directly links the gesture to Siddons’s performance as Constance in Shakespeare’s *King John* appears in Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia*, plate 11.

gestures work to evoke a response in the audience, the eloquence of Matilda's body affects Elmwood's emotionally. Moved, he rewards her with a limited form of autonomy.

In *A Simple Story*, Inchbald's interest in the physical expression of the passions and the sympathetic responses they induce suggests that her skills as a writer were profoundly shaped by her experience in the professional theater. Throughout the novel, the heroines' physiological reactions and the inadequacy of their words, which "frequently exist only to censor a truth expressed by the body," recall techniques used to generate sympathy on the eighteenth-century stage (Todd *Sensibility* 86). Gestures in *A Simple Story* do more than illustrate the brutal effects of institutional power. As in a play, the protagonists' gestures create a sense of physical and emotional immediacy designed to provoke a sympathetic reaction in the other characters and in the reader. Within the novel, the sympathy elicited by the heroines' bodies subsequently transforms Dorriforth/Elmwood from guardian to lover and from tyrant to father. Although Elmwood's legal authority remains intact at the novel's conclusion, Inchbald's use of gesture simultaneously demonstrates the way those without power may achieve a limited degree of agency *within* a patriarchal society. Open rebellion, as Miss Milner's fate demonstrates, harms the rebel most of all. Matilda, in contrast, acts like a lady and she gets what she wants.

Complex Significant Gestures.

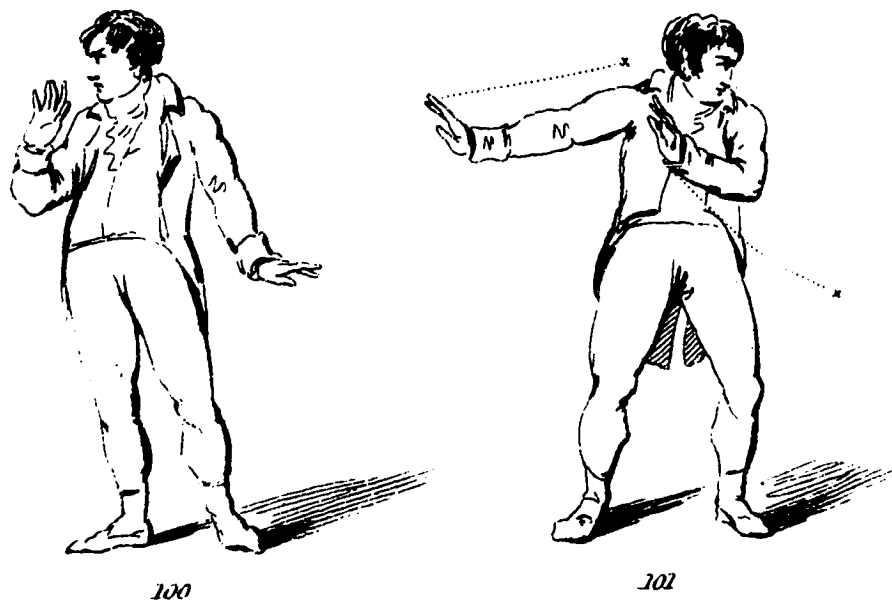


Figure 1: Aversion. Gilbert Austin, Chironomia; or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery (London, 1806) plate 10. Reproduced by permission of the General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



Figure 2: Grief, Gilbert Austin, Chironomia; or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery (London, 1806) plate 11. Reproduced by permission of the General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



Dejection

Figure 3: Dejection. Henry Siddons, Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to the English Drama From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engle. 2nd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1822), plate 30. Reproduced by permission of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



Despondency

Figure 4: Despondency. Henry Siddons, Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to the English Drama From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engle. 2nd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1822), plate 42. Reproduced by permission of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



Despair

Figure 5. Despair. Henry Siddons, Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to the English Drama From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engle. 2nd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1822), plate 47. Reproduced by permission of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



Figure 6. Appeal to Heaven (after Sarah Siddons). Gilbert Austen. Chironornia; or, a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery (London 1806). Plate 11. Reproduced by permission of the General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



Supplication

Figure 7. Supplication. Henry Siddons, Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to the English Drama From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engle. 2nd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1822), plate 52. Reproduced by permission of the Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



Figure 8. Resignation. Gilbert Austen. Chironomia; or, a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery. (London, 1806) plate 10. Reproduced by permission of the General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

Chapter Three

“Not as Juliet She Followed”: Frances Burney and the Performance of Femininity

One third of the way through The Wanderer (1814), Frances Burney’s last novel, the heroine, Ellis, receives a letter from the man she loves asking her not to sing at a public assembly. In the letter, Harleigh begs Ellis not to “deviat[e] from that long-beaten track of female timidity” (W 343). Performing in public, he suggests, will signify that Ellis lacks the modest desire for self-effacement which characterizes respectable women. Harleigh’s letter reflects a crucial assumption found in the courtesy literature discussed in Chapter One. He suggests that Ellis’s appearance and conduct bears a direct and unmediated relationship to her quality of mind. To perform in public, he implies, will be to demonstrate an essential difference between her own character and that of a truly feminine woman.

Ellis’s response to Harleigh’s letter challenges any simple correspondence between her appearance and character. “What is woman unprotected?” she asks. “She is pronounced upon only from outward semblance: — and indeed, what other criterion has the world? Can it read the heart?” (W 344). Ellis’s comment takes issue with the notion that her character can be construed from external signs. Instead it implies that ladies, like actresses, can act and appear other than themselves.

This chapter examines the way Burney’s experience with the eighteenth-century theater, especially with regard to actors and acting, helped shape her sense of herself and

of women in general. In doing so, it takes issue with a critical tradition that views Burney as writer whose depiction of female nature was formed primarily in relation to conduct material. This tradition in part derives from Joyce Hemlow's important article "Fanny Burney and the Conduct Books" (1950) in which Burney is described as a conservative moralist, whose novels grew progressively weaker as her determination to illustrate "'morals in action' eclipsed the comic spirit which had presided over her earlier work" (760). Since then, scholars have struggled to reconcile their vision of Burney as a feminist with her apparent admiration for writers like Fordyce and Gregory. In the mid-seventies, Hemlow's critique was challenged by feminists who argued that Burney's subconscious emotions undermined her overt acceptance of conventional notions of femininity. Patricia Meyer Spacks, for example, argued that Burney's later novels reveal substantial anger with the female condition even as they also "acknowledge the possibility of happiness within that condition" (*Imagining* 189). Rose Marie Cutting went even further. Burney was a feminist, she concludes, whose concern with propriety was "balanced . . . by a growing rebellion against the restrictions imposed upon women" ("Defiant" 520).

The ideological conflicts these scholars point out made Burney's work particularly well-suited to post-structuralist criticism. By 1986, arguments about Burney's relationship to conduct material had developed into discussions which emphasized the competing discourses within the novels. In her reading of *Evelina*, for example, Kristina Straub explicitly rejects established ways of describing the novel:

Burney's novel is not a seamless representation of patriarchal ideology that

Burney learned from her culture. Nor is it . . . a “palimpsest” such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar see as the form of nineteenth-century women’s writing, a buried female subtext within a cover story (“Gulphs” 231).

Instead, Straub contends, Burney’s texts reveal a “dividedness” which exposes “the contradictions in the ideology that shaped her sense of female maturity” (“Gulphs” 231).

Straub explicitly notes that Burney does not offer her readers alternatives to the ideologies she criticizes. Instead, she argues, Burney’s novel describes “moments in the process through which art is shaped by, and in turn, shapes ideology” (“Gulphs” 244). By claiming Burney’s work as integral to the evolution of a feminist canon, Straub — along with Margaret Doody and Julia Epstein — established Burney’s importance to feminists without apologizing for the more conservative aspects of her narratives. While these aspects continue to convince scholars like Jane Spencer, Martha Brown, and Janet Todd, that Burney internalized conventional models of the feminine ideal, other scholars, like Claudia Johnson and Ruth Yeazell, have confidently described Burney as a proto-feminist by focusing on the way her novels criticize the same patriarchal structures they seem to uphold. In the relatively small world of Burney criticism, their work has ensured that Burney’s interest in conduct material is no longer read simply as conclusive proof of her conservative sympathies.

In the larger world of genre criticism, however, Burney’s status as a feminist continues to be threatened by her interest in courtesy literature. As we have seen in Chapter One, the Foucauldian approach to the novel embraced by scholars like Armstrong and Poovey sees writers like Burney as participants in a process that naturalized and disseminated conduct-book notions of the feminine ideal. According to

this approach, women like Burney created heroines who conformed to their authors' own beliefs about women — beliefs shaped primarily by conduct material. Readers who identified with these heroines consequently internalized these naturalized definitions of what a woman should be by understanding them as an essential part of the heroine herself. As a result, writers like Burney are assumed to have helped confined women to a newly reified domestic sphere, effectively separating them from direct participation in public and political life.

An examination of Burney's friendship with David Garrick and her acquaintance with Sarah Siddons substantially qualifies such a view of Burney's novels. Indeed, a look at Burney's journals and fiction suggest that her view of conduct material was affected by her interest in an ongoing debate about whether actors really felt the emotions they expressed on the stage. Inchbald, as we have seen, suggests that women's bodies, like actresses', speak a truth that is easily read. Burney, in contrast, points out the difficulty of reading women's hearts from external signs. For Burney, ladies, like actresses, are often not what they seem. Focusing on Burney's first and last novels, this chapter considers the way Burney uses theatrical images in her fiction to suggest the performative nature of women's social experience. Despite the stylistic and temporal elements that separate Evelina (1777) from The Wanderer (1814), both novels take issue with the conduct-book notion of a direct and unmediated relationship between a woman's external appearance and her interior life. In both of these novels, Burney's theatrical imagination helped her to dramatize the undefinable nature of women's hearts and to ask probing questions about the social structures that affect women's lives.

Burney's Theatrical Background

Burney's literary imagination was shaped by her early exposure to the theater. The Burney's came from a family with close ties to the stage.⁸⁰ The first wife of Dr. Burney's father, James MacBurney, was an actress named Rebecca Ellis. James MacBurney himself "trod the boards in a professional capacity on more than one occasion," appearing at an unlicensed playhouse in London in 1719 and again between 1729 and 1731 (Farr 69). Dr. Burney's brothers and half-brothers were either professional musicians or dancing masters, and Dr. Burney himself began his career in 1744 as an apprentice to Dr. Arne, a respected composer and the leader of the band at Drury Lane.

Although Burney rapidly grew disenchanted with Arne, his position as Arne's apprentice ensured his access to London's theater world. Through Arne, Burney secured places in the bands at Drury Lane and at Vauxhall Gardens. At both locations and at Arne's house, "where he lived as one of the family," Burney met many musicians, actors, and composers, including Arne's sister, the famous actress Susannah Maria Cibber

⁸⁰ The standard biographies of Frances Burney include Margaret Doody, Frances Burney: The Life in the Works and Joyce Hemlow, The History of Frances Burney. Other works that acknowledge the theater's influence on Burney's novels include Barbara Darby, Frances Burney, Dramatist; Clayton Delery's introduction to his dissertation, "The Witlings: A Comedy by [Frances Burney] a Sister of the Order"; Marjorie Morrison's dissertation, "Fanny Burney and the Theater"; Peter Sabor's preface to The Plays of Frances Burney; and Eugene White's dissertation, "Fanny Burney, Novelist: A Study in Technique." See also Emily Allen, "Staging Identity: Frances Burney's Allegory of Genre," for a discussion of the relationship between Burney's own stage fright and her construction of female interiority in Evelina.

(Lonsdale 11). As a guest in Mrs. Cibber's home, Burney "found himself in a constellation of wits, poets, actors, authors, and men of letters" (Burney Memoirs 1: 14).⁸¹ There he met David Garrick, "then hardly beyond the glowing dawn of his unparalleled celebrity," who "shown forth with a blaze of luster that struck the young Burney with enthusiastic admiration" (Memoirs 1: 15). Garrick and Burney became close friends. When Garrick returned to Drury Lane as manager in 1747, he gave Burney — who was no longer a regular member of the orchestra — permission to use the music room and to watch from behind the scenes (Lonsdale 17).

Burney's ambitions, however, extended beyond watching plays and playing in the band; he wanted to compose for the stage. In October of 1747, James Oswald, a fellow musician and friend of Burney's, obtained a copyright grant for all music composed by the dilettanti members of the Society for the Temple of Apollo. According to Roger Lonsdale, Burney and Oswald were the sole members of the society (30). Burney was still an apprentice, and Frances Burney speculates that her father was prohibited from publishing while under Arne (Memoirs 1: 20).⁸² Although Dr. Burney's own descriptions of Arne support her contention, Lonsdale asserts that the notion of "dilettanti members"

⁸¹ Begun by Dr. Burney and completed by Frances, The Memoirs of Doctor Burney are notoriously unreliable as a primary source since Frances Burney omitted any information that would reflect poorly on her father. Regardless of their accuracy, Frances Burney's descriptions of Garrick in the Burney household as described in the Memoirs have been treated as truth since what interests me here are her own thoughts about the actor and his art.

⁸² In December of 1748 Fulke Greville bought Charles Burney's articles from Arne for £300. For the next two years Burney lived in the Greville home as Greville's companion and music teacher. However, Greville himself was frequently abroad.

was intended to help gain commissions (30).

If so, their ploy was successful. Sometime in 1750, Garrick enlisted the aid of the Society in his battle with John Rich, then Manager of Covent Garden, who was mounting wildly successful pantomimes at the rival theater. Writing anonymously, Burney composed music for Robin Hood (1750), a comic after piece, and for the pantomime Queen Mab (1750). The music for Robin Hood was well received but the piece itself was poorly regarded. Queen Mab, however, was an enormous success. Although Burney was not acknowledged as the composer of either piece, Lonsdale speculates that he revealed his identity to Garrick soon after the success of Queen Mab (36). If so, Garrick was deliberately using Burney when he asked the Society to compose new music for a version of the Masque of Alfred, a piece originally scored by Dr. Arne. Burney, however, was no longer apprenticed to Arne and wrote completely new music for every song except “Rule Britannia,” which he “thought . . . the most pleasing and the best song that ever was produced by a native of England in our language” (Lonsdale 35). Despite Garrick’s participation, Alfred, which opened on February 23, 1751, was not a success and the piece was dropped from the repertoire after its initial season. Nevertheless, music from Alfred, along with music from the other two pieces, was eventually published as “the offspring of the Society of the Sons of Apollo” (Burney Memoirs 1: 20). Alfred was Burney’s last composition as a member of the Society; shortly afterwards he fell ill and lived outside of London for the next nine years.

Although Burney wrote for the theater upon his return to London, none of his work ever equaled the success of his compositions for Queen Mab. Indeed Lonsdale

remarks that “Burney’s protracted flirtation with the theater was largely a waste of time and energy” (63). In 1763, Burney wrote much of the music for Garrick’s adaption of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The piece was a dismal failure and played only one night. One scathing review, paying special attention to the music, described a scene in which the “Performers sung the Audience to Sleep, and then went to Sleep themselves” (Lonsdale 39). The failure of the play “must have dealt a bitter blow to [Burney’s] theatrical ambitions, as he had carried most of the responsibility for the musical side of the production” (Lonsdale 60).

Burney’s theatrical ambitions were also unfulfilled by the modest success of his next project, an adaption of Rousseau’s operetta Le Divan du Village. Renamed The Cunning Man, the piece opened at Drury Lane in 1766 with the Burney children watching from Garrick’s box. Garrick, recounts Frances,

amused himself in watching from the orchestra . . . the [Burney] children . . . and he imitatingly described to Mr. Burney, the innocent confidence of success with which they all openly bent forward, to look exultingly at the audience. when loud clapping followed the overture; and their smiles or nods; or chuckling and laughter according to their more or less advanced years. during the unmingled approbation bestowed on about half the piece – contrasted with, first amazement; next indignation; and, lastly, affright and disappointment, that was brought forth by the beginning buzz of hissing, and followed by the shrill horrors of a catcall: and then the return – joyous, but no longer dauntless! – of hope, when again applause prevailed (Memoirs 1: 170).

As Garrick’s performance indicates, The Cunning Man met a lukewarm response; the piece ran thirteen times over three months in its first season and was still occasionally performed for the next two years (LS Index).

Although Frances Burney blamed Garrick for her father’s decision to retire from

the stage, Charles Burney's decision to relinquish his theatrical ambitions may also reflect his own loss of confidence. Apparently Garrick encouraged Burney to write the music for a short comic piece, or burletta, to be inserted into Garrick's farce, A Peep Behind the Curtain. Garrick, however, had also given the libretto to Francois Barthélemon, who had recently composed the music for The Country Girl. Garrick's successful, less-libidinous revision of William Wycherly's Restoration comedy, The Country Wife. Burney was deeply hurt when he discovered what Garrick had done. Garrick apologized profusely and the friendship was saved; but Burney "declined setting the opera and never after composed for the theaters" (Memoirs 1: 171).

...

Despite the cessation of Charles Burney's theatrical ambitions, his continued interest in the theater profoundly influenced Frances and her five siblings. The children attended the theater often. Apparently they were deemed old enough to attend performances by the time they were three or four years old (Hemlow History 12). Frequently, the Burneys had at their disposal the boxes of the two patent theaters – Garrick's at Drury Lane and George Colman the Elder's at Covent Garden.⁸³ In one instance, Garrick answered Burney's request for two places for The Alchemist by writing, "I had rather have your Family in the Front Box, than all the Lords and Commons" (EJ&L 1: 314). At another, he insisted that they see The Masque of Alfred from the front-boxes. "'You shall have my Box,' said [Garrick], [any] other time that you please – but you will *see* nothing of the new scenes up there'" (EJ&L 1: 212). Colman was also a

⁸³ See, for example, EJ&L, 1: 314; Memoirs 1: 166, 169-170.

close family friend and, as the stage manager of Covent Garden, he, like Garrick, was an immensely powerful person in the theater world.⁸⁴ When Jenny Barsanti, Dr. Burney's protégée, lost her voice and decided to act, Dr. Burney spoke to Colman about securing her a place at Covent Garden.⁸⁵

Although Frances did not record every play she saw as a child, she was extremely familiar with a great many plays. Her ambition to see Garrick in all of his major roles was probably fulfilled. Private theatricals were regular events in the Burney household and Burney records her participation in rehearsed and impromptu performances through 1777.⁸⁶ Through a painstaking count of the plays mentioned in the Annie Raine Ellis's

⁸⁴ A respected and popular playwright, Colman was part of a combine that purchased the patent and property of Covent Garden in 1767. Colman managed the theater through 1774 when he sold his share of the theater. In 1777 Colman bought the theater in the Haymarket from Samuel Foote, which he managed until the late 1780s, at which time he was succeeded by his son, George Colman the Younger. Between 1763 and 1765, while Garrick was on his continental tour, Colman and with Garrick's brother shared the responsibilities for Drury Lane, with Colman taking primary responsibility for the direction of plays. In this capacity, Colman worked with Burney on Garrick's adaption of A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1763 (Lonsdale 38).

⁸⁵ Burney remarks that her father was, at first, unwilling to speak to Colman. "having a superior regard for Mr. Garrick; but Drury Lane Theatre has 2 actresses already in Barsanti's style" (EJ&L 1: 176). Dr. Burney's influence was, however, limited. Colman waited a year before hiring Barsanti in 1772. At Covent Garden. Barsanti had modest success; in 1774 she spoke the farewell epilogue upon Colman's retirement, "establishing prologue- and epilogue-speaking as a speciality" and, in 1775, she originated the role of Lydia Languish in The Rivals (BD 2: 360). After the death of her first husband, a member of an ancient Irish family, Barsanti married Richard Daly, the same theater manager who forcibly seduced Dora Jordan and attempted to rape Elizabeth Inchbald.

⁸⁶ Burney participated in at least four amateur performances between 1770 and 1777 (EJ&L 1: 116-117, 159-163, 1717-172; 2: 235-53, 262-264). Records of Dr. Burney's participation in private theatricals are recorded in the first volume of his Memoirs.

edition of Burney's Early Diary and in August Dobson's edition of The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, Marjorie Morrison discovered that "from 1766 to 1796," Burney "acknowledged the reading of twenty-four plays; knew sixteen others well enough to quote, allude to or discuss, acted in five plays and saw forty-nine--a total of ninety-four plays" (59). Although Morrison is "relatively certain that the list of plays . . . represents only a portion of what [Burney] had read or seen," she confidently asserts that "the number of plays . . . is certainly larger than the total of all items of non-dramatic reading mentioned in the journals" (59).

Burney and Garrick

Perhaps because he inspired Frances Burney's own love of mimicry, Garrick profoundly influenced her opinions about actors and acting – opinions which also informed her own sense of self. Before they could read, the Burney children "acted over parts they had seen [Garrick] play" (Hemlow History 13). Probably because she was unable to read until she was eight, Frances had an extraordinary memory for dialogue. Of all the children, she was also the best mimic. Dr. Burney recalls she "had a great deal of invention and humour in her childish sports and used, after having seen a play in Mrs. Garrick's box, to take the actors off and compose speeches for their characters" (Memoirs 2: 168). The young Burneys' "interest in drama and the standards of acting that they formed from Garrick's performances lasted their lives long" (Hemlow History 13). However, Frances Burney's exposure to Garrick extended beyond the stage.

A frequent visitor to the Burney home, the childless Garrick spent countless hours

entertaining the Burney children.

So playfully he individualized his attentions by an endless variety of comic badinage, — now exhibited in ludicrous obsequiousness; now by a sarcasm skillfully implying a compliment; now by a compliment archfully conveying a sarcasm; that every happy day that gave [the children] but a glimpse of this idol of their juvenile fancy, was exhilarated to its close by reciprocating anecdotes of the look, the smile, that bow, the shrug, the start, that after his departure, each enraptured admirer could describe (Memoirs 1: 167-8).

Garrick's mobile countenance and the children's love of imitating the actor provided constant amusement in the Burney household. In Dr. Burney's Memoirs, Frances recounts episodes in which Garrick, with astonishing rapidity, transforms himself into fictional characters as well as into people he observed in his daily life. In one memorable episode, Garrick amused the children by confounding Dr. Burney's hair-dresser.

[He put] on, by degrees, with a power like transformation, a little mean face of envy and sadness, such as he wore in representing Abel Drugger; which so indescribably altered his countenance as to make his young admirers almost mingle incredulity of his individuality with their surprise and amusement; for, with his mouth hanging stupidly open, he fixed his features in so vacant an absence of all expression, that he less resembled himself than some daubed wooden block in a barber's shop window (Memoirs 1: 347).

The friseur is first flattered, then distressed, and finally amused by Garrick's attention. Ultimately he escapes into the hall, where the children hear an "uncontrollable horse-laugh" (Memoirs 1: 349). Garrick, meanwhile, segues into Bayes, from The Rehearsal, and then mimics Messrs. Twiss and Boswell "whom he took off to the life" (Memoirs 1: 351). The performance ends with Garrick's impersonation of his old teacher and friend, Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose "peculiarities," Garrick remarked, "[were] of such unequalled eccentricity, that even to his most attached . . . admirers, they were irresistibly provoking to mimicry" (Memoirs 1: 352).

Obviously, Garrick's style of acting depended upon close attention to physical detail. As Garrick himself defines it in his Essay on Acting (1744),

[a]cting is an entertainment of the stage, which by calling in the aid and assistance of articulation, corporeal motion, and ocular expression, imitates, assumes, or puts on the various mental and bodily emotions arising from the various humours, virtues, and vices incident to human nature (1).

Garrick clearly foregrounds the physical portion of the actor's art. He is, however, surprisingly vague about the actor's internal process. The actor, he suggests, may actually feel or may merely represent a character's emotions. Written amidst an ongoing debate about whether actors ought to feel the emotions they represented on stage, Garrick's ambiguous statement was, perhaps, a deliberate attempt to remain neutral. A look at this debate, in which all sides claimed Garrick as their exemplar, helps illuminate Burney's own opinions regarding actors' identification with their roles.

Burney and Acting Theory

The debate about acting can best be described as a controversy over the relationship between emotion and gesture. As noted in Chapter Two, eighteenth-century actors relied on a standardized language of theatrical gesture which held that every emotion had a specific physical manifestation. Although this language of gesture was widely used throughout the century, there was considerable disagreement about how the actor was to go about the process. As Joseph Roach notes, for some actors and theorists, the Cartesian model of human physiology, which envisioned the body as a machine guided by a cognating ghost, or rational soul, which was located in the brain, lent itself to

a rather mechanical approach to acting. The “classification of the passions by gestural and positional stereotypes [rendered] the actor’s body as a dead mechanism from which parts may be detached for separate treatment. . . . Mechanization objectified and exteriorized the passions, draining them of their subjective content” (71). The actor’s own emotional state was irrelevant. Through the careful imitation of ideal templates, such as those found in Le Brun’s Méthode, actors like Barton Booth could manifest their characters’ passions regardless of their ability to identify with their roles (Roach 71).

Other mid-century theorists, however, envisioned the actor’s gestures as the final manifestation of an internal process. In his Essay on Acting (1746), Aaron Hill describes a method by which actors enter into characters’ emotions through their use of their imaginative powers. The idea of a passion, he explains, once conceived and strongly impressed upon the actor’s mind, inevitably causes the body to respond with appropriate movements and facial expressions. For Hill, actors like Garrick worked from the inside out. Unless the actor could first conceive of the emotions he or she portrayed, those emotions would not be accurately rendered by the actor in performance. “To act a passion well,” he warns, “the actor must never attempt its imitation, until his fancy has conceived so strong an image, or idea, of it, as to move the same impressive springs within his mind, which form that passion, when it is undesigned, and natural” (339). Hill recommended that actors study “prints and paintings” to increase the actors store of ideas — not to copy but to “influence the bodily emotions ‘indirectly by the representation of things which are usually united to the passions which we desire to have’” (Roach 81).

Although Hill discusses the actor’s internal process, his view of human

physiology and his emphasis on the external manifestation of the passions distinguishes his work from that of Sir John Hill, whose 1750 treatise, The Actor, stresses the performer's need for great sensibility. Like Aaron Hill, John Hill insists that actors must feel the emotions they represent. His use of sensibility as a physiological model, however, shifted the discussion about acting from the role of gesture in the actor's process to the body's innate capacity to experience emotion. "The performer," he writes,

who does not himself feel the several emotions he is to express to the audience, will give a lifeless and insipid representation of them. All the art in the world can never supply the want of sensibility in a player; if he is defective in this essential quality, all the advantages of nature, all the accomplishments he may have acquired by study, are thrown away upon him; he will never make others feel what he does not feel himself, and will always be as different from the thing he is to represent, as a mask from a face (126).

For Hill, Garrick's attention to external detail was a manifestation of his sympathetic identification with a character. Leigh Woods echoes Hill's view of Garrick when he argues that Garrick's "hypersensitivity to kinesthetic detail may have worked to free him from the burden of conscious thought at certain moments on stage, and so facilitated his movement towards a state of extreme sympathy which he termed 'transport'" (199-200). Garrick's sensibility, Woods argues, was so acute that he was "able to experience a sense of himself as the characters so intense as to momentarily remove his ability to distinguish between them and himself" (44).

This notion of transport is precisely what Denis Diderot opposes in his Paradox of Acting (1773). "Extreme sensibility makes middling actors," declares his First Speaker. "[M]iddling sensibility makes bad actors; [and] in complete absence of sensibility is the possibility of a sublime actor" (20). Originally an advocate of the actor's need for

sensibility, Diderot based his reversal on the belief that the human body is “a virtually soulless machine possessing vital drives but not will” (Roach 130). Rejecting the Cartesian notion of a mechanical body and a rational soul, Diderot, like John Hill, allowed for the body’s vitality, its inherent, physical capacity to feel the emotions. However, to Diderot, this capacity made the body extremely unmanageable. Thus his First Speaker argues that an actor who relies on his own sensibility may create a fine moment but not a fine part (67). The more an actor relies on his sensibility, he argues, the more unpredictable is his performance and the more limited his range. A great actor, in contrast, knows how to get out of his own way; his roles do not depend on his capacity for sympathy; he is a blank slate who can create a model character he has invented out of his imagination (Roach 123). Consequently, Diderot contends, an actor like Garrick, “trains himself to overcome the effect of sensibility on stage, to discipline his gestures and expressions to the threshold at which their sensible content ceases to register on his consciousness” (Roach 134). Here then is another explanation for Garrick’s emphasis on the physical details of a role. In Diderot’s opinion, repetition endows a great actor like Garrick with a dual consciousness; when performing, he has a “freakish capacity to detach himself from his bodily machine, to divide himself into two personalities . . . and so to direct the outward motions of his passions by an inward mental force, itself unmoved, undistorted by the physiological effects it oversees” (Roach 147-8). Great acting, for Diderot, thus requires a certain degree of critical detachment; at the same time that a performer is experiencing emotion, he or she must also be able to direct its expression by using rational thought. Although Diderot’s treatise was not published until

1830, these ideas were already in circulation through a variety of sources during the last third of the century. Garrick, who knew Diderot well, was certainly aware of the philosopher's position on acting.⁸⁷

Garrick's own opinions about acting are difficult to ascertain. In writing and in person, he often contradicted himself. He is deliberately vague about the actor's need to identify with a character's emotions in his Essay on Acting (1744). His ability to quickly run through a gamut of different emotions, and his penchant for mimicking different character types, suggests the rather mechanical, or external, approach fostered by Le Brun's Méthode. However, in a letter of 1769, Garrick's comments upon the French actress Madame Clairon insist upon the importance of sensibility: "Madam Clairon," he writes, "has none of those instantaneous feelings, . . . that [burst] at once from genius, and like electrical fire, shoots through the veins, marrow, bones and all of every spectator" (Letters 2: 635). Sensibility, he goes on to suggest, is more important than attention to physical detail:

Madam Clairon is so conscious and certain of what she can do, that she never, I believe, has the feelings of the instant come upon her unexpectedly; but I pronounce that the greatest strokes of genius have been unknown to the actor himself, till circumstances, and the warmth of the scene, has sprung the mine as it were, as much to his own surprise as that of the audience (Letters 2: 635).

A great actor, he concludes, is someone whose sensibility will enable him to "realize the

⁸⁷ Long before its publication, The Paradox was widely circulated in manuscript form. Diderot's ideas were also disseminated in Friedrich Grimm's Correspondence Littéraire (1770) and in his own Salons (Roach 157, 127). In his Salon de 1767, for example, Diderot has Garrick exclaim "When I rend my heart, when I utter inhuman cries, it is not from my heart, they are not my cries, but those of another whom I have imagined and who does not exist" (Roach 128).

feelings of his character, and be transported beyond himself” (Letters 2: 635). Garrick’s letter clearly indicates his belief that the actor must feel the emotions he or she represents. However, according to his great friend and tutor, Samuel Johnson, he was merely giving in to the public’s desire to imagine that he felt his characters’ emotions. According to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Johnson once remarked to Gibbon:

‘Garrick’s trade was to represent passion, not to feel it. Ask Reynolds whether he felt the distress of Count Hugolino when he drew it.’
 Gib. ‘But surely he feels the passion at the moment he is representing it.’
 Johns. ‘About as much as Punch feels. That Garrick himself gave into this foppery of feelings I can easily believe; but he knew at the same time he lied. He might think it right, as far as I know, to have what fools imagined he ought to have; but it is amazing that any one should be so ignorant as to think an actor will risk his reputation by depending on the feelings that shall be excited in the presence of two hundred people, on the repetition of certain words which he has repeated two hundred times before. . . . No, Sir, Garrick left nothing to chance; every gesture, every expression of countenance, and variation of voice, was settled in his closet before he set foot upon the stage (George Hill 1: 248).⁸⁸

Regardless of his own protestations, then, Garrick’s identification with his roles was a matter of considerable debate. While people like the Reverend James Fordyce and John Hill insisted that Garrick identified with his characters, others like Charles Burney and Robert Brinsley Sheridan agreed with Johnson’s point of view.

Widely circulated stories illustrate both ideas about Garrick. One story, for instance, had it that “following Garrick’s final performance of King Lear, the actress playing Cordelia, Miss Younge, requested Garrick’s blessing and that he obliged her

⁸⁸ Although the piece is excerpted from a work entitled “Two Dialogues by Sir Joshua Reynolds in Imitation of Johnson’s Style of Conversation,” George Hill insists that the substance of this dialogue really did occur. Sir Joshua Reynolds merely collected, “as if into *two* conversations, what had been uttered at *many*” (232, note 1).

backstage with all the soberness and gravity of his character” (Woods 42). Conversely, Lonsdale recounts Dr. Burney’s description of an episode in which Garrick,

at the end of ‘the most affecting scenes of King Lear,’ peering with great satisfaction at his deeply moved audience who were wiping their eyes and blowing their noses: ‘Yes! Yes! My dears! You have it,’ said Garrick cheerfully, & mopping his fingers, ran into the green room’ (17).

Garrick, Burney demonstrates, does not feel Lear’s pain.

Frances almost certainly shared her father’s opinions regarding Garrick’s method of acting. With apparent approval, she reports that Dr. Johnson called Garrick “mechanical,” able to “exert his spirits at a Time alike, without consulting his real Disposition to hilarity” (EJ&L 2: 129). Even when moved by a performance, Burney remains skeptical. Lauding Garrick as Richard II, for example, she declares that she “will ever see him so disfigured again; he *seemed* so truly the monster he performed, that I felt myself glow with indignation every time I saw him” (EJ&L 1: 225). Although affected by the performance, Burney nevertheless differentiates Garrick, her friend, from the role he performs.

Acting Theory and Conduct Material

Burney’s admiration for Garrick’s ability to represent qualities he did not necessarily possess does more than put her at odds with the schools of thought represented by Aaron and John Hill. It sheds light on her view of women’s nature and roles. As we saw in Chapter One, much eighteenth-century conduct material helped to discipline women’s behavior by insisting on a direct and unmediated correlation between

a woman's external attributes and her quality of mind. Real ladies, these writers, suggest, are incapable of acting other than themselves. Burney's opinion of Garrick's method of acting, however, may have enabled her to see an important contradiction within the material. By offering young ladies advice about how to behave, conduct-book writers "indirectly testified as how little 'nature' alone would explain" (Yeazell 47). Indeed, the stress on behavior in conduct material created the possibility that – like Diderot's actor – any woman could learn to act like a lady regardless of her individual quality of mind.

Much eighteenth-century conduct material consequently reveals an anxiety about women who can act and appear as something other than themselves. This anxiety is typically expressed in terms of a concern about authenticity of demeanor. "Nothing so effectually defeats its own ends as the [pretense of emotion]" warns Hester Chapone; "for, though warm affections and tender feelings are beyond measure amiable and charming when perfectly natural . . . yet nothing is so truly disgusting as the affectation of them" (51). Lady Sarah Pennington agrees. "The conduct of a virtuous woman never shuns the light," she explains; "the more her character is enquired into, the better she is satisfied" (128). Pennington here overtly conflates the conduct and character of virtuous women; one is the direct reflection of the other. Inadvertently, however, she also suggests that not-so-virtuous women can appear to be virtuous. Unlady-like behavior, she implies, is something that shuns the light. Baring close scrutiny, it is something that can be hidden successfully. Dr. Gregory is even more awkward. In this passage he tries to reconcile giving advice about conduct with his assertion that feminine behavior is natural to women: "You may perhaps think I want to throw every spark of Nature out of your

composition and make you entirely artificial. Far from it. I think you may possess dignity without pride, affability without meanness, and simple elegance without affectation” (52). For Gregory, nature and art are continuous. One cannot learn to act like a lady unless one is already inherently feminine. Even though he gives his readers explicit directions about how to behave, Gregory denies that acting like a lady could mean acting in a theatrical sense.

Nevertheless, the possibility existed. In fact, conduct material played an important role in narrowing the gap between the public’s perception of ladies and actresses at the end of the century. However, the first sign of this phenomenon, as we have seen, was not the belief that ladies could be actresses, but the sense that actresses, like Siddons, could also be ladies. Key to this process was the notion of sensibility. By the last third of the century, the actress’s ability to identify with her role had become a sign of her own inherent quality of mind. Just as the lady’s physiological response to a person or scene was read as sign of her sensibility, the actress’s ability to feel her character’s emotions indicated a similar ability to experience a sympathetic reaction to the pathetic or affecting in art and in life. Read in this light, Burney’s reservations about Sarah Siddons’s reliance on sensibility suggests the extent that her exposure to Garrick helped shape her sense of herself, of actresses, and of women in general.

Burney and Siddons

As someone who began her career in the 1760s, Siddons publicly embraced the belief that actors needed to feel the emotions they represented on stage. In her remarks

on playing Constance in King John, for example, she explains that

I never, from the beginning of the play to the end of my part in it, once suffered my dressing-room door to be closed, in order that my attention might be constantly fixed on those distressing events which, by this means, I could plainly hear going upon the stage, the terrible effects which progress were to be represented by me. . . . [T]he sickening sounds of [the] march would usually cause the bitter tears of rage, disappointment, betrayed confidence, baffled ambition, and, above all, the agonizing feelings of maternal affection to gush into my eyes. In short, the spirit of the whole drama took possession of my mind and frame, by my attention being incessantly riveted to the passing scenes (Campbell 89).

Siddons's emotional identification with her roles often inspired pandemonium in the audience. Boaden recalls that Siddons's portrayal of Jane Shore, for example, caused

sobs, [and] *shrieks*, among the tender part of her audiences; or those tears, which manhood . . . at length grew proud of indulging. . . . the nerves of many a gentle being gave way . . . and fainting fits, long and frequently alarmed the decorum of the house (Siddons 161).

Siddons's portrayal of Shore's "physical suffering," Campbell explains, "was the more appalling for a sort of prosaic closeness to reality. But it was terrible and perfect acting," he adds, "up to the truth of nature" (74).

Although Siddons's identification with her roles was widely acknowledged, other evidence suggests that it was not as complete as she would have it seem. One telling example suggests that Siddons depended on the presence of something akin to Diderot's "dual consciousness" when performing. According to Campbell, Siddons, while playing Mrs. Beverley in The Gamester, uttered such a piercing shriek that Mr. Young, who played Mr. Beverley, found himself unable to speak:

Mr. Young said his throat swelled, and his utterance was choked. He stood unable to speak the few words which, as *Beverley*, he ought to have immediately delivered: the pause lasted long enough to make the prompter several times repeat *Beverley's* speech, till Mrs. Siddons, coming up to her fellow-actor, put the tip of

her fingers on his shoulders, and said, in a low voice, “Mr. Young, *recollect yourself*” (86).

In this instance, at least, Siddons was clearly able to distinguish herself and her fellow actor from the roles they portrayed.

Viewed in this light, Siddons’s insistence that she felt her characters’ emotions seems part of a self-conscious effort to affirm her resemblance to conduct-book notions of the feminine ideal. As a creature of sensibility, Siddons was able to claim for herself an authenticity of demeanor on stage that was unavailable to those who relied on technique alone. Indeed, she observes, “those who act mechanically are sure to be in some sort of right, while we who trust to nature (if we do not happen to be in the humour, which, however, Heaven be praised, seldom happens) are as dull as anything . . . because *we cannot feign*” (Manvell Siddons 60, emphasis mine). Siddons’s insistence on her inability to act other than how she feels here clearly recalls conduct books’ insistence on a direct correlation between a lady’s countenance and character. Her repertoire, which consisted primarily of wronged wives and mothers, reinforced the impression. So did her apparent fidelity to her husband and her overt displays of maternal affection. Indeed, as I have argued in Chapter One, Siddons’s famous “Three Reasons” for leaving Bath suggests that her publicly displayed “private” persona was as much of a performance as her roles on the stage.

Burney seems to have been one of the few unconvinced by the actress’s demonstrations of sensibility. She first saw Siddons in Bath in 1780 as Belvidera in Thomas Otway’s tragedy Venice Preserv’d. Burney was prepared to “fall in love” with

the actress, but instead found herself more impressed with John Lee who played the hero, Pierre. “[A] better [actor],” she writes, “except Garrick I never did see” (D&L 1: 351). Despite Siddons’s vaunted skill in the role, Burney was unmoved by her depiction of Belvidera’s decline into madness and death. Although her admiration for Siddons’s acting eventually increased, Burney was never overwhelmed by her demonstrations of sensibility on stage:

I do think that Mrs. Siddons for Vigour of Action, pathetic Tone of Voice, and a sort of Radiance which comes round her in Scenes where strong heroic Virtues are displayed, *never had her equal*. For versatility of Genius, or Comprehension of various Characters, Pritchard was eminently her superior; Add to this that [Mrs. Siddons] is eminently handsome — dear Pritchard’s Person came against her perpetually — but what a *Mind* she had! (D&L 2: 343).

Burney’s comment reveals a detached, almost clinical interest in Siddons’s technique. Moreover, in her comparison of Pritchard and Siddons, she explicitly denigrates Siddons’s method of comprehending her characters. Describing Siddons as Portia, she writes, for example, that the actress “played Portia . . . charmingly, though not, I think with so perfect an entrance into the character as I have observed in her performance of some other parts” (D&L 3: 401). For Burney, Siddons’s reliance on sensibility as a method of understanding her roles is an imperfect method of acting. She preferred performers whose ability to remain emotionally detached from their roles allowed them to think about how their parts should be played. Consequently, when King George III exclaimed to Burney, “there was never any player in my time so excellent [as Siddons] — not Garrick himself” Burney remained silent. “I could not concur where I thought so differently,” she writes, “and to enter into an argument with [the King] was impossible”

(D&L 2: 397-8).

Burney's Journals

Given the extent to which Burney's own ideas about acting were influenced by Garrick, her reservations about Siddons's method of acting are less than surprising. As Burney's journals attest, she was clearly aware of the performative nature of female experience. Indeed, for Burney, behaving like a lady often meant acting a role *regardless* of whether or not one identified with the part. Allusions to plays pepper her journals and descriptions of social occasions often are written as if they were scenes in a play. When Sheridan and Reynolds addressed her about writing a play in January of 1779, for example, she not only refers to herself as "Mrs. Candour," an inveterate gossip who spreads misinformation in Sheridan's School for Scandal, but records the conversation thus:

Sir Joshua. Anything in the *Dialogue* way, I think, she *must* succeed in;-- & I am sure *invention* will not be wanting.

Mr. Sheridan No, indeed; -- I think, & say, she should write a *Comedy*.

....

Sir Joshua. I am sure I think so; & hope she *will*.

I could only answer by *incredulous* exclamations.

'Consider, continued Sir Joshua, you have already had all the applause & fame you *can* have given you in the *Clozet*,--but the Acclamation of a *Theatre* will be new to you.'

And then he put down his Trumpet, & began a violent clapping of his Hands. I actually shook from Head to foot! I felt myself already in Drury Lane, amidst the *Hub bub* of a first Night.

....

'Oh, Sir! cried I, *You* should not run on so,--you don't know what mischief you may do!

Mr. Sheridan. I wish I *may*--I shall be very glad to be accessory.

Sir Joshua. She has, certainly, something of a knack at Characters;--*where* she

got it, I don't know,--& how she got it, I can't imagine,--but she
certainly *has* it. And to throw it away is---
Mr. Sheridan. Oh, she *won't*,--she will write a Comedy,--she has promised me
she will! (EJ&L 3: 234-235).

As befits a young lady receiving paternal advice, Burney seems timid, unsure of her skills. Her apparent reluctance to write a play indicates a degree of modesty, and a consequent fear of exposure commended by conduct book writers like Dr. Gregory. According to Gregory, truly modest women should not even attend plays. "There are few English comedies," Gregory writes, "that a lady may see without a shock to her delicacy" (58). The woman who laughs at such scenes, he warns, "is believed to know more than she should," while the innocent woman who does not react will appear hardened and immodest (58). Since the only appropriate response to indecent material is a look of pained awareness, Gregory suggests avoiding such plays altogether.

Writing plays was even worse. Indeed, in December of 1778, Burney's mentor, Samuel "Daddy" Crisp, explained to Burney that most successful comedies possess freedoms that "Ladies of the strictest Character . . . perhaps would *shy* at being *known* to be the Authors of" (EJ&L 3: 187). Burney's response is revealing. "I would a thousand times forfeit my character as a *Writer*," she remarks, rather "than risk ridicule and censure as a *Female*" (EJ&L 3: 212). Burney's emphasis on reputation here clearly underscores her concern with the way her behavior will be perceived by others. Read in this light, Burney's response to Sheridan and Reynolds dramatizes her determination to conform to conventional notions of the feminine ideal.

However, for Burney, conforming required a certain degree of acting. As Burney's

description of herself as “Mrs. Candour” suggests, Burney is not being honest with Sheridan and Reynolds. Despite her protestations, Burney was already, albeit secretly, at work on her first play, The Witlings. Moreover, as the author of this “scene,” Burney amply justifies the duo’s faith in her potential as a playwright. The two images of Burney that emerge from this scene consequently illustrate Burney’s theatrical view of female experience. Although she behaves like a lady, she is at the same time actively, though secretly, opposing conduct-book models of feminine behavior by writing her play.⁸⁹

As Ellen Donkin has convincingly argued, Burney’s inability to reconcile her desire to act like a lady with writing plays ultimately proved fatal to her career as a playwright.⁹⁰ As a novelist, however, Burney was much more adept at protecting her reputation as a proper young lady. Unlike writing plays, which required working with actors and theater managers, writing a novel was a privately generated endeavor. As a

⁸⁹ See Margaret Doody, Frances Burney: The Life in the Works, Ellen Donkin, Getting Into the Act, and Julia Epstein, “Epistolary Voices” for thorough discussions about Burney’s efforts to appease Dr. Burney’s and Samuel Crisp’s fears about her desire to write plays.

⁹⁰ In addition to the fragment of a tragedy entitled Elberta, Burney completed four comedies (The Witlings, Love and Fashion, The Woman-Hater, and A Busy Day) and three tragedies (Edwy and Elgiva, Hubert De Vere, and The Seige of Pevensey). Edwy and Elgiva was the only one of Burney’s plays to be produced during her lifetime. The play, which opened at Drury Lane on March 21, 1795, was a miserable failure and closed after only one performance. According to Burney, who describes the performance in her journal, the staging was laughably inappropriate and most of the actors did not know their lines. Donkin argues that the play’s failure illuminates the practical difficulties Burney faced as she attempted to reconcile her desire to write plays with her notions of appropriate feminine conduct. Donkin argues that Burney’s refusal to attend rehearsals deprived her of the opportunity to make crucial last-minute revisions to the script. Furthermore, as an “outsider” at Drury Lane, Burney had no way of knowing that her play was caught in a dispute between Sheridan and his company over unpaid salaries. The lead actor’s refusal to learn his lines, Donkin explains, was the result of this dispute.

result, Burney was able to script and stage her own entrance into the world as a professional novelist. Despite her genuine fear of public exposure, Burney's decision to conceal her identity as Evelina's author was also a theatrical move. The anonymous publication dramatized the author's modesty; it ensured that Burney's authorship, if revealed, would reinforce her reputation as a proper young lady. In the months before her identity as the author of Evelina was discovered, her behavior was characterized by a love of acting and a determination to keep her own roles — as an author and as a proper young lady — distinct from each other. During the negotiations preceding publication and in the weeks that followed, Burney successfully feigned ignorance about the authorship of Evelina. In one instance, she volunteered to read the “new” novel to Daddy Crisp, and records in her journal her difficulty in appearing unconcerned with his reaction:

I have, since, heartily repented that I read *any* of the book to him, for I found it a much more awkward thing than I had expected: my voice quite faltered when I began it. . . . But now that I was sensible of my error in being my own Mistress of Ceremonies, I determined to leave to [my sister] Hetty the 3^d Volume, & therefore pretended I had not brought it. He was in a delightful ill humour about it, & I *enjoyed* his impatience far more than I should have done his forbearance (EJ&L 3: 21).

Burney's description of her behavior underscores her own love of performing. At the same time, her desire to act as “my own Mistress of Ceremonies.” suggests the way Burney's ability to act like a lady gave her a degree of control over her own self-presentation as a novelist. In a similar fashion, Burney's preface to Evelina attempts to define the novelist as a respectable young lady. In describing her work as something that young ladies may read “if not with advantage, at least without injury,” Burney describes herself as a novelist whom conduct-book writers like Gregory and Chapone might

recommend (EV pref.).

Evelina

The performative view of female experience apparent in Burney's journals also appears in Evelina. On one level, Evelina seems to reinforce conduct-book notions of women's nature and roles. On another level, however, the novel points out several incongruities between Evelina's outward demeanor and her interior life, incongruities that undermine the notion that a lady's behavior is the natural and unmediated manifestation of her quality of mind. Despite the fact that Evelina herself has internalized conduct-book notions of lady-like behavior, the disparities between her interior life and her external conduct ultimately suggests that behaving like a lady means acting a role.⁹¹

At first glance, the structure of Evelina seems to reinforce Hemlow's assertion that Burney's novels commend conduct-book notions of the feminine ideal. Raised in seclusion, Evelina is brought to London and later to Bristol Hotwells where she manages to maintain her virtue and win the hearts of Lord Orville and her estranged father, despite the constant interference of scheming relatives and would-be seducers. Along the way,

⁹¹ In "Staging Identity: Frances Burney's Allegory of Genre," Emily Allen also notes a disparity between Evelina's internal experience and the way others perceive that experience. However, she argues that in Evelina, "the novel comes to be aligned with an appropriate inwardness, with nature in fact, while theatrical spectacle is aligned with an inappropriate exteriority and ocular excess" (435). Ultimately, she concludes, that Evelina neutralizes public spectacle, recasting the heroine's experience as predominantly internal. Allen's reading thus supports Armstrong's contention that the novel works to naturalize middle-class notions of gender (as opposed to the theatrical spectacle, which denaturalizes it). As such, it conflicts with my own reading, which sees Burney foregrounding the tension between internal and external experience in order to indicate the performative nature of female identity.

Evelina's letters home testify to her own virtuous conduct while pointing out the foibles and vices of those whom she meets. Meanwhile, the letters of her guardian, the Reverend Villars, function as "a compact courtesy-book covering a surprisingly full list of the stereotyped topics treated in such works" (Hemlow History 91). Evelina is advised to shun London as "a general harbour of fraud and folly, of duplicity and impertinence." to avoid coquetry and imprudence, and to protect her reputation (EV 105). When Evelina finds herself under the irresponsible protection of her grandmother, Madame Duval, Villars warns her to avoid improper conduct. "Do not, by a too passive facility, risk the censure of the world," he commands, "or your own future regret" (EV 149). Villars's advice clearly reflects Burney's own concern with the fragility of women's reputations. However, Villars is also insisting upon the accuracy and the authority of public opinion. Specifically, he insists that Evelina's conduct and *her sense of herself* should correspond to popular opinions about women's nature and roles.

Overtly, at least, initial descriptions of Evelina seem drawn from conduct-book descriptions of the feminine ideal. Before we meet Evelina, we learn that Villars regards her as a creature of "artless purity" (EV 9). His friend, Lady Howard, elaborates:

She is a little angel! . . . Her face and person answer my most refined ideas of complete beauty. . . . She has the same gentleness in her manners, the same natural graces in her motions, that I formerly so much admired in her mother. Her character seems truly ingenuous and simple; and at the same time that nature has blessed her with an excellent understanding and great quickness of parts, she has a certain air of inexperience and innocency that is extremely interesting (EV 10).

On one level, Lady Howard's depiction of the heroine works to naturalize her appearance and behavior by insisting on a direct correlation between Evelina's exterior and interior

qualities. Evelina, we learn, is a girl without “art”; her character is simple and easily read; her physical beauty is merely the manifestation of her virtuous heart. On another level, however, Lady Howard’s description undermines the same correlation it seems to enforce. Evelina’s inexperience, Lady Howard approvingly notes, makes her appear less intelligent than she really is.

Evelina’s behavior bears out Lady Howard’s description. Although she is capable of occasional mistakes in deportment, most of her errors spring from ignorance of social custom. On the few occasions where she is actually at fault, her conduct is severely chastised. For example, when Evelina lies at a ridotto in order to avoid dancing with Sir Clement Willoughby, Villars condemns her “attempted adoption of . . . fashionable manners” (EV 44). Later, after she leaves the opera with Willoughby to avoid a meeting between Lord Orville and her cousins, the Branghtons, Villars blames Evelina for Willoughby’s subsequent attempt at seduction. “I need not now,” he remarks. “enlarge upon your indiscretion and want of thought, in so hastily trusting yourself with a man so little known to you, and whose gaiety and flightiness should have put you on your guard” (EV 104). Upon both these occasions, Villars’s distress does more than reveal his concern for Evelina’s quality of mind; it also underscores the fact that Evelina, like all young women, is a girl whose character is forever on display. Indeed, as Ruth Yeazell notes, for Evelina “to enter the world is largely for her to be exposed to the gaze of the Other, to be looked at and judged” (130). By foregrounding the audience’s role in the interpreting Evelina’s appearance and behavior, the novel effectively suggests the theatrical nature of Evelina’s experience.

Throughout the novel, Evelina's letters to Villars frequently discuss the way her appearance and behavior are misinterpreted by the people she meets, especially the men. Too shy to speak to Lord Orville at her first ridotto, for example, she overhears Orville describe her as "a poor weak girl," to Sir Clement Willoughby. "*A poor weak girl!*" Evelina writes later, "*ignorant or mischievous!*" What mortifying words! . . . I am resolved . . . that I will never again be tempted to go to an assembly" (EV 25). Indirectly, Evelina's comments point out and condemn the spectator's role in constructing her public persona. For her, there is a clear difference between the way she is perceived by Orville and her own sense of self. Despite Villars suggestion that "the world" is an accurate judge of a woman's private character, Evelina's experience at the ridotto suggests that the public's insights into women's characters are limited at best.

Occasionally, they can even be dangerous. When Evelina finds herself lost in a grove at Vauxhall frequented by prostitutes she is reminded of the real dangers involved in straying off "the long-beaten path of female timidity" (W 343). Surrounded by rakes, Evelina finds herself unable to move. "In a moment, she explains, "both my hands, by different persons, were caught hold of, and one of them, in a most familiar manner, desired where I ran next; . . . while the rest of the party stood still and laughed" (EV 181). Although she begs for release, the men continue to restrain Evelina. To the newly arrived Willoughby, one man describes her as "the prettiest little actress I have seen this age" (EV 181). The remark is telling. Defined by her context, Evelina here is akin to an actress to the extent that her audience defines who she is by what they see. Only Willoughby's interference saves Evelina from rape.

Willoughby's subsequent attempt at seduction reinforces the lesson. When repelled, he defends his conduct by pleading her situation. "By Heaven," he cries. "you distract me; . . . why do I see you here?" (EV 183). Evelina's presence in the grove, he suggests, encouraged his amorous intentions because it revealed something wanton in her own character. Only after Evelina enacts her virtue with tears and anger is Willoughby persuaded to lead her back to her friends. The threat of physical violence dramatized here consequently demonstrates the way the assumption of a direct and unmediated correlation between women's behavior and their sexual availability disciplined the conduct of women. By emphasizing the role of the spectator in the misinterpretation of Evelina's character, the novel takes issue with this assumed correlation, suggesting, instead, the performative nature of Evelina's experience in the public eye.

To this end, the novel's epistolary structure constantly reminds the reader of the difference between the way others see Evelina and her own sense of self. As Burney does in her journals, Evelina uses the letters to differentiate between her real self – or at least the self she wants Villars to see – and the "Evelina" who is observed in a social context. As the narrator of her own experience, Evelina is far more astute and much less passive than she otherwise appears. Despite her outward obedience to Madame Duval, Evelina is horrified by her grandmother's bad manners and describes her "tyrannical humours" and lack of understanding in scathing detail. In one telling comment she remarks. "it is wonderful to see how easily and frequently [Madame Duval] is deceived" (EV 221). Regardless of her own feelings, however, Evelina *behaves* like a dutiful granddaughter. Despite her contempt for Captain Mirvan, the Branghtons, Sir Clement Willoughby, and

Lord Orville's sister, Lady Louisa Larpent. Evelina treats them with respect as well. Slighted by Lady Louisa, Evelina exclaims, "how can that young lady see her brother so universally admired for his manners and deportment, and yet be so unamiably opposite to him in hers! but while *his* mind, enlarged and noble, rises superior to the little prejudices of rank, *hers*, feeble and unsteady, sinks beneath their influence" (EV 268). Although she is perfectly polite to Lady Louisa, Evelina's comments to Villars are absolutely devastating. Read against Evelina's descriptions of her own behavior, Evelina's private thoughts are another way Burney undermines the notion of a direct correlation between Evelina's character and her outward demeanor. Indeed, they create the impression that Evelina is performing a role.

A host of theatrical allusions reinforce this performative view of Evelina's experience upon what Burney calls "the *great and busy stage* of life" (EV pref. emphasis mine). During Evelina's London sojourn Burney uses specific plays to illuminate Evelina's character and situation. Her sorrow at King Lear, for example, helps illustrate her filial piety. Like Cordelia, Evelina has also been unfairly disowned by her father. Likewise, a performance of Congreve's Love for Love provides the occasion for Evelina to demonstrate her modesty. The play, Evelina writes, "is so extremely indelicate . . . that Miss Mirvan and I were perpetually out of countenance, and could neither make any observation ourselves, nor venture to listen to those of others" (EV 67). Although Evelina's experience here illustrates Gregory's caution about seeing plays, the ensuing discussion points out the nearness of life on and off stage. Accosted by Lovel — a fop whom the Captain compares to the play's Mr. Tattle — Evelina finds herself identified

with Miss Prue, “the *country* young lady” (EV 70). The Captain, Lovel also suggests, resembles Mr. Ben, the play’s rough and stupid sailor. Springing to Evelina’s defense, Orville revises Lovel’s estimation by asserting that “[t]he only female in the play . . . worthy of being mentioned to these ladies is Angelica” (EV 70). Recast as the ingenue, Evelina remains silent for the duration of what reads like a short, theatrical scene.

In fact, as in Burney’s journals, many of the novel’s scenes read like scenes in a play. As Marjorie Morrison notes, the structure of Evelina bears a marked resemblance to genteel comedy, which Morrison defines as “essentially a comedy of manners stripped of the licentiousness of Restoration days and adulterated with the sentimental” (219). As in genteel comedy, the majority of scenes in Evelina are built around parties of people who meet in public places and reveal their characters through dialogue and gestures. The fops, rakes, fashionable ladies, and educated women are all types taken from the drama. Refining Morrison’s argument, Margaret Doody argues that Burney uses the farce, “a ‘masculine’ mode of comedy, largely derived from the public medium of the stage, [and] wraps it up in the ‘feminine’ epistolary mode” in order to “[repudiate] the restrictions of being ‘the proper lady’” (Burney 48-9). In an actual farce, Doody explains, Madame Duval would be a transvestite role, something “Burney’s contemporaries presumably understood . . . intuitively” (Burney 50). According to Doody, Burney uses this contemporary convention to “explode and express the tensions involved in playing the female role in the eighteenth century” (Burney 50). While Evelina herself certainly believes in the role she performs, Burney’s use of theatrical allusion thus underscores the theatrical nature of female experience. Evelina, in fact, could be describing the way

Garrick influenced Burney's view of women who adhere to notions of feminine deportment found in conduct material when she exclaims, "I could hardly believe [Garrick] had studied a *written part*. for every word *seemed* to be uttered from the impulse of the moment" (EV 15. emphasis mine). Although Evelina's marriage to Orville ultimately rewards the heroine's adherence to contemporary notions of the feminine ideal, the narrative split in Evelina and the plethora of theatrical allusions throughout the novel simultaneously work to suggest that acting like a lady means acting a role.

The Wanderer

While Evelina is often described as Burney's best novel, The Wanderer is usually considered her worst.⁹² Even Rose Marie Cutting, a staunch defender of Burney's last novel, admits that "The Wanderer has many weaknesses: an improbable plot: faulty characterization; monotonous repetition; pompous, even bombastic diction: [and] a convoluted syntax intended to be elegant but thwarting comprehension and enjoyment" ("Wreath" 47). These problems have been explicitly connected to Burney's relationship to conduct material. Hemlow, for example, argues that Burney's talents were contorted by her effort to "distinguish between propriety and impropriety, between good and faulty behaviour: to delineate and reward perfect conduct and to punish its reverse" (342). More

⁹² See, for example, Edward and Lillian Bloom, "Fanny Burney: The Retreat from Wonder"; Hemlow, History of Fanny Burney; Patricia Meyer Spacks, Imagining a Self: Autobiography and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England; and Katherine Rogers, "Fanny Burney, the Private Self and the Published Self" and Frances Burney: The World of Female Difficulties.

recently, scholars like Katherine Rogers, Patricia Meyer Spacks and Kristina Straub have pointed out the ways Burney's last work manifests the author's struggle between her "longing for freedom" and her fear of deviating from conventional standards of feminine conduct (Spacks *Imagining* 188). Burney's "conflicting fantasies," Spacks argues, "lessen her fiction's energy: on the one hand the dream of self assertion and success in the face of all obstacles, on the other the fearful fantasy of nemesis for female admission of hostility and female attempts at self-determination" (*Imagining* 190). Only Margaret Doody and Catherine Craft Fairchild, both of whom read *The Wanderer* as an unabashedly feminist novel, offer alternative explanations for the novel's aesthetic problems. For Fairchild, the novel's repetitions and excesses "reveal the strategies by which men suppress female discourse" (126-7). For Doody, the novel's bitter insistence on "the unrighteousness of human affairs" purposely undercuts the novel's happy ending in order to foreground woman's essential isolation (*Burney* 367). Although both scholars focus on other elements in the novel, both acknowledge that Burney's use of theatrical images and allusions helps her dramatize the way patriarchal authority subjugates women.⁹³

⁹³ Focusing on the subversive elements of masquerade, Fairchild discusses the way the heroine's many disguises create a mask upon which men project their desires (143). The heroine's multiple identities, she argues, are part of the way the novel uses excess to reveal the repressive effects of patriarchal ideology. Doody observes that Ellis, the heroine, and Elinor Joddrel, another important character, are both actresses. Doody points out that Elinor's self-conscious theatricality helps her act out the roles "which are socially proffered, and literalizes what is usually left metaphorical" (*Burney* 341). Ellis, she declares, "is that dangerous being, a fine female actress" (W xxii). Doody's insights are tantalizing but she does not elaborate on the ways the women's theatrical strategies figure in the novel's depiction of an unjust society or its concern with mankind's essential isolation.

The following discussion of The Wanderer builds on this insight, describing the way the novel's use of theatrical images and allusions enables Burney's most radical depiction of women's nature and roles. As in Evelina, Burney's ability to suggest the performative nature of female experience helps her denaturalize conduct-book equations between the heroine's countenance and character. However, in The Wanderer, Burney's use of third-person narration distances the reader from the heroine's interior life, an effect impossible to achieve in an epistolary novel. As a result, the true name, history, and motives of The Wanderer's heroine remain unknown to the reader for over two-thirds of the novel. Like the other characters in the novel, the reader is forced to interpret Ellis through her appearance and behavior, a process which the novel depicts as implicitly theatrical. Burney's use of theatrical allusions and images consequently makes the reader aware of his or her own dependence upon ideological structures that define women even as they point out the inadequacy of those beliefs. In fact, the novel's focus on the complex interplay between the protagonist and her audience ultimately suggests that ladies, like actresses, can't be defined by the way they appear.

Announcing itself as panoramic in scope, the novel opens in mid-action, deliberately disorienting the reader:

During the dire reign of the terrific Robespierre, and in the dead of night, braving the cold, the darkness, and the damps of December, some English passengers were preparing to glide silently from the coast of France when a voice of keen distress resounded from the shore imploring, in the French language, pity and admission (W 18).

Everything in this opening scene creates a sense of liminality. The passengers in the boat are literally between France and England. Blinded by darkness and without a familiar

context, neither the passengers nor the reader can possibly know what kind of person owns the voice on the beach. Until her pleas sharpen into “cries of agony” even the sex of the owner is undetermined (W 11).” The passengers reasonably fear that the voice belongs to a French agent attempting to prevent their escape. Thus the novel begins by taking away the usual means of establishing identity – vision, context, and auxiliary information – while raising the stakes.

The contrast between what is and is not visible in this opening scene creates the expectation – for both the passengers and the reader – that the speaker’s appearance will explain who she is. This expectation transforms the beach into a kind of stage. Ellis’s appearance on the beach is heralded, as it were, by her voice from the wings. Revolutionary France is the backdrop against which she appears. The English passengers assume the dual role of audience for Ellis and actors for the reader. The fact that they only look to Ellis’s appearance and conduct when she comes into view tests the assumption that a woman’s exterior reveals who she is.

This assumption, however, is quickly called into question. As the journey progresses, Ellis’s shabby clothes, dark brown skin, bandaged face, polished white teeth, and French accent give rise to a variety of conjectures based on the passengers’ own preconceptions. To the vicious Mrs. Ireton, her spoiled son, and the hypocritical Mrs. Maple, Ellis seems a dishonest adventurer. The rake, Mr. Riley, dismisses her as a black woman from Africa or the West Indies. The patriotic sea officer regards Ellis as a foreigner in distress. Mrs. Maple’s rebellious niece Elinor Joddrel is too self-absorbed to see Ellis as anything more than a potential rival for Harleigh’s affections. Gallant

Harleigh himself offers Ellis sympathy and support without drawing conclusions. The interpretation of Ellis's character is thus a kind of publicly-constructed event. Like an actress performing a role in a play, Ellis has only limited control over the way her character is understood by an audience. The passengers' different interpretations of her demeanor and appearance have as much to do with their own concerns and preoccupations as with the way Ellis looks and behaves.

Ellis's resemblance to an actress becomes even more pronounced once the party lands in England. Over several days, Ellis's artificially darkened skin fades to a "dazzling fairness" and her bandages, removed, reveal "amazing beauty" (W 43). As in the boat, the passengers' reactions are varied. Elinor is amused by the stranger's disguise.

Harleigh is concerned. As Burney explains:

It would not have been easy to have forborne taking an interest in her fate. She was in *evident* distress, yet never suffered herself to forget that she had escaped from some yet greater. Her mind *seemed* fraught with strength and native dignity. There was something singular, *indescribable*, in her manner of supporting the most harassing circumstances. It was impossible not to admire her (W 51, emphasis mine).

Although Burney's description of Ellis appears to reinforce an equation between her countenance and character, the language also emphasizes the interpretive choices her audience makes. While Harleigh sees a mind full of dignity and grace, Mrs. Maple and the Iretons see an adventurer whose lady-like appearance is as much of a disguise as her dark skin and patches. For them, Ellis's ability to disguise herself proves she's no lady. As in the case of actresses, Ellis's ability to transform her appearance relegates her to the status of "other" in the eyes of these characters.

The cultural norms that influence the way the public constructs Ellis's character are nowhere more clear than when Ellis appears on an actual stage. In the first of two episodes, a penniless Ellis agrees to participate in the private theatricals produced by Elinor. As Lady Townley in John Vanbrugh and Colley Cibber's The Provoked Husband. Ellis proves she can act. Rallying from an initial awkwardness occasioned by fright, Ellis gives a performance that "seemed the very essence of gay intelligence, of well bred animation, and of lively variety" (W 94). But her modulated voice and variable countenance do more than prove that she can act theatrically. Ellis's performance as Lady Townley helps Burney suggest that being a lady means acting a part.

A self-serving announcement from Mrs. Maple introducing Ellis as a "young lady of consequence" (W 91) predisposes the guests to regard Ellis's performance as a manifestation of her gentility rather than as the result of theatrical skill. However, Ellis's fellow performers know her as a penniless refugee who has refused to reveal her name and connections. Harleigh excepted, they are astonished when Ellis enters the green room dressed for the performance:

the ease with which she wore her ornaments, the grace which set them off, the elegance of her deportment, and the air of dignified modesty ... spoke her not only accustomed to such attire, but also to the good breeding and refined manners, which announce the habits of life to have been formed in the superior classes of society (W 92).

The similarity between the descriptions of Ellis acting as Lady Townley and her entrance into the green room collapses the distinction between on stage and off and suggests that one is every bit as much of a stage as the other. In this context, the guests' interpretation of Ellis's performance as Lady Townley illustrates the prevailing anxiety about women

who act. For the guests, Ellis's performance as Lady Townley must be credited to her good breeding rather than to her skill as an actress. To believe otherwise would be to suggest that women can be other than what they seem to be offstage as well as on.

If the private theatricals reveal a cultural anxiety about whether ladies act theatrically, the episode where Ellis performs in public shows what happens when it's known that they do. Here Burney describes a culture that cannot reconcile its notion of feminine modesty with the spectacle of a woman performing in public. As Harleigh points out when he begs Ellis not to act, to do so would be to deviate "alone and unsupported ... from the long-beaten track of female timidity"(W 343). After all, to go on stage would be to voluntarily subject herself to the public gaze. Thus Harleigh warns Ellis that her participation in the public assembly will prove she's immodest. By going on stage, Ellis, he suggests, would align herself with the figure of the actress, indicating to others an unlady-like yen for the admiration of strangers.

Needless to say, Burney does not let her heroine perform in public. Instead she creates a spectacle that blurs the line between the audience and the performers. The second suicide attempt of Elinor Joddrel, whose unrequited love for Harleigh has led her to despair, collapses the distinction between the audience and the stage. Obsessed with the suspicion that Ellis loves Harleigh, Elinor attends the recital in disguise. Overcome by the realization that Elinor is the mysterious gentleman seated near the stage, Ellis faints. Harleigh leaps from the audience and rushes to her side where they, in turn, watch Elinor's performance in the crowd. Casting aside her disguise, Elinor appears in "deep mourning: her long hair, wholly unornamented, hanging loosely down her shoulders" (W

359). Brandishing a dagger, Elinor demands everyone's attention: "Turn, Harleigh, turn!" she cries. "Behold perfidious Ellis, behold thy victim" (W 359). Harleigh rushes back into the audience, but he is too late. Plunging a dagger into her chest, Elinor falls into his arms.

Although Elinor's despair is genuine, the scene itself is explicitly theatrical. The blocking, with its emphasis on point and counterpoint, would work well on the stage. Elinor's use of "perfidious" and "thy" is also theatrical; elevated language was characteristic of melodrama at the turn of the century. On stage, Elinor's dark robes would designate her as a tragedy queen and her loose hair would indicate an unstable mind. By situating such an overtly theatrical performance in the audience, Burney collapses the distinction between on- and off-stage.

In this manner, the narrative calls attention to the performative aspects of the audience's behavior. Predictably, Elinor's actions encourage a kind of public display by the rest of the audience that reinforces prevailing notions of feminine conduct. The ladies demonstrate their modesty by hiding their faces and running away. The men, meanwhile, crowd around Elinor as "spectators of some public exhibition [rather] than as actors in a scene of humanity" (W 360). Burney's language insists that everyone acts. It also points out the way that women's behavior is disciplined by the threat of seeming unlike a lady. Elinor isn't a spectacle because she acts. Burney implies; Elinor is a spectacle because of the role she performs.

The scene at the public assembly consequently helps clarify Burney's treatment of

Elinor, a figure whose behavior recalls both Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays.⁹⁴ At first glance, Elinor's feminist tirades and self-centered behavior make her seem like a stock character from anti-jacobin novels. However, as Claudia Johnson and Margaret Doody have noted, Burney is not simply condemning outspoken proponents of women's rights and the French Revolution. Elinor's criticism of English society is validated by the behavior of "snobbish, callous, prejudiced" characters like Mrs. Maple and the Iretons (Doody Burney 326). Moreover, her "ravings, though duly dismissed by 'sensible' characters, provide accurate running commentary on the humiliation and injustice suffered throughout the novel by . . . Ellis" (Johnson 21). Despite Elinor's outrageous behavior, then, Burney's depiction of Elinor does not prove that Burney disagreed with Wollstonecraft's views. However, it does suggest that Burney disagreed with Wollstonecraft's confrontational style of opposing social conventions.

Through Elinor, Burney illustrates the inefficacy of open rebellion. Individuals, she suggests, who don't conform to codes of modest femininity are treated like outcasts and yet perform still. By making a spectacle of herself at the assembly, Elinor forfeits her claim to the protection a modest demeanor provides. In this context, the crowding of the men is more sinister than it appears at first glance. Through her desire for public effect,

⁹⁴ Many scholars have noted a similarity between Elinor and Mary Wollstonecraft. Doody argues that the ultimate source for Elinor is the heroine of Mary Hays's Emma Courtney (1796) who pursues Augustus Harley. Joanne Cutting-Gray argues that Elinor's inability to control her feelings makes her a perversion of Wollstonecraft and notes that Wollstonecraft opposed Rousseau's "antinomy of nature-culture which isolates feeling from reason" (106). Taking a different tact, Leslie Marchand has argued that Lady Caroline Lamb's public threats of suicide over the end of her affair with Byron provided Burney with a more current model for Elinor's behavior than either Wollstonecraft or Hays (3: 72).

Elinor has given away her right to privacy. She becomes an object to be possessed by anyone who chooses to view her. Like Evelina's experience with the rakes at Vauxhall, Elinor's experience at the public assembly therefore does more than suggest the impossibility of living in the world as a woman who does not act theatrically. It illustrates the limitations and the dangers involved in choosing both one's roles and one's venues.

If Elinor's experience hints at the misery non-conformists suffer, Ellis's collapse dramatizes the benefits of conforming to the period's definition of proper feminine conduct. To Ellis's audience, her collapse proves that she's modest. In this sense the swoon is a performance. Regardless of Ellis's own intentions, the swoon is interpreted by the audience according to its idea of how a lady should behave. It is the assumption of a direct relationship between Ellis's behavior and her character, then, that suggests to her audience that she is inherently a "lady."

Not until the last third of the novel does the revelation of Ellis's name and her history validate the audience's assumptions. Ellis, we learn, is the legitimate daughter of the late Lord Granville's secret first marriage to the beautiful, orphaned daughter of a destitute man of business. Lord Granville, we are told, truly adored Ellis's mother, who "possessed every advantage . . . every perfection to which human nature can rise" (W 641). Ellis, then, embodies this union between two individuals defined by two different systems of value. As her mother's daughter, Ellis descends from a woman whose inner qualities were the source of her worth. Meanwhile, as Lord Granville's daughter, Ellis is also a member of the English nobility.

The satisfaction of knowing Ellis's name, connections and history is fleeting, however. Upon closer examination, the fact that Ellis is Juliet Granville tells us little about our heroine. The information, in fact, is explicitly devalued. Ellis's papers, we learn, were destroyed by a fire. She is therefore unable to prove who she is. We are told that her half-siblings' guardian, Lord Denmeath, has repeatedly refused requests by Juliet's French friends to recognize her legitimacy. Apparently the public recognition of Juliet's name rather than the name itself is what is needed for Ellis's identity as Juliet to exist. Overtly, at least, the novel seems to enact what Nancy Armstrong argues is the purpose of domestic fiction – a redefinition of gender that locates a woman's value in her character rather than in her fortune and family. By separating Ellis from her legal identity as Juliet Granville, the novel insists that Ellis – like her mother -- is a heroine because of her essential quality of mind.

As the novel continues, however, it points out its own inability to accurately represent the interior life of its heroine. Near the end of the novel, Sir Jaspar Harrington – a “gouty old Baronet” with a big crush on Ellis – takes Ellis to two different places which symbolize mankind's efforts to define a place for himself in the universe (W 435). Ellis's different reactions to Wilton, the ancestral home of the Earl of Pembroke, and to Stonehenge point out the limitations of social convention as a means of determining a person's identity. Ellis's self, we learn, can't be described by language at all.

If the public assembly proved that everyone acts, then Wilton is a stage where great performances occur. As the Earl of Pembroke's ancestral home, Wilton is the seat of political, social, and economic power, a repository for cultural artifacts, the site and

result of aristocratic social production. Although Burney assures us that “Juliet had a soul . . . delightedly ‘awake to the tender strokes of art’” Ellis follows Sir Jaspar as “one to whom everything was indifferent” (W 759). Burney’s choice of words is crucial here. Because Ellis no longer hopes that her identity as a Granville will be ratified, she is, suggests Burney, somehow changed by this loss. While Juliet’s “skill and taste would have heightened her pleasure into rapture” in viewing Wilton, “it is not as Juliet she followed” Sir Jaspar: “but as one whose discernment was gone, whose eyes were dimmed, whose powers of perception were asleep, whose spirit was annihilated” (W 760). Juliet would have appreciated Wilton. Ellis can not. Because Ellis no longer identifies herself as Juliet, in some sense she no longer is Juliet. Whatever it is that Ellis’s identity as Juliet embodies — whether it be the taste to appreciate Wilton or the ability to make sense of what Wilton signifies — they are not essential attributes of Ellis’s character. Rather, they are byproducts of a role: Ellis’s identity as Juliet Granville. Ellis’s identity as Juliet — or rather, her belief in her identity as Juliet — is therefore what mediates between Ellis and her culture. Without it, Ellis has no way to live in the kind of world represented by Wilton.

Appropriately then, the next scene takes Ellis out of the cultural world as she knows it. Stonehenge reminds us that the cultural production represented by Wilton is only a moment in a far longer story (Doody Burney 362). Stonehenge, notes Doody, signals Burney’s desire “to get beyond the readily accessible history . . . [of] Wilton, and into the realm of deep time, of measureless antiquity” (Burney 364). “Placed in this abandoned spot, far from the intercourse or even view of mankind,” Stonehenge

temporarily removes Ellis from the demands of her culture (W 766). At Stonehenge, Ellis finds a comfort that was missing at Wilton. To Ellis, “[t]he beauties of Wilton seemed appendages of luxury . . . while the nearly savage, however wonderful work of antiquity, in which she was now rambling . . . with no other prospect but of heath and sky, blunted for the moment, her sensibility . . . and calmed her spirits” (W 766). As in melodrama, the scenery here exteriorizes the protagonist’s emotion by making “plain what is ordinarily hidden” (Donohue Dramatic Character 110). “There is a gap,” remarks Doody, “between the outward personality in the social world and the inner self which finds its semblance in what is grand, strange, and primitive” (Burney 363). At Stonehenge, then, the difference between Ellis’s public self and her interior life becomes vividly clear. Indeed, for a moment, at Stonehenge, the reader comes close to experiencing a state of mind that belongs to the essential “Ellis.”

Who, then, is Ellis? In one sense, the way she is named points to her lack of control over how she is defined by others. Early in the novel a minor character visits Elinor, mistakenly assumes that the stranger’s name is “Miss Ellis,” and the name sticks.⁹⁵ In another sense, however, the naming of Ellis points to the public’s inability to explain who she is. Throughout the rest of the novel the reader is constantly aware that

⁹⁵ See Doody’s chapter on The Wanderer in Frances Burney: The Life in the Works and her introduction to The Wanderer (xv-xvi). At the novel’s conclusion, Ellis explains that “L.S.” were initials chosen at random by her French friends in order to protect her identity from discovery. Doody suggests that the initials refer to the fictional “Letitia Sourby,” a character who appeared in a paper published in the Anti-Jacobin which was, perhaps, authored by Burney’s father. Doody also comments that the letters “L” and “S” refer to types of British currency and speculates that Burney is commenting on the fact that women have no control over currency and are themselves treated as a means of medium and exchange.

Ellis's name is not her own. Like her identity as Juliet Granville, Ellis's name points to the difference between who she really is and how she is defined by others. "Ellis," then, is a name that suggests the theatrical nature of female experience.

Significantly, one source for Ellis's name must have been Rebecca Ellis, the actress who was the first wife of Burney's paternal grandfather.⁹⁶ By naming her heroine after an actress, Burney suggests that ladies, like actresses, perform roles. "Ellis," as Doody remarks, also translates as "Elle is," a phrase that asserts the heroine's gender and anonymity (W xvi). Ellis, then, is a name that ceaselessly defers an answer to the question: "Who is Ellis?"⁹⁷

Ultimately, the privacy Burney accords Ellis suggests that language, to Burney, is something that may ensnare but cannot express the self. Instead, like Evelina, The Wanderer calls attention to the opacity of women's exteriors and to the impossibility of self-disclosure in a social world. By suggesting the performative nature of female experience in society, Burney calls into question ideals of feminine appearance and behavior found in conduct material. Her novels offer their readers a way to conceive of themselves as unique individuals who might resist the control of those who dictate definitions of women's nature and roles. While there is no question that Burney encourages her readers to conform to a particular concept of what a lady should be, she also wants her readers to keep in mind that being a lady means acting a role. By

⁹⁶ See the family tree in Doody's Frances Burney: The Life in the Works.

⁹⁷ Doody also comes to this conclusion in Frances Burney: A Life in the Works (367-368).

suggesting that “ladies” cannot exist except in relation to the public eye, Burney demonstrates that a woman can’t be born a “lady” — she can only act like one.

Chapter Four:
Reading Like a Lady: Jane Austen's Irony and
the Divided Perspective

In his “Remarks upon the Present Taste for Acting Private Plays,” (1788) Richard Cumberland wrote: “if our present taste for private plays spreads as far as most fashions do in this country, we may expect the rising generation will be . . . one entire nation of actors and actresses” (115). Although the rage for private theatricals had largely subsided by the time Mansfield Park was published in 1814, Jane Austen’s use of Elizabeth Inchbald’s Lovers’ Vows in the novel testifies to the importance of the theater – both amateur and professional – in Austen’s life and her fiction. Culminating in a discussion of Mansfield Park and three recent films based on Sense and Sensibility and Emma, this chapter considers how Austen’s experience as an audience member for professional and amateur theatricals influenced her presentation of female experience. Like Burney and Inchbald, Austen, I show, was keenly aware of the theatrical nature of everyday life. In her novels, everyone – her heroines included – acts all the time. However, for Austen, acting like a lady is not so much a matter of performance, but of perception. Her primary interest is in the way her heroines and readers interpret what they see. Austen, I argue, locates both her heroines’ moral authority and their skill as performers in their ability to recognize the roles people assume as the fictions they are.

Austen’s readers are endowed with an even wider perspective, one that resonates with Austen’s own experience as a theatergoer. As we shall see, Austen experienced

drama through a divided consciousness. Even when moved by a performance, she also was able to rationally evaluate the play as a whole. In her novels, Austen uses irony to replicate this double consciousness for her readers.⁹⁸ Best understood as a mode of perception that acknowledges a difference between the way things appear and the way they really are, Austen's irony – as I later will demonstrate – manifests itself in a variety of ways. Invariably, however, it “discriminates between being and seeming, between . . . man as he is and man as he aspires to be” (Mudrick 3). Austen's irony endows the reader with a perspective that is both divided and ironic: at the same time that we sympathize with Austen's heroines, we also evaluate their decisions in light of what the narrator shows us is true. Unlike Burney and Inchbald, Austen thus prohibits her readers from fully identifying with any one character's perspective, including the heroine's. By privileging a divided, ironic mode of spectatorship, Austen's novels instead encourage her readers, regardless of their gender, to rationally evaluate the social norms and beliefs that her characters embrace.⁹⁹

Jane Austen and Private Theatricals

⁹⁸ Important discussions of Austen's irony include Howard Babb's Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue; Rachel Brownstein's “Jane Austen: Irony and Authority”: Marvin Mudrick's Jane Austen, Irony as Defense and Discovery; and Lionel Trilling's chapter on “Mansfield Park” in The Opposing Self. Scholarship which acknowledges the dramatic nature of Austen's irony includes Reuben A. Blower, “Light Bright and Sparkling: Irony in Fiction in Pride and Prejudice”; Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art; A. Walton Litz, Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development.

⁹⁹ My view of Austen's feminism resembles that of Margaret Kirkham, who argues that Austen's primary concern was to demonstrate that women, like men, were “rational creatures” capable of governing their passions through reason (xvii).

Although Austen was an enthusiastic and discerning observer of theatrical performances, there is no record of her exposure to the professional theater prior to June, 1799, when she was twenty-three years old. Private theatricals, however, were a common event during Austen's childhood. As Park Honan points out, the private theatricals in Mansfield Park are almost certainly derived from Austen's memories of the theatricals that took place at the Austens' home, Steventon rectory, between 1782 and 1790. The theatricals, moreover, certainly help shape Austen's literary imagination. Written between 1787 and 1793, Austen's juvenilia contain three playlets, which satirize various theatrical genres. Sometime in the 1790s, she also may have begun to turn Samuel Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison into a play.¹⁰⁰

Although little is known about the Steventon theatricals, Austen, at seven, was

¹⁰⁰ Austen's authorship of Grandison is not definitively established. According to family tradition, the piece was thought to have been written by Austen's favorite niece, Jane Anna Elizabeth Austen, or "Anna," who, as a child, dictated the work to her aunt. Until Brian Southam examined the play in 1977, Anna Austen's authorship of Grandison was widely accepted by Austen scholars, including R. W. Chapman, who produced what is still considered to be the authoritative collection of her works. Southam, however, notes that Chapman had never seen Grandison which, at fifty pages, was too long and too sophisticated to have been dictated by a child of seven. At the same time, Southam reasoned, "[i]f Grandison was written later than 1800, when Anna might have been old enough to conceive the play, Jane Austen would have had no hand in it. At that age, the girl could have written it out for herself" (9). Southam consequently concludes that both the chronology and the manuscript point to Austen as the play's sole author (9). In her review of Southam's edition of Grandison, "Jane Austen's Latest," Marilyn Butler contests this argument, arguing that the play was primarily written by Anna Austen around 1801, when she was ten. Logan Speirs also insists that Anna Austen's involvement was greater than Southam indicates. However, he argues that "The overall conception behind 'Grandison,' is not a child's" (27). He concludes — and I agree — that Austen was "behind much of 'Grandison'" regardless of whether or not she was the sole author (29).

certainly too young to have performed a significant role in the initial productions. However, they probably honed her skills as an audience member; perchance they also dramatized the theatrical nature of everyday life. From first to last, the theatricals were organized by Austen's oldest brother, James, and her favorite brother Henry, with whom he shared a keen interest in acting. The first play we know about is Matilda, a tragedy by Dr. Thomas Franklin, which was staged in the Austen's parlor in 1782. "Two sets of brothers." Claire Tomalin notes, "the Austens and the Fowles, seem to have taken part in this . . . play, for which James wrote the epilogue, spoken by Tom Fowle" (Austen 31). In 1784, when Austen was nine, James and Henry staged a performance of Sheridan's The Rivals in the family barn. Again, the prologue and epilogue were written by James. "As The Rivals requires eleven male and five female characters it is obvious that the Austens could hardly have mustered enough actors and actresses within the family circle to fill all the roles without a good deal of doubling of parts" (Tucker 89). However, George Herbert Tucker suggests that the Austens' neighbors, the Lefroys, probably participated in the amateur theatricals (89). Whether Austen acted as well as observed is uncertain. According to Honan, Austen "was theatrical to please [her] brothers who loved the stage" (70). Yet evidence suggests that Austen herself was a talented mimic who enjoyed the spotlight. She "loved reading aloud," remarks David Nokes, and was skilled at "disguising her own voice among the characters she created" (133). Both Tucker and Nokes cite William Bigg's childhood recollection of a twelfth-day party in 1808 in which Austen either performed or read the role of Mrs. Candour in Sheridan's School for Scandal with "great spirit" (Tucker 89; Nokes 322). Austen's ability "to

breathe life into one of the wittiest roles in Sheridan's [play]," Tucker concludes. "is an argument in favor of her having taken part in the Steventon theatricals" (89).

In 1787, when Austen was twelve, a visit from her cousin Eliza de Feuillide altered the character of the Steventon theatricals in a way that directly reflects on the theatricals depicted in Mansfield Park. Eliza, at twenty-six, was already married to a dashing French officer, and believed herself a Comtesse.¹⁰¹ Eliza had already performed in theatricals at Versailles and was a "good comic actress" (Honan 45, 46). She was also an accomplished flirt. Along with two other cousins, Edward and Jane Cooper, aged sixteen and seventeen, the younger Austens and Eliza mounted a performance of Centlivre's comedy, The Wonder; or, A Woman Keeps a Secret, in the Austens' barn over Christmas. Like Lovers' Vows, The Wonder requires the actors to speak sexually suggestive lines and to perform love scenes on stage. Honan surmises that, in what seemed like a real-life episode of Mansfield Park, Eliza "began to use the rehearsals . . . to make love to both James and Henry" (49). Through Eliza, he speculates, Austen had the opportunity to see how rehearsals mix with seduction. "It is probably true," he concludes, "that before the rehearsals . . . were over, both James and Henry were in love with [Eliza]" (50). Perhaps this is why this particular "theatrical season" at Steventon was particularly busy. A few weeks later, the Austens and their cousins put on Garrick's

¹⁰¹ Claire Tomalin explains that Eliza's belief that she was a French countess was "based either on fantasy or, more likely, on some misrepresentation." Her husband, Jean Francois Capot de Feuillide was "the son of a lawyer who had risen from modest beginnings to become mayor of Nérac, and had been placed in charge of the 'Eaux de Fortes' in his region, the remote and unprosperous Landes where they touch on the Bas-Armagnac. . . . Capot de Feuillide presumably hoped to be ennobled, helped by his bride's fortune, and did a bit of Gascon boasting on the subject" (Tomalin Austen 50).

The Chances. As he did for The Wonder, James Austen wrote both the prologue and epilogue; in both he affected a worldly air intended to impress Eliza (Nokes 95). Another play, the title unknown, shortly followed. The final play produced by the Austens in 1788 was either Fielding's The Tragedy of Tom Thumb or Kane O'Hara's later adaption (Tucker 92).

The last known theatricals at Steventon were farces. Both The Sultan; or, a Peep into the Seraglio by Isaac Bickerstaffe and James Townley's High Life Below Stairs were performed at Steventon in 1790, when Austen was fifteen. Jane Cooper, who played Roxalana in The Sultan, probably performed the central female role in Townley's play as well. Both plays have several parts for women and there is no reason to suppose that Austen would not have participated in the productions.

Although there is no documented evidence of theatricals at Steventon after 1790, an Austen "family legend claims that Henry Austen and Eliza de Feuillide revived playacting [at Steventon] after her husband was guillotined in Paris in 1794, the outcome being that Henry became Eliza's second husband" (Tucker 92). Like the couple's flirtation during the earlier productions, such later endeavors certainly would have suggested a link between rehearsing and seduction, a link which Austen dramatizes in Mansfield Park.

According to Valerie Meyer, Austen knew of a couple in 1785 who "had fallen in love while rehearsing an amateur production" of Julia by Robert Jephson (43). Perhaps Austen remembered the story when she wrote Mansfield Park, since she has *Julia* Bertram run off with Henry Yates, the man who brings play acting to Mansfield.

However, the “Groom” in the story is not a Henry. He was Thomas James Twisleton, whose sister, another Julia, had married an Austen cousin, James Henry Leigh (Meyer 43). “Twisleton’s younger sister, the Honorable Mary-Cassandra, was an ‘Adulteress’ Jane was to recognize at a dance in Bath in 1801, having honed in on Mary-Cassandra’s likeness to Julia Leigh” (Meyer 43). Again, the similarity between the names is striking. In Mansfield Park, Julia Bertram’s sister, Maria, commits adultery. “Mary-Cassandra” also sounds similar to “Mary Crawford,” the name Austen gave to her novel’s seductress.

Although there is no way to know whether Austen was thinking of Mary-Cassandra when she wrote Mansfield Park, her description of the dance at Bath is highly theatrical. “I am proud to say,” Austen wrote, “that I have a very good eye at an Adulteress, for tho’ repeatedly assured that another in the same party was the She. I fixed my eye on the right one from the first” (JAL 85). Austen then describes Mary-Cassandra with clinical detachment. “She is not so pretty as I expected,” Austen remarks; “her face has the same defect of baldness as her sister’s, & her features not so handsome; — she was highly rouged, & looked rather quietly and contentedly silly than anything else” (JAL 85). As if she were at a play, Austen positions herself as a member of the audience. After a brief description of “Mrs. Badcock . . . [running] about the room after her drunken Husband,” she underscores the theatrical nature of everyday life by describing the whole as an “amusing scene” (JAL 85).

...

Austen’s early exposure to private theatricals was probably not limited to the theatricals at Steventon. Between 1785 and 1786, Jane and Cassandra Austen were

almost certainly involved with theatricals at their school in Reading. At the time Austen attended, the Abbey School was run by Miss Sarah Hackett — who called herself Mrs. La Tournelle — and Miss Pitts. Its brother school, run by Dr. Valpy, was across a walled meadow (Honan 31). Although there is no evidence that Austen participated in dramatic productions while at Reading, Dr. Valpy’s academy had a long history of school theatricals. By the time Austen attended, the school customarily “acted plays in the town hall upon the triennial visits of dignitaries who came to examine the scholars” (Gleason 15). Relations between the two schools were close and “it seems likely that . . . the Austen girls would have seen whatever theatricals were being presented by the boys of Valpy’s school” (Gleason 16). Testimonials also indicate that the pupils of the Abbey School acted themselves. In 1792, the writer Mary Martha Sherwood recalled, “she was coached by Dr. Valpy himself for participation in a pre-Christmas entertainment” which included a performance of Madame Genlis’s La Bonne Mere (Gleason 13-14). Later, after the school moved to London, Mary Russell Mitford was involved in the students’ attempts to mount Sheridan’s Pizarro and Hannah More’s The Search After Happiness (Gleason 14).

The Juvenilia and Sir Charles Grandison

Given Austen’s experience with private theatricals, the theatrical allusions that pepper her juvenilia are far from surprising. In addition to noting other theatrical influences on Austen’s short fiction, Gleason has demonstrated that Austen’s “Three Sisters” resembles Centlivre’s Love’s Contrivance, while her “Love and Freindship” [sic]

has marked similarities to a play with the same title (132, 143).

Like much of the juvenilia, Austen's three playlets were probably composed while the Austens were still mounting theatricals at Steventon rectory. All three pieces are parodies; however, each is characterized by a different dramatic style. "The First Act of a Comedy," was probably intended as a musical farce and "was probably inspired by just such a piece that Jane Austen had seen upon some stage" (Gleason 128). "The Mystery," an even shorter piece, consists of three scenes in which various characters meet to discuss matters that are never revealed to an audience. In the play, which reads as high comedy, almost all the information is conveyed in whispers. According to Gleason, "The Mystery" is probably "patterned on some whispering scene, and the probability is good that it is [the] famous whispering scene in Buckingham's The Rehearsal," which itself pokes fun at two older plays, Killigrew's Playhouse to Let, and The Amorous Prince by Aphra Behn (129). Southam, however, suggests that Austen's source was Act Two, Scene One of The Critic, which Sheridan based on The Rehearsal (14). The final playlet is entitled "The Visit." More developed than its predecessors, "The Visit" is a two-act comedy of manners in which various characters attend a dinner which terminates in three couple's betrothals. In this sense, "The Visit," resembles Grandison which concludes with a large drawing-room scene in which two couples affirm their intentions to marry.

Although Austen's authorship of Grandison has not been definitively established, the play, like the playlets, satirizes a particular literary genre. In this case, the target is Samuel Richardson's epic epistolary novel. Richardson, Southam remarks, "designed Grandison as a kind of conduct book, a didactic entertainment from which young people

could take an enjoyable and instructive lesson in manners” (22). Written in epistolary form, Grandison rewards the protagonists’ honorable behavior in the face of adversity. Sir Charles himself is a paragon of male virtue, who rescues and then falls in love with the flawless Harriet Byron after she is kidnaped by an unscrupulous suitor.

Unfortunately, Grandison has already committed himself to Clementina Porretta, a member of the Italian nobility. Religious differences, however, have kept them apart and Clementina’s mind has collapsed under the strain. Eventually she recovers and frees Grandison to marry Harriet. According to Henry Austen, Grandison was one of his sister’s favorite novels and, after her death, he refers to this fact to illustrate her superior morality. “Faultless herself,” Henry writes, Austen’s admiration for Richardson “gratified the natural discrimination of her mind, while her taste secured her from the error of his prolix style and tedious narrative” (75, 77). Fielding, he adds, “she did not rank . . . quite so high. Without the slightest affectation she recoiled from everything gross. Neither nature, wit, nor humour, could make her amends for so very low a scale of morals” (77).

However, if Austen did write or help write Sir Charles Grandison, it substantially qualifies Henry’s depiction of his sister as a conservative moralist. Instead, it calls attention to the way Austen uses dramatic irony to help her audience see and evaluate the world represented by Richardson’s novel. In contrast to narrative irony, which occurs when a narrator calls the reader’s attention to a character’s limited perspective, dramatic irony occurs when the narrator – if he or she exists – is silent. Instead characters unconsciously reveal their ignorance of themselves or others to a more informed audience

(Abrams 91-93). These moments are implicitly theatrical since characters unknowingly enact their own limitations.

Much of the comedy in Grandison results from this form of irony. Grandison's author not only reduces a novel of mammoth proportions to five very short acts, but she also – both literally and figuratively – *alters the reader's point of view*. Rather than seeing events through characters' eyes, Grandison's audience are objective observers. As a result, Sir Charles's banality, Harriet's increasing passivity, and Richardson's tendency to over-dignify the minutiae of every day life are much more obvious in the play than they are in the novel (Southam 23). So is the unintentional humor of some of Richardson's scenes. Unfiltered by Harriet's consciousness, her tendency to fall into a succession of fits when abducted becomes a hilarious commentary on the practical virtues of female delicacy. Conversely, Charlotte Grandison's tendency to send Harriet to bed at the slightest provocation, "a regime which appears to reduce her to a vegetable," points out the way strictures of femininity reduce women to children (Speirs 32). Most importantly, the play undermines Richardson's idealization of patriarchal authority, as represented in Sir Charles. As Logan Speirs points out, all the characters yearn for Sir Charles's approval, which is generally obtained by being both silent and obedient (35). At one point, Charlotte explains that her brother, "is constantly going about from one place to another. But for what we cannot tell. And we have such a high respect for him that we never interfere with his affairs" (46). "What an odd brother this is," Harriet remarks in an aside: "[i]f he is so fond of them why should he wish them not to know his affairs?" (46). As her comment suggests, the play thus functions as a "set of observations on the

absurdities which any stranger is able to take in when introduced into a family circle, yet which no one within it can see or afford to see” (Speirs 29). Harriet’s moment of clarity, of course, is rapidly extinguished by her absorption into the Grandison clan. The audience, however, continues to comprehend the Grandison family’s absurdities — absurdities which comment on the benevolent patriarchy depicted in Richardson’s novel — through the end of the play.

Austen and The Professional Theater

Austen’s remarks on the professional theater are characterized by the same capacity for objective observation that renders Grandison funny. Austen’s first documented exposure to the professional theater occurred in Bath, in 1799, when she saw T. J. Dibden’s translation of August von Kotzebue’s Die Versöhnung, entitled The Birthday, and George Colman the Younger’s Blue Beard, a popular afterpiece (JAL 47). She does not comment on the play in her letters except to note that she hopes that the play will “conclude our gaieties here” (47). Austen, however, “enjoyed Bath as a visitor” and the Theatre Royal at Orchard Street was one of the town’s primary attractions (Tomalin Austen 171). The Theatre had a strong repertory company and many of its performers, including Siddons, eventually graduated to London’s playhouses.¹⁰² Stars from the

¹⁰² Writing in 1832, John Genest notes that “Bath has long been considered as a nursery for the London theatres” (Lowndes 30). Performers besides Siddons who left Bath for Drury Lane include John Henderson, James Dodd and Fanny Kemble. Charles Inledon and Robert William Elliston left Bath for Covent Garden. Austen liked Elliston immensely and, having heard that he “succeeded to a considerable fortune upon the death of an Uncle,” Austen writes, “I would not have it enough to take him from the Stage” (JAL 122).

London stages frequently played short seasons at Bath. “Towards the end of the century, William Lowndes remarks, “a season at Bath was thought to be essential for even the most successful London actors” (30).

Although Austen may have liked Bath, “she had no wish to live there” (Tomalin Austen 171). However, in 1801, Austen’s father, George, ceded his living to James, and moved with his wife, Jane, and Jane’s sister, Cassandra, to Bath where they lived until 1806. Unfortunately, there is little information about Austen’s playgoing activities during these years. A letter from Southampton, dated 1807, indicates that she was already familiar with the actor Robert William Elliston, who was a member of the repertory company at Bath from 1790 through 1804, when he left to join the company at Covent Garden (JAL 122; TRB viii). The only other evidence that links Austen with the Theatre Royal at Bath is a letter written by her mother about the actor George Frederick Cooke, whom, she believes, “will have full houses to-night & Saturday, as he had on Tuesday” (Tucker 97).

Since Austen enjoyed attending the theater when in London, however, there is no reason to suppose that she did not go to the theater while living in Bath. Indeed, a great many plays that appear in Austen’s novels were performed in Bath between 1801 and 1806. At Bath, Austen could have seen Hamlet and Othello, as well as John Home’s Douglas and Garrick’s The Gamester, all of which fail to satisfy the aspiring tragedians in Mansfield Park. She could also have seen The Rivals and The School for Scandal, both of which “successfully accommodated sentimentalism while keeping a range of familiar characterizations before English audiences” (Donohue Kean 86). Although the two

comedies are among those rejected for the Mansfield theatricals, Honan argues that Sheridan's "sharp management of scenes, his heaped-up wit and the immediacy of his portraits. . . . [stimulated Austen's] comic writing" (35). Honan also points out that Austen alludes to Scene Two in The Rivals, where Lydia Languish makes curl papers out of Fordyce's Sermons "when . . . Lydia Bennet interrupt[s] Mr. Collins's reading of Fordyce" in Pride and Prejudice (35).

Austen also could have seen August von Kotzebue's plays during her residence in Bath. "Managers kept in touch with London and new plays were often mounted very quickly" (TRB xii). The vogue for Kotzebue's plays was fostered in Bath as well as in London. Adapted from Kotzebue's Die Spanier in Peru Oder Rollas, Sheridan's Pizarro opened in both London and Bath in 1799 (Donohue Kean 103; TRB 244). Austen, we know, saw Dibdin's The Birthday, in 1799 but she would have been able to see it later as well. The play, which concerns a "daughter unable to marry because of her devotion to an invalid father and two brothers estranged about a garden," was performed every following year through 1804 (Kirkham 140; TRB 234). According to Margaret Kirkham, Austen became interested in The Birthday around 1803. In fact, she contends, Kotzebue's "romanticization of devoted daughters and fraternal love," provided the schema which Austen "adapted and corrected in Emma" (140).¹⁰³ At Bath Austen would also have been able to see Elizabeth Inchbald's Lovers' Vows. This translation of Kotzebue's Das Kind der Liebe, was performed every year at the Theatre Royal at Bath

¹⁰³ For a detailed comparison between the play and Austen's novel see Margaret Kirkham, Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction, Chapter 18.

between 1799 and 1805 (TRB 241).

...

Whether or not Austen attended the theater regularly at Bath, her comments about the London theater suggest that she was something of a connoisseur regarding theatrical performances. Her comments, moreover, are characterized by the same capacity for objective observation that she requires from her own readers. While she often praises individual performers or plays, Austen's compliments are always qualified by some kind of criticism that bespeaks her refusal to lose herself in a performance. In praising The Hypocrite, for example, which she saw in 1811, Austen notes that "Dowton & Mathews were the good actors" and that "Mrs. Edwin's performance "is just what it used to be" (JAL 184). Obviously, the other performers did not live up to Austen's definition of good acting. Austen's comment not only suggests a certain degree of familiarity with the performers, but also indicates a refusal, or an inability, to suspend disbelief. Rather than losing herself in the play, Austen remains aware of the difference between the actors and their roles. Her interest is in evaluating the quality of the actors' work and her standards are rigorous. In 1813, for example, she commends a performance of The Clandestine Marriage. The other performances, she notes, were "sing-song and trumpery" (JAL 230). Although her nieces were pleased, Austen herself "wanted better acting. . . . I believe," she concludes, "the Theatres are thought at a low ebb at present" (JAL 230). Even Miss O'Neil, a tragic actress widely touted as Siddons's successor, failed to stir Austen. "I fancy I want something more than can be," she writes; "[a]cting seldom satisfies me. I took two pocket handkerchiefs, but had very little occasion for either" (JAL 283).

On those rare occasions when Austen admits to being emotionally affected by an actor's performance, her comments demonstrate her capacity to maintain a divided perspective. At the same time that she is absorbed in the drama, she also objectively evaluates the way the play's disparate elements function as a whole. Thus her satisfaction with Edmund Kean's Shylock in 1814 does not prevent her from noting that "excepting him & Miss Smith, & *she* did not quite answer my expectation, the parts were ill-fitted and the Play heavy" (JAL 257). Elliston, who was on the same bill in Frances Sheridan's The Illusion: or, the Trances of Nourjahad, also failed to please. "The part," she wrote, is "not at all calculated for his powers. There was nothing of the *best Elliston* about him" (JAL 258). As with her comments on The Merchant of Venice, Austen's comment here stems from a capacity to objectively evaluate an actor's performance. Austen's experience as an audience member, as we shall see, thus bears an interesting relationship to her manipulation of her readers' experience. In novels like Mansfield Park, Austen's narrator not only maintains a broader perspective than her fictional characters, but encourages her readers to do the same.

Mansfield Park

Although her letters reveal her keen interest in the theater, many Austen scholars have insisted that Austen actually disapproved of actors and acting. Much of their evidence comes from Mansfield Park, in which several characters use the rehearsals of Lovers' Vows as an excuse to pursue romantic entanglements which are immoral, at worst, and, at best, ill-advised. In his essay, "Mansfield Park," Lionel Trilling contends

that Austen's own love of performing in family theatricals did not negate her concern over the moral effects of theatrical impersonation. "It is the fear," he explains, "that the impersonation of a bad or inferior character will have a harmful effect upon the impersonator, that, indeed, the impersonation of any other self will diminish the integrity of the real self" (132). For Trilling, as for A. Walton Litz and Tony Tanner, the significance of the play "does not lie in the impact of the play upon its audience, but in the effect of 'acting' upon the amateur players" (Litz 125). While Henry and Mary Crawford's talent for acting indicates a basic insincerity of character, Edmund Bertram's decision to play Anhalt, the young parson who loves Amelia Wildenhaim, involves, as Tanner puts it, "an abdication of his true self in order to indulge a passionate impulse" (Tanner 164). According to these scholars, Fanny Price's refusal to act is a sign of her moral integrity. She alone is left to "uphold the claims and necessity of lucid moral consciousness. The others are lost in their roles; blind behind their masks" (Tanner 165).

While Trilling focuses on Austen's feelings about playacting in general, Litz, and Tanner argue that Austen also harbored a particular dislike for Kotzebue's "Rousseauistic values and shoddy emotionalism" (Litz 125). E. M. Butler, Marilyn Butler, and Margaret Kirkham – three very different critics – believe this as well. According to E. M. Butler, "Mansfield Park is nothing more nor less than Lovers' Vows translated into terms of real life with the moral standard . . . neatly reinvented" (326). Marilyn Butler also sees Austen as a conservative novelist. The play, she explains, "attacks the conventions by which marriage upholds rank, and exalts instead the liaison based upon feeling" (234). The problem with the rehearsals is not that the characters are

acting, but, that they are “finding an indirect means to gratify desires which are illicit, and should have been contained” (Butler 232). Consequently, she argues, Austen condemns the theatricals because they undermine the structures that support patriarchal authority. Margaret Kirkham also believes that Austen disliked Kotzebue, but she sees Austen as a rational feminist whose opposition to unnatural class distinctions resembled the playwright’s. Austen’s problem with Kotzebue, Kirkham insists, primarily stems from his simplistic treatment of women (111).

Over the past several years, a number of feminist scholars have taken issue with the notion that Austen objected to play-acting in general and to Kotzebue in particular. These scholars emphasize the play’s effect on the audience rather than its effect on the actors. In her pivotal essay, “The Inefficacy of Lovers’ Vows,” Dvora Zelicovici explicitly refutes Marilyn Butler’s reading of Lovers’ Vows; the play, she contends, is a didactic piece which “exposes the viciousness of immoral conduct and its miserable consequences” (531). The real problem, she demonstrates, in both the play and the novel, “is the wrong values of fashionable society and its insufficient emphasis on duty and self-restraint” (532). Ultimately, Zelicovici concludes, “the standard of conduct ruling Kotzebue’s play is . . . essentially the one ruling the novel” (531-2). Zelicovici’s reevaluation of Lovers’ Vows has been developed in important ways by Sidney McMillan Conger and Susan Greenfield, both of whom echo Zelicovici’s claim that problems in Mansfield Park stem from the fact that several characters fail to learn from the play. Conger is primarily concerned with the effect of German sensibility on English theatergoers. Although she admits that the play has a negative effect on the morally

corrupt characters, she insists that it spurs Fanny and Edmund to sober reflection (112). Greenfield, however, resists the urge to see Fanny as Austen's representative in all things. Echoing Claudia Johnson, Greenfield suggests that Fanny's dislike of Lovers' Vows is part of a larger textual irony. As Johnson remarks, "Mansfield Park erodes rather than upholds the conclusions that support a conservative reading of the novel" (114). In different ways, Zelicovici, Conger, Greenfield, and Johnson oppose the notion that Austen is objecting to the content of Lovers' Vows. Instead, they suggest that Austen's use of the play foregrounds the question of how one interprets what one sees on stage and — by extension — in everyday life.¹⁰⁴

Obviously the plot of Lovers' Vows supports a variety of readings. The play concerns the fate of Agatha Friberg, who was seduced and abandoned by Baron Wildenhaim twenty years before the play begins. Tormented by guilt and self-loathing, Wildenhaim refuses to marry his daughter, Amelia, to the rich Count Cassel after Cassel — revealing himself a libertine — remarks, "there are constitutions, and there are circumstances, in which [seduction] can be palliated" (LV IV.ii.521). Amelia is less than heartbroken at the news. She is in love with Anhalt, her tutor, to whom, in an earlier scene, she practically proposes. Amelia tells Wildenhaim that she loves Anhalt but the Baron, who values money and name, initially opposes the match. Anhalt, however, plays

¹⁰⁴ Conger, for example, equates Fanny and Edmund's ability to disengage from sentimental theatricality with the ability to learn more about their companions, themselves, and their values (98). Greenfield argues that Fanny's opposition to the theatricals is a fight to defend her interior integrity in a world where women are primarily valued for their external appearance (319). Johnson insists that Lovers' Vows helps to expose the ways "authority figures all don the drapery of decency" (100).

a pivotal role in reuniting the Baron with Agatha and their illegitimate son Frederick, who is in the Baron's prison after attempting to rob him of the money he needs to help Agatha. After Anhalt convinces the Baron to atone for his sins by marrying Agatha, Wildenhaim gives the parson permission to marry his daughter. The play ends with the characters clustered around Agatha who has spent much of the play at death's door.

While Inchbald herself believed that the play "condemned the crime of seduction," the morality of Lovers' Vows generated a good deal of debate when it first premiered in 1798 (Inchbald pref. Lovers' Vows BT 23). To some, the play clearly encouraged chastity, honesty, and respect for one's elders. "The sentiments are pure and edifying" declared the Times; "the morality which they convey is of the most important kind" (Pedley 304). Others, like the writer for the Antijacobin Review, argued that the play exalted sexual liberty and undermined traditional structures of morality. "[N]o trifling evils have been done to this country by the importation and acting of German plays," he remarks; "and the applause bestowed upon the repeated performances of these miserable productions is at once a lamentable proof of our depravity in taste, sense, and virtue" (Pedley 302).

Although reviewers disagreed about the play's content, many agreed about its ability to affect the audience's emotions. As one reviewer noted, in watching Lovers' Vows, the

mind is roused from the most torpid state of indifference, and compelled to sympathise in the melting effusions of sorrow, or to exult with fervent joy in the vindication of distressed innocence. We are absolutely forced to take part in the respective interests, and enter into the motives and the 'cue for passion,' with which the characters are supposed to be animated (Pedley 305).

For those who thought the play moral, its ability to evoke a sympathetic response in the audience was something to be admired. However, to those who believed that the play rewarded licentiousness, its effect on the spectator's emotions posed a serious problem. As Colin Pedley explains, these writers invariably warn of the following scenario: "the audience is seduced into acceptance by the grace of a performer; a position wins its place with us insidiously, bypassing moral filters in moments of emotional collusion" (307). Consequently, for those who condemned the play's content as immoral, its ability to rouse the audience's emotions was something to be feared rather than praised.

Although Austen's opinion of the play remains unclear, her use of it in Mansfield Park suggests that she too was interested in its effects on spectators' emotions. However, as other scholars have noted, in Mansfield Park, to watch a performance is also to act: throughout the novel, each of the characters functions as a participant in and as an audience for the dramas occurring both on stage and off.¹⁰⁵ With the exception of Fanny Price, however, they all lack the ability to see beyond the demands of their own individual parts.¹⁰⁶ Compared to the others, Fanny has a far greater capacity to see what is false or superficial in those who surround her. Her moral authority directly results from this wider perspective

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Johnson, Jane Austen, Women, Politics and the Novel, (100-103) and Chapter One of Joseph Litvak's Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century Novel.

¹⁰⁶ As previously noted, Tanner makes this point in Jane Austen (165). See also Howard S. Babb, Jane Austen's Novel's: The Fabric of Dialogue, Chapter 6. Babb argues that every character except Fanny is "trapped to some extent within feelings oriented toward satisfaction of the self alone . . . and recreate [the world] in the image of their desires" (146-7).

However, as it pertains to her own situation, Fanny's vision is limited.¹⁰⁷ As Mary Lascelles remarks, in Mansfield Park the "actual pattern of human relations is visible *only to the reader*," who alone "is allowed to occupy Fanny's observation-post, and, with her sensibility, but *with more critical detachment*, to gather and relate impressions from all of the characters" (165-6, emphasis mine). This divided perspective, as I shall demonstrate, is most clearly realized in those moments of dramatic irony that pervade the novel. In contrast to Austen's five other novels, the ironic narrator in MP is comparatively subdued. Instead, MP is full of instances in which the characters – Fanny included — unconsciously reveal their own limited perspectives to the reader. Although the novel frequently validates Fanny's emotions and insights, it also points out her limitations. By creating a novel which prohibits a simple identification with any character's perspective – including the heroine's – Austen encourages her readers, regardless of their gender, to rationally evaluate the truths that her characters embrace.

...

Nowhere is this process more clear than in the ironic casting of Lovers's Vows, which points out the differences between the characters and the roles they assume. Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram are clearly miscast as Agatha and Frederick, the repentant adulteress and her idealistic son. Now older and wiser, Agatha clearly regrets her affair with the Baron; conversely, Maria — like a young Agatha — yearns for Henry's

¹⁰⁷ As previously noted, Claudia Johnson and Susan Greenfield also acknowledge Fanny's ability to read others correctly yet misread her own situation. See Greenfield's "Fanny's Misreading and the Misreading of Fanny: Women, Literature, and Interiority in Mansfield Park" (321-2) and Johnson (155-6).

attentions. Nor does she feel guilt for publicly slighting her fiancé, Mr. Rushworth. Supremely selfish, Henry clearly lacks Frederick's allegiance to duty and honor. In contrast to Frederick, who thinks his father "a villain!," Henry is actively abetting Maria's disgrace (LV I.i.487).

Despite superficial similarities between themselves and their roles, Mary Crawford and Edmund Bertram are also quite different from the characters they portray. Mary is less honest than Amelia and far more mercenary. Although her father wants her to wed Count Cassel, Amelia refuses to marry for money or title: she is "proud to become the wife of a parson whose goodness and merit in her eyes exalt him to the rank of the noblest family" (Zelicovici 534). Mary is much more worldly and cynical. Before meeting the Bertrams, she sets her cap for Edmund's older brother Tom, Sir Thomas's heir. "Matrimony was her object," Austen reports, "provided she could marry well, and having seen Mr. Bertram in town, she know that objection could no more be made to his person than to his situation in life" (MP 75). Although she finds herself falling in love with Edmund instead, she resists the idea of marrying a parson (Zelicovici 534). Edmund is also quite different from Anhalt. Unlike Edmund, Anhalt sticks to his principles when faced with temptation. Although he returns Amelia's love, he refuses to wed her without the Baron's consent. Edmund, however, acts against his own convictions (and his father's wishes) by performing a love scene with Mary. As in the case of Henry and Maria, Austen's casting consequently contrasts the protagonists' thoughts and behavior to the more virtuous conduct dramatized by the play.

Austen's casting also does more than reveal her protagonists' character flaws. As

she does in the rest of the novel. Austen here collapses the distinction between actor and audience, and in doing so dramatizes a number of different ways to respond to a play. Henry, Maria, and Mary are completely unable to learn from their roles. During rehearsals, Henry and Maria spend much of their time rehearsing the scene in which Agatha explains how she was seduced and betrayed by Baron Wildenhaim. However, they are “deaf to the dialogue” (Zelicovici 537). Caught up in their own selfish desires, they use the rehearsals as an excuse to further their flirtation. Mary Crawford is also unable to absorb the play’s lessons. Unlike Amelia, who respects Anhalt’s beliefs, Mary has little regard for Edmund’s convictions. Although the two rehearse the scene in which Anhalt and Amelia discuss the importance of “sympathetic hearts” in a marriage, Mary exults in bending Edmund to her will (III.ii.504). Her

cry of triumph at overcoming Edmund’s principles, making him act out of character, breaking him, shows how perverted her thinking is. She wishes to destroy precisely those attributes that have made her love Edmund. Studying and rehearsing the play have taught her nothing of value, and what is worse, the play has been the occasion for testing her power over Edmund and exulting in her abuse of it (Zelicovici 536).

For these three “incorrigibles,” as Zelicovici calls them, Lovers’ Vows is indeed a dangerous influence (537). It is so because the three are incapable of seeing the play as anything except a vehicle for the fulfillment of their own selfish desires.

Edmund’s situation is a bit more complex. Although he temporarily abandons his own principles in order to act, he shares Anhalt’s antipathy to a marriage between people “at variance in their opinions” (LV III.ii.505). However, for much of the novel he misreads the characters of Amelia and Mary Crawford. Specifically, he thinks that Mary

is Amelia's moral superior. "[S]he probably engaged in the part with different expectations," he rationalizes, "perhaps without considering the subject enough to know what it was likely to be" (MP 176). He credits Mary with a lack of guile that actually belongs to Amelia. Indeed, much of Edmund's confusion throughout the novel stems from his largely unsuccessful efforts to endow Mary with Amelia's moral integrity. At the end of the novel, however, he recognizes his misreading. "*I had never understood her before,*" he explains to Fanny, "and that, as far as related to mind, it had been the creature of *my own imagination*, not Miss Crawford, that I had been too apt to dwell on for many months past" (MP 444, emphasis mine). Although Edmund never again mentions the play, his subsequent proposal to Fanny reaffirms Inchbald's insistence upon the importance of sympathy and love in a marriage. In this sense, Edmund ultimately responds well to the play.

While the actors' self-absorption prevents them from understanding their roles, those watching the rehearsals respond to the private dramas that the rehearsals generate both on and off stage. Like Mary, Henry, and her older sister, Maria, Julia Bertram represents a particular kind of faulty spectatorship. Unlike her brothers, Julia is all too aware of Maria's flirtation with Henry. Her jealousy, however, retards her capacity for sympathetic response. Julia, Austen notes, "could never see Maria distinguished by Henry Crawford, without trusting that it would create jealousy, and bring a public disturbance at last" (MP 183). Instead of worrying about her sister, Julia spends her time hoping that Maria will end up disgraced and alone. Nor does she note Fanny's less obvious dismay over the growing affection between Edmund and Mary. Lost in her own

misery, Julia is completely unable to care about what is happening to others. As a result, Fanny and Julia remain “two solitary sufferers . . . connected only by Fanny’s consciousness” (MP 183).

As Austen’s comment suggests, Fanny Price’s behavior illustrates Austen’s notion of ideal spectatorship. Julia’s brothers are too self-absorbed to note Maria’s danger and Julia’s distress. Fanny, in contrast, can look beyond her own immediate concerns. Although she enjoys watching Crawford and Maria rehearse, she is able to differentiate between Henry as a man and as an actor. As a result, she understands why Julia is jealous and pities her condition. She also sympathizes with Maria’s fiance, Mr. Rushworth. “So decided to her eye was her cousin Maria’s avoidance of him, and so needlessly often the rehearsal of the first scene between her and Mr. Crawford,” that Fanny begins actively to distract Rushworth by helping him rehearse (MP 184-5). As a sympathetic yet discerning observer, Fanny not only sees what the other characters can not, but possesses a generosity of spirit that they clearly lack.

Fanny’s skill as a spectator also serves her well in everyday life. Throughout the novel, Fanny’s capacity to feel her own emotions intensely does not prevent her from correctly interpreting much of what she sees. She is, for example, the first to suspect that Henry prefers Maria to Julia. “With all that submission to Edmund could do, and all the help of coinciding looks and hints which she occasionally noticed in some of the others, and which always seemed to say that Julia was Mr. Crawford’s choice, she knew not what to think” (MP 143). Only her own lack of confidence in her perceptions prevents her from “making some important communications” to Edmund (MP 142). Fanny is also

alone in discerning Mary Crawford's insincerity. While Edmund insists that Mary's character resembles Fanny's own in its "true generosity and natural delicacy," Fanny quickly becomes convinced that Mary has "a mind led astray and bewildered, and without any suspicion of being so" (MP 270, 362). Edmund, Fanny realizes, is not only "deceiving himself" about Mary Crawford, but also is in denial about his own decision to act in the play (MP 177). She is even correct about Henry Crawford. Although she comes to believe that Henry loves her sincerely, she remains aware that he is both vain and unstable. She is shocked when he runs off with Maria, but she believes the report. "His unsettled affections, wavering with his vanity, Maria's decided attachment, and no sufficient principle on either side gave it possibility" (MP 430).

In order to appreciate Fanny's skill as a spectator, Austen encourages her readers not only to sympathize with Fanny, but to evaluate the behavior of the other characters as if they were actors performing a play.¹⁰⁸ The most "professional" actors are the cosmopolitan Crawfords, whose talent for role-playing enables them to insinuate themselves into the lives of Fanny Price and the Bertrams. Although she dislikes him personally, even Fanny thinks Henry the best actor at Mansfield. Like an amateur Garrick, Henry can easily run through a gamut of roles, as he demonstrates when he reads from Henry VIII.¹⁰⁹ "The King, the Queen, Buckingham, Wolsey, Cromwell, all were

¹⁰⁸ As Claudia Johnson has noted, "every major character [in Mansfield Park] is acting all the time" (100). Joseph Litvak makes a similar point in Chapter One of Caught in the Act when he notes that Mansfield Park suffers from "an overdose of theatricality" (14).

¹⁰⁹ Penelope Gay notes Crawford's resemblance to Garrick in "Theatricals and Theatricality in Mansfield Park" (69).

given in turn; . . . and whether it was dignity or pride, or tenderness or remorse, or whatever was to be expressed, he could do it with equal beauty. — it was truly dramatic.” (MP 336-7).

Henry’s acting, however, extends beyond his ability to play established parts. His off-stage behavior is also a series of performances. Although he has no intention of marrying either Bertram daughter, he courts them both. Circumstances eventually force him to favor Maria, who is already engaged, but he never truly returns her affections. As her wedding draws near, Maria expects him to declare his love. Instead, Henry leaves the neighborhood, thus ending “all the hopes that his selfish vanity had raised in Maria and Julia Bertram” (MP 209). As he says his farewells, Maria sees her mistake:

To her he soon turned, repeating much of what he had already said, with only a softened air and stronger expressions of regret. But what availed his expressions or his air? — He was going — and in not voluntarily going, voluntarily intending to stay away. . . . The hand which had so pressed her’s to his heart! — The hand and the heart were alike motionless and passive now! (MP 209).

Despite her considerable vanity, Maria discovers she is nothing to Crawford. Although she continues to love him, she learns that she has been fooled by a masterful performance.

Given the insincerity that underlies much of Henry’s behavior, scholars have puzzled over whether Henry’s affection for Fanny is merely an act. On the one hand, C. Knatchbull Bevan, Penelope Gay, and Tony Tanner have pointed out that Henry’s courtship of Fanny — like that of Maria and Julia — stems from the selfish desire “to make Fanny Price in love with [him]” (MP 239). However as, David Marshall had noted, “the novel leaves open the possibility that, following the eighteenth-century theories of acting that Henry echoes, Henry has really become the part he plays” (“True Acting” 99).

Certainly Henry is capable of feeling the emotions attached to a role, as when he imagines himself “ a William Price, distinguishing himself and working his way to fortune with so much self-respect and happy ardour, instead of what he was!” (MP 245). Henry’s sense of self-loathing passes, however, when the subject changes to hunting. Since he wants to please Fanny by lending William a horse, he finds that “it was as well to be a man of fortune at once with horses and grooms at his command” (MP 246). But Henry is only acting the part of a true English gentleman. As we learn later, his apparent generosity does not extend to caring for his tenants or land. Instead it springs from a selfish desire to win Fanny’s approval. Given his moment of self-detestation, Henry’s propensity to assume various roles, including that of a libertine, suggests a deep-seated need for external validation. Certainly he is mortified by Maria’s coldness when they meet again in London. Although he indeed may have come to love Fanny “rationally as well as passionately,” his affection for her is no match for the demands of his ego. He did not love Maria, Austen explains, but “he could not bear to be thrown off by the woman whose smiles had once been so wholly at his command” (MP 452).

While Henry’s vanity is the cause of his downfall, his skill as an actor is also to blame. In triumphing over Maria’s anger, he becomes trapped in his role. “[S]he loved him; there was no withdrawing attentions, avowedly dear to her. He was entangled by his own vanity, with as little excuse as possible, and without the smallest inconstancy of mind towards [Fanny]” (MP 452). Tricked by his own ego, Henry finds himself trapped in two incompatible roles. Because he loves Fanny, “[t]o keep Fanny and the Bertrams from a knowledge of what was passing” between himself and Maria “became his first

object” (MP 452). Maria’s imprudence, however, makes concealment impossible. As Trilling remarks, Henry “is trapped by his impersonation of passion — his role requires that he carry Maria off from a dull marriage to a life of boring concupiscence” (Trilling 133). Ironically, Henry’s facility at playing so many different parts well is what ultimately deprives him of what he wants in the end.

The same can not be said of Mary Crawford. Like Henry, she is also an actor in the sense that she self-consciously represents herself differently to different people. Although she charms everyone but Fanny, “the narrative consistently notes the “enormous amount of technique that underlies” her displays of warmth and affection (Trilling 128; Litvak 17). Thus at the ball that Fanny’s uncle, Sir Thomas, throws for Fanny and William, we see her selfishness and hypocrisy as well as her charm. Motivated by a “general prevailing desire of recommending herself” to Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Mary “says something agreeable of Fanny” (MP 282). Both respond warmly. Then, in order to please Fanny’s Aunt Norris, Mary exclaims, “Ah! ma’am, how much we want dear Mrs. Rushworth and Julia tonight!” (MP 282). As the belle of the ball, Mary implies, Fanny is utterly incapable of filling her cousins’ shoes. Mary, we know, sincerely believes Fanny superior to both Bertram sisters. She caters to Mrs. Norris’s vanity by echoing her sentiments. She courts her approval by telling a lie.

While Henry finds himself trapped by a role he plays too well, Mary’s downfall is occasioned by her inability to sustain a performance. Despite the “really good feelings by which [Mary] was almost purely governed,” her role-playing, like Henry’s, suggests a profound, albeit unconscious, dissatisfaction with who she is (MP 170). By cultivating

the “*style* of sensitivity, virtue, and intelligence.” Trilling points out, Mary “impersonates the woman she thinks she ought to be” (133). Her primary intention is not to fool others, but to comfort herself (Trilling 133). Her time at Mansfield, away from “all the negative London influences of her family and friends, living with her ‘excellent sister,’ coming to appreciate and love Edmund . . . is . . . the peak of her moral development” (Zelicovici 538). Once she returns to London, her ability to value the kind of moral integrity represented by Fanny and Edmund is considerably diminished. When Tom Bertram falls ill, Mary writes Fanny seeking information. Although the letter ostensibly expresses her concern, she clearly hopes Tom will die so that Edmund can inherit Sir Thomas’s title. Nor is she properly horrified when Henry runs off with Maria. The fact that she views the discovery of the affair, rather than the act of adultery, as the true crime finally shows Edmund that he has mistaken her style for substance.¹¹⁰ Indeed, Edmund’s earlier assertion that he prefers “good hardened real acting,” over the “efforts of those who have not been bred to the trade,” ultimately appears as an ironic commentary on his desire to suspend disbelief about Mary Crawford (MP 150). Because the Crawfords, like professional actors, make their performances credible, Edmund — for much of the novel — is able to believe that Mary is as artless as she seems.

While Edmund’s faulty assumption of a direct correlation between Mary’s demeanor and character echos the assertions of conduct-book writers, Austen’s treatment of Maria and Julia Bertram clearly equates acting like a lady with performing a role. Proficient in music, drawing, and other feminine accomplishments, Maria and Julia

¹¹⁰ I am indebted to Trilling for this insight. See “Mansfield Park.” (133).

behave according to conduct-book models of the feminine ideal. However, as we have seen, even while conduct-books insisted that lady-like behavior was natural to women, they functioned as acting manuals, teaching their readers how to appear and behave. Austen calls attention to this paradox in her description of the two Bertram sisters.

The Miss Bertrams were now fully established among the belles of the neighborhood; and as they joined to beauty and brilliant acquirements, a manner *naturally easy*, and *carefully formed* to general civility and obligingness, they possessed its favour as well as its admiration. Their vanity was in such good order that they seemed to be quite free from it, and gave themselves no airs; while praises attending such behaviour, secured, and brought round by their aunt, served to strengthen *them in believing* they had no faults (MP 68, my emphasis).

“Actresses in everything but the title.” Maria and Julia are not what they seem (Litvak 14). They are, more importantly, unaware of this fact. To them and to others, their outward appearance indicates an inner perfection they do not really possess. They are selfish and vain, Austen points out. Their naturally easy manner is really the result of rigorous training. According to Joseph Litvak, this passage consequently demonstrates that “the perfection of theatrical artifice is apparent artlessness” (15). However, the passage also insists that this artlessness stems from a lack of self-knowledge that limits their agency. In contrast to Mary, Maria and Julia have no idea that they are acting. Because they are unaware that they are not what they seem, they lack the ability to alter their parts.

Although he too is selfish, Tom Bertram’s case is, in many respects, the opposite of his sisters’. While Maria and Julia are praised as perfect young ladies, Tom is repeatedly chastised for failing to fulfill his role as Sir Thomas’s heir. Indeed, for much of the novel, Tom seems to be impersonating the role of a gentleman. He is a spendthrift

and gambler, whose expenditures have robbed Edmund “for ten, twenty, thirty years, perhaps for life, of more than half the income that ought to be his” (MP 58). His irresponsibility, Tom Giotta has argued, and his lack of reflection is signaled by his repeated insistence that the performers mount George Colman’s The Heir at Law. Austen’s choice of the play, Giotta contends, calls attention to Tom’s difference from Henry Moreland, the play’s “‘proper’ heir and gentleman” (468). So do his roles in Lovers’ Vows. His desire to play every minor part that does not conflict with his role as the Butler underscores his relative insignificance within the Bertram household. His reformation, however, is subtly foreshadowed by the fact that he is an extremely bad actor. Tom is neither a good Butler on stage nor an accomplished libertine off. Rather than glory in his excesses, he falls dangerously ill. As he recovers, he also reforms: “[h]e had suffered and he had learned to think, two advantages that he had never known before” (MP 447). This newfound self knowledge engenders Tom’s agency. Upon his recovery, he gives up all roles but one, self-consciously choosing to fulfill his responsibilities as Sir Thomas’s heir.

Despite his initial opposition to the theatricals, Edmund Bertram, of course, is also guilty of acting. Not only does he agree to play Anhalt in the theatricals but his decision to do so involves him in some serious acting off stage as well. Unlike his siblings, however, he has much more difficulty embracing his roles. “It is not at all what I like,” he explains to Fanny, “to be driven into the *appearance* of such inconsistency” (MP 175). The irony, of course, is that Edmund *is* behaving inconsistently. In his effort to suspend disbelief about Mary’s true character, Edmund abandons his own convictions. Separated

from his own values, Edmund is merely impersonating himself. Although he insists that his participation is the only way to protect the family from scandal, the narrative insists that his real motivation is his interest in Mary. Unless he plays Anhalt, Mary will perform a love scene with their neighbor, Charles Maddox. "Perhaps," he warns Fanny,

you are not so much aware as I am, of the mischief that *may*, of the unpleasantness that *must*, arise from a young man's being received in this manner — domesticated among us — authorized to come and go at all hours — and placed suddenly on a footing which must do away with all restraints. To think of the license which every rehearsal must tend to create. It is all very bad! (MP 175-6).

That Edmund is blind to the fact that Henry Crawford and Mr. Yates already have access for such improprieties does more than emphasize his desire to exclude Charles Maddox. It is a perfect example of the way Austen uses dramatic irony to underscore the difference between what the reader and the characters are able to see. Like Fanny — whom Edmund here underestimates — we not only see Edmund lie to himself, but find him completely unaware of the fact that Crawford and Yates are already pursuing his sisters. Although his warning to Fanny correctly anticipates the disastrous results of the private theatricals, it does so in a way that Edmund fails to envision. Ironically, then, Edmund's speech does the opposite of what he intends. Rather than reassure Fanny, it validates her fears. Edmund, she realizes, cannot afford to see himself or others too clearly if he is to pursue his interest in Mary.

Given Fanny's refusal to act in Lovers' Vows, the narrative, at least at first glance, seems to equate Fanny's anti-theatrical stance with her personal integrity. Because we spend so much time in her head, we know that Fanny feels emotion far more acutely than any other character in the novel. We also know that she refuses to act against her

principles. When she resists Sir Thomas's pressure to accept Henry's offer, the narrative clearly describes how she suffers.

[H]er heart was almost broke by such a picture of what she appeared to him: by such accusations, so heavy, so multiplied, so rising in dreadful gradation. *Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful. He thought her all this. She had deceived his expectations; she had lost his good opinion. What was to become of her?* (MP 319, emphasis mine).

Here as elsewhere, Austen's use of free indirect discourse creates the illusion that we are witnessing Fanny's immediate, authentic emotions and thoughts. "A hybrid form of direct and indirect discourse," free indirect discourse employs the past tense and the third-person pronoun of indirect discourse, as in "he was glad." (Dussinger 98). Like direct discourse, however, free indirect discourse is syntactically independent and implies the speaker's attitude, as in "Oh! He was glad!" (Dussinger 98). Free indirect discourse thus allows Austen to efface the narrator's presence. As such it "is crucial to projecting the requisite interiority of the self" (Dussinger 99). Juxtaposed with regular indirect and direct discourse in Mansfield Park, Austen's use of free indirect discourse helps create a "sense of an 'inner,' primary, and 'outer,' secondary space" that adds depth to the characters (Dussinger 99). In this particular instance, Austen's use of free indirect discourse underscores both the severity and the *sincerity* of Fanny's distress. By dramatizing Fanny's emotions thus, Austen reinforces our sense that Fanny is the novel's exemplar of genuine feeling.

Fanny's emotional integrity, however, does not exempt her from the theatrical imperative governing Mansfield Park. Despite her efforts to remain a spectator, the narrative constantly collapses the distinction between on stage and off. When Fanny

refuses to take the part of the Cottager's Wife. for example, she is "shocked to find herself at that moment the only speaker in the room, and . . . feel . . . that almost every eye was upon her" (MP 169). Likewise, at the ball, we watch as she is put on display by Sir Thomas, who advises her to go to bed in order to show her "persuadableness" to Henry Crawford. Indeed, Henry's presence, as Marshall remarks, invariably "places Fanny in a play" ("True Acting" 96). Regardless of her own preference for "being suffered to sit silent and unattended to," she is powerless to resist his gaze or assumptions. Notwithstanding her own insistence upon being a spectator, the other characters force Fanny to act whether she wants to or not.

One of the most profound ironies in the novel, then, is that Fanny is actually the most accomplished actor at Mansfield. Although she insists that acting would be "absolutely impossible for [her]," she successfully conceals her feelings for Edmund throughout the novel (MP 169). When she stands up to Sir Thomas, her sorrow and fear does not ruin her act. Indeed, she uses a pause in conversation to "harden and prepare herself against further questioning. She would rather die than own the truth and she hoped by a little reflection to fortify herself beyond betraying it" (MP 317). Ultimately she succeeds in placating Sir Thomas without revealing her love for Edmund. This scene, then, does more than underscore the sincerity of Fanny's emotions. It also suggests that Fanny's skill as a performer accords her a limited degree of agency. Rather than bend Fanny's will to his own, Sir Thomas is forced to satisfy himself with the hope that Fanny will eventually change her mind about Crawford.

...

Once we understand that everyone in the novel acts, then Austen's efforts to underscore the importance of reading with a divided sensibility becomes much more apparent. As if we were critics and Fanny were an actress performing a play, Austen encourages her readers to experience a sympathetic response to Fanny's emotions while evaluating her decisions rationally. To facilitate this response, Austen's sentences not only describe, but actually dramatize Fanny's emotions. As Norman Page notes, feelings of excitement or suspense are frequently presented by a series of short sentences. Thus when the actors pressure Fanny to participate in what turns out to be the final rehearsal of Lovers' Vows, "Fanny," we read,

still hung back. She could not endure the idea of it. Why was not Miss Crawford applied to as well? Or why had she not rather gone to her own room as she had felt to be safest, instead of attending the rehearsal at all? She had known it would irritate and distress her — she had known it her duty to keep away. She was properly punished (MP 191).

Austen's syntax, Page explains, encourages the reader "to relive, as it were," the character's emotions (106). While the first two sentences reflect Fanny's determination, the two unanswered questions suggest her feelings of helplessness. The dashes mirror her panic and the short final sentence rings with despair. Austen's syntax thus mimics the progress of Fanny's emotions in such a way as to foster a similar experience in the reader.

Occasionally, long sentences in Mansfield Park also heighten our sense of Fanny's emotional state. The ten days between Sir Thomas's invitation to William Price and his arrival, for example, are summarized thus:

This dear William would soon be amongst them. There could be no doubt of his obtaining leave of absence immediately, for he was still only a midshipman; and as his parents, from living on the spot, must already have seen him and be seeing

him perhaps daily, his direct holidays might with justice be instantly given to the sister, who had been his best correspondent through a period of seven years, and the uncle who had done most for his support and advancement; and accordingly the reply to her reply, fixing a very early date for his arrival, came as soon as possible; and scarcely ten days had passed since Fanny had been in the agitation of her first dinner visit, when she found herself in the hall, in the lobby, on the stairs, for the first sound of the carriage which was to bring her brother (MP 242).

Separated by semicolons and commas, the rush of clauses that comprise this long sentence help the reader experience Fanny's growing excitement during the ten days prior to William's arrival. As the moment approaches, the sentence moves from a description of Fanny's fears and concerns, to practical matters, to a concrete description of her behavior. At the same time, the clauses get shorter and more dramatic. Fanny is "in the hall," "in the lobby," and "on the stairs" before the carriage arrives. Comprising 139 words, the sentence consequently mimics the actual experience of waiting for a long-anticipated event.¹¹¹

Even more dramatically, Austen's use of free indirect discourse works to arouse a sympathetic reaction in the reader. When Fanny reflects upon Edmund's feelings for Mary, Austen's use of free indirect discourse places us directly inside Fanny's head.

He was gone as he spoke: and Fanny remained to tranquillise herself as much as she could. *She was one of his two dearest — that must support her. But the other! the first!* She had never heard him speak so openly before, and though it told her no more than what she had long perceived, it was a stab . . . *He would marry Miss Crawford. It was a stab, in spite of every long-standing expectation . . .* Could she believe Miss Crawford to deserve him, it would be — *Oh! How different it would be — how far more tolerable. But he was deceived in her; he gave her merits which she had not; her faults were what they had ever been, but he saw them no longer.* Till she had shed many tears over this deception, Fanny could not subdue her agitation: and the dejection which followed could only be relieved by the influence of fervent prayer for his happiness (MP 271, emphasis

¹¹¹ Page does not analyze this particular sentence but the method is his.

mine).

In this passage and others, Austen's use of free indirect discourse works to conflate the reader's sensibility with Fanny's. Although we begin by observing her from outside, the narrative quickly moves us into her head. In doing so it creates the illusion that we are actually experiencing — rather than merely reading about — Fanny's immediate, authentic emotions and thoughts.

The final method by which Austen asks her readers to sympathize with Fanny's emotions is by making Fanny's internal life seem more real and interesting than anything else that occurs in the novel. To do so, Austen frequently focuses on Fanny's response to a scene. This tendency is especially apparent in the episode in which Fanny helps Mary and Edmund rehearse the love scene between Amelia and Anhalt. Rather than describe what Fanny observes, Austen focuses on Fanny's internal reactions. Once Edmund arrives, Fanny's spirits sink. "She was invested," we are told,

with the office of judge and critic, and earnestly desired to exercise it and tell them all their faults; but from doing so every feeling within her shrank. she could not, would not, dared not attempt it: had she been otherwise qualified for criticism, her conscience must have restrained her from venturing at disapprobation. She believed herself to feel too much of it in the aggregate for honesty or safety in particulars. To prompt them must be enough for her; and it was sometimes *more* than enough: for she could not always pay attention to the book. In watching them she forgot herself; and agitated by the increasing spirit of Edmund's manner, had once turned away exactly as he wanted help (MP 189).

Here Fanny's interior experience seems far more vivid than the rehearsal she observes.

Thus while Fanny loses herself in watching the actors, the narrative encourages the readers to lose themselves in observing Fanny's response to the scene. In fact, this scene works to frame Fanny's emotions as theater. Although Fanny defines herself as a

spectator, the narrative insists that Fanny's interior conflict is as much of a spectacle as the scene she observes. By dramatizing Fanny's emotions thus, Austen asks that we experience the same kind of sympathetic reaction to Fanny that we experience when watching a play.

At the same time, however, the narrative also insists that the readers maintain a certain distance from Fanny in order to evaluate her decisions from a relatively objective standpoint. To effect this detachment, and to guide our conclusions, Austen gives us more information about the other characters than Fanny possesses. In some cases, we are present at scenes when Fanny is not. Unlike Fanny, for example, we witness Henry state his lack of interest in Maria and Julia. Likewise, we see Mary's genuine lack of concern for the Bertram sisters' well-being. At other times, the narrative informs us about feelings and motives that Fanny only suspects. Although Fanny is initially convinced that Henry's attentions mean nothing, the narrative informs us that he comes to love her sincerely. In these cases and others, the narrative asks us to validate Fanny's conclusions by allowing us to see what she only suspects.

At times, Austen encourages her readers to disagree with Fanny's conclusions. This is especially true when the issue at hand is Fanny herself. Throughout the novel, the narrative frequently suggests that Fanny is less successful in understanding herself than she is in her ability to evaluate others. Thus when Fanny, at Portsmouth, considers Henry's "wonderful improvement," her convictions are called into question in the following passage:

Not considering in how different a circle she had been just seeing him, nor how

much might be owing to contrast, she was quite persuaded of his being astonishingly more gentle, and regardful of others, than formerly. And if in little things, must it not be so in great? So anxious for her health and comfort, so very feeling as he now expressed himself, and really seemed, might not it be fairly supposed, that he would not much longer persevere in a suit so distressing to her? (MP 405).

Ostensibly, the passage reaffirms Fanny's determination to discourage Crawford. Even though her opinion of him has undergone a substantial revision, she continues to hope he will leave her alone. At the same time, however, the passage also indicates that Fanny's own feelings have changed. Moreover, it suggests that she is unaware of the fact. Had the last sentence been written as a statement, it would indicate closure, reinforcing our sense that Fanny wants Henry to stay away. As an open question, however, the sentence leaves us hanging, awaiting an answer. Indeed, it puts us in the position of awaiting a guest who does not arrive. By ending her chapter thus unresolved, Austen not only suggests that Fanny would feel disappointed were Henry to give up his suit, but asks the reader to feel a semblance of that emotion.

This passage, however, does more than suggest that Fanny is unconsciously warming towards Crawford. It is also one of many instances in which Austen's ironic narrator underscores Fanny's comparatively limited perspective. As Greenfield remarks, "although Fanny is a privileged reader of some of the most important events in the novel, she lacks insight into her own character and history" (321). In this particular instance, Fanny fails to consider that her opinion of Henry is bolstered both by her isolation at Portsmouth and her disgust at her family's conduct. Fanny's lack of perspective is also apparent when the narrative questions her belief that Mary would make Edmund

miserable. “Experience,” Austen notes, “might have hoped for more for any young people so circumstanced, and *impartiality* would not have denied to Miss Crawford’s nature, that . . . which would lead her to adopt the opinions of the man she loved and respected as her own (MP 362, my emphasis). Although the narrative, as we have seen, validates Fanny’s belief in Mary’s lack of sincerity, here it suggests that Fanny’s youth and emotions prevent her from evaluating the situation fairly. Rather than admit she is jealous, Fanny, we realize, is lying to herself in order to rationalize her opposition to the match.

Although the plot confirms many of Fanny’s observations, the novel ultimately suggests that Fanny’s ability to see clearly is compromised by her internalization of patriarchal authority. As Johnson remarks, “the most unsettling irony of Mansfield Park . . . is that the failures of conservative ideology fall . . . most heavily on the only member of the household to believe in it fully to the very end” (115). By the end of the novel Sir Thomas may be “conscious of errors in his conduct as a parent,” but Fanny is not (MP 446). Instead, she blames Maria, Julia, Tom, and the Crawfords. Nor does she understand that she possesses an “‘independence of spirit’ and that this is good” (Greenfield 321). Instead, she becomes the “daughter [Sir Thomas] wanted,” by continuing to uphold “the most restrictive features of conduct book femininity” (MP 456: Greenfield 321). Even after her resistance to Sir Thomas has been thoroughly justified, she remains a “model of obedience and silence” (Greenfield 321). She also continues to idolize Edmund despite the fact that her interpretation of events has been proven superior to his own. Most importantly, Fanny continues to idealize the kind of life represented by

the society at Mansfield. Regardless of what we know to be true, Fanny, at Portsmouth, regards Mansfield as the repository of “elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony . . . peace and tranquility” (MP 376). From Fanny’s perspective, her return to Mansfield Park and her marriage to Edmund are sources of joy, enabling her to nourish a way of life she believes she adores.

Austen, however, makes sure that we understand the end of the novel differently. “My Fanny,” she writes, “must have been very happy in spite of all that she felt or thought she felt for the distress of those around her” (MP 446). More overtly than at any other time in the novel, the narrator underscores Fanny’s limited understanding of her own situation. Perhaps that is why she sounds so protective. Fanny, we realize, can not distinguish between her own sense of self and her role as Sir Thomas’s “best” daughter. Just like Harriet Byron’s, Fanny’s vision has become clouded by her absorption into her family of choice. Our vision, however, is far more clear. As Johnson notes, Austen’s narrative style at the end of the novel invites us to scrutinize the reactionary formulas with which the novel ostensibly concludes (114). Although the “good” characters are rewarded and the “bad” characters punished, the speed with which Austen describes the union of Fanny and Edmund makes the marriage seem “a perfunctorily opted anticlimax the narrator washes her hands of, rather than a properly wished-for and well-deserved union towards which the parties have been moving all along” (Johnson 114).

Sir Thomas’s reformation is also called into question. He does admit to his own failings as a parent. However, his banishment of Mrs. Norris “relieves him from the necessity of examining the mutuality of their responsibility in the ruin of his family”

(Johnson 115). His treatment of Maria also indicates a desire to foist blame onto others. Through free indirect discourse Austen lets us know that Sir Thomas believes that “*Maria* had destroyed her own character” (MP 449, emphasis mine). As with Mrs. Norris, Sir Thomas’s subsequent treatment of Maria helps him to restore a semblance of his own moral dignity. “He would not by a vain attempt to restore what could never be restored, be affording his sanction to vice, or in seeking to lessen its disgrace, be anywise accessory to introducing such misery in another man’s family, as he had known himself (MP 449-50). Sir Thomas here paints himself as a victim. However, given his own role in his family’s destruction, his view of the situation creates yet another instance of dramatic irony for Austen’s readers.

Even Austen’s apparent condemnation of Maria, Henry, Rushworth, and Mary is less straightforward than it seems. Although the four characters are banished from Mansfield, Austen is much more interested in exposing the conditions that have led to their expulsion than in vilifying their conduct. Just as she underscores Sir Thomas’s responsibility for Maria’s situation, Austen calls attention to the deficits in Henry’s upbringing. “Henry Crawford,” she notes, was “ruined by an early independence and a bad domestic example” (MP 451). Spoiled from birth, Rushworth is blamed for his own “stupidity” and “selfish passion” in marrying a woman whom he knew loved another (MP 449). Mary, like Henry, suffers because she has been raised incorrectly. Like Lovers’ Vows, their examples indict a society that teaches its children to value wealth and class over love and moral integrity.

Austen’s novel suggests that the readers’ salvation from this fate lies in the use of

a divided, ironic perspective. Although we continue to sympathize with Fanny through the end of the novel, we ultimately disagree with her view of Mansfield Park. By endowing us with a perspective much larger than Fanny's, the narrative demonstrates that immersion into a world, whether fictional or real, does not necessarily mean that one has to adopt its truths as one's own. Nor, it suggests, does the sympathetic reaction evoked by reading a novel or watching a play mean that one has to adopt the heroine's views. By enabling her readers to disagree with Fanny's conclusions at the end of the novel, Austen calls her reader's attention to their power as critics, encouraging them to read, see, and think for themselves.

Translating Austen's novels to Film

Perhaps this is why film makers have had mixed results adapting Austen's novels to film.¹¹² Granted that a movie need not be "just like the book" in order to be good, there is a crucial issue involved in translating Austen's novels to the screen: how does the film maker replicate the reader's divided, ironic perspective? As the three recent large-budget movies based on Sense and Sensibility (1811) and Emma (1816) demonstrate, the loss of Austen's ironic third-person narrator requires some form of compensation. Although Emma Thompson's adaption of Sense and Sensibility (1995), Douglas McGrath's Emma (1996), and Amy Heckerling's updated Emma, entitled Clueless (1995) employ strategies which make the movies "work" in and for themselves, the use of dramatic irony

¹¹² See Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield's Jane Austen in Hollywood for a list of television and feature-length films based on Austen's novels.

in Clueless is the solution that most accurately reproduces Austen's manipulation of her readers' perspective.

...

Before we turn the films, however, I want to take a brief look at how Austen discourages the reader from completely identifying with the heroines' emotions and beliefs in Sense and Sensibility and Emma. In both novels, the reader's critical detachment is effected in a variety of ways. As in Mansfield Park, it may result from a verbal exchange. For example, in Sense and Sensibility, this is how Elinor defends Colonel Brandon's use of a flannel waistcoat: "Had he been only in a violent fever, you would not have despised him half so much. Confess, Marianne, is not there something interesting to you in the flushed cheek, hollow eye, and quick pulse of a fever?" (SS 38). Obviously, the real object of Elinor's remark is to reveal the absurdity of Marianne's romantic sensibilities. Sometimes Austen's irony is visual. For example, in Emma, the fact that Emma blithely paints an idealized portrait of Harriet Smith underscores the fact that Emma imagines much that is not true about her new friend. Austen's irony may also depend upon a disparity between what can be seen and what is invisible. Willoughby's "person and air," may be "equal to what [Marianne's] fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story" (SAS 43) but he *behaves* like a cad. The disparity between Willoughby's appearance and character calls into question reader's assumptions about what heroes ought to look like and casts doubt onto novels that glorify excessive sensibility.

I am not, however, suggesting that Austen does anything as straightforward as condemn novels of sensibility. The structural irony in Sense and Sensibility makes this quite clear: Elinor's refusal to succumb to romantic assumptions fails to protect her from the same kind of heartbreak that grieves Marianne. As in Mansfield Park, Austen has a larger purpose. Specifically, she is interested in training her readers how to interpret both the world around them and the fictions that represent it on stage or in print. Austen's irony does more than expose those social structures that weaken and corrupt men and make women dependents and fools. It also prohibits readers from naively accepting the fictions that reaffirm those structures.

Integral to this campaign is Austen's witty deflation of literary tropes that train readers to reproduce romantic clichés. In Sense and Sensibility, for instance, the narrator ridicules silly ideas of romance by remarking upon Willoughby's "incivility in surviving [the] loss" of Marianne (SAS 379). Romantic convention, asserts the narrator, requires that he at least "[flee] from society or [contract] an habitual gloom of temper, or [die] of a broken heart" (SAS 379). In Emma, the heroine's ignorance of her own heart is suggested thus:

Emma continued to entertain no doubt of her being in love [with Frank Churchill]. Her ideas only varied as to how much. At first, she thought it was a good deal; and afterwards, but little. She had great pleasure in hearing Frank Churchill talked of...she was very often thinking of him, and quite impatient for a letter....But, on the other hand, she could not admit herself to be unhappy, nor after the first morning, to be less disposed for employment than usual: she was still busy and cheerful, and pleasing as he was, she could yet imagine him to have faults (E 237).

By the end of this passage, the only thing more apparent than Emma's indifference to

Frank Churchill is the absurdity of her criteria for judging the extent of her own affections. As Rachel Brownstein points out, the danger facing Emma, and all of Austen's heroines, is that they may "let the right man and the chance for action pass them by" (Heroine 90). Consequently, she adds, the novels' happy conclusions depend upon the heroines' ability to know their own hearts and to interpret the world around them correctly (Heroine 91). Often, as in Sense and Sensibility or Emma, this requires that the heroines, like Austen's readers, reject romantic conventions. Marianne finally realizes that second attachments may actually work while Emma eventually accepts the difference between her real and imagined worlds.

...

Written by Emma Thompson and directed by Ang Lee, the movie version of Sense and Sensibility actually celebrates the conventions of romance that the novel condemns. The book ends as it begins, by foregrounding the relationship of Elinor and Marianne. In contrast, the movie concludes with the marriage of Colonel Brandon and Marianne and--in direct opposition to the novel--emphasizes Willoughby's sorrow. The book tells us that Willoughby "lived to exert and frequently to enjoy himself" (SAS 331). The screenplay, however, ends with Willoughby on a white horse, "*on the far edge of the frame,*" watching as Brandon tosses coins into the air. "*As we draw back further still,*" the screenplay concludes, "*he slowly pulls the horse around and moves off in the opposite direction*" (SAS 202).

Willoughby's white horse, and horses in general, are a key to the movie version of Sense and Sensibility. That Willoughby rides the white horse of a hero suggests that

Emma Thompson clearly understands Austen's intentions regarding the disparity between the way Willoughby looks and behaves (a stage direction when Willoughby leaves Barton Cottage describes him as "looking about as virile as his horse" (100)). However, the fact that Brandon's black charger is equally, if more subtly, virile points to a crucial difference between the novel and the film. Despite a few reservations, Thompson's screenplay intentionally glorifies the romantic conventions that Austen deflates. In her published diary, Thompson remarks that "making the male characters effective was one of the biggest problems" in translating the novel to film (269). "In the novel," she remarks, "Edward and Brandon are quite shadowy and absent for long periods" (269). In a movie which ends up celebrating romance this might be a serious problem.

Thompson's solution was to "keep [the men] present even when they're off screen" (269). One way this was accomplished was in the casting. Austen's Edward Ferrars is not a hunk. "He was not recommended to [the Dashwoods] by any particular graces of person or address" remarks the narrator. "He was not handsome and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing" (SAS 12). In the movie, Edward is played by Hugh Grant, a man Thompson describes as "repellently gorgeous . . . much prettier than I am" (212). Although he is not precisely pretty, Alan Rickman as Brandon is definitely more macho than someone who wears flannel waistcoats has a right to be. He is frequently filmed with a gun or a horse and his disheveled appearance as Marianne lies ill out-Byrons Willoughby. "Give me an occupation," he murmurs to Elinor, "or I shall run mad" (181). After this, the screenplay asserts, he is "*dangerously quiet*" (181). This is much more exciting than Austen's description of a man who, "with a readiness

that seemed to speak the occasion, and the service prearranged in his mind . . . offered himself as the messenger who should fetch Mrs. Dashwood” (SAS 269). Clearly Brandon, as played by Rickman, is far sexier than Austen intended him to be.

Indeed, the movie works hard to create the impression that Brandon is the perfect romantic hero for Marianne. Specifically, the screenplay revises the novel so that Brandon’s later actions mirror Willoughby’s earlier behavior. In the movie both carry an incapacitated Marianne through the rain. Both ride powerful chargers and both recite poetry to her with heartfelt conviction. Brandon even concludes his poetry reading with what the screenplay describes as a “*soul-breathing glance*” (187). Austen, in contrast, is notoriously reluctant to describe love scenes of any kind. In the novel, the courtship of Marianne and Colonel Brandon is described thus: “[w]ith such a confederacy against her, with a knowledge so intimate of his goodness, with a conviction of his fond attachment to herself, which at last, though long after it was observable to everybody else, burst on her — what could she do?” (SAS 330). Thompson’s movie works but it works by celebrating the very tropes that Austen destabilizes.

Like Austen’s Sense and Sensibility, Emma is also not really about romance. Emma is a story about how a girl learns to be kind. Set on a pedestal by virtue of her social position, spoiled by her father, Emma “dangerously imagines herself a splendid free young goddess whose connection to most people is an amused puppeteer’s” (Brownstein 104). Throughout the novel, Emma gradually learns that she is like everyone else. However, until she learns to value and join a community, the third-person narration mercilessly exposes Emma’s delusions, and satirizes the social conventions that

nurture them.

Viewed in this light, Doug McGrath's Emma is a vexed piece of work. Although the film ultimately refuses to knock Emma off her perch, it occasionally succeeds in exposing the delusions of its principal characters. One way it illustrates Emma's ignorance of her own heart, for example, is through the casting. Gwyneth Paltrow's Emma and Jeremy Northam's Mr. Knightley are extremely good-looking. Moreover, the sixteen-year age gap that exists between Emma and Mr. Knightley is, here, invisible. Their union is so aesthetically pleasing that Emma's inability to see Knightley as anything other than a brother-in-law is called into question within the movie's first five minutes. The camera also insists that the two be viewed as a pair. Whenever the two share a scene the camera either frames them within a single shot or shows us that they are aware of each other. We see Mr. Knightley watch Emma with more-than-brotherly-interest at a piano recital. Later, at a ball, we observe Mr. Knightley rescuing Harriet Smith from Emma's point of view. When their eyes meet, Emma and Mr. Knightley are inevitably drawn to each other. At the piano recital, Knightley joins Emma on the sofa and a closeup shuts out the rest of the room. At the ball, the two turn away from the camera and the camera pulls back, dramatizing their intimacy by shutting us out. Subtly, the casting, the blocking and the camera-work all expose Emma's lack of self-knowledge. This dramatic irony is what helps us see Emma's mistakes. As when reading the novel, we are aware that Emma belongs with Mr. Knightley and suspect the plot's outcome before she has a clue.

McGrath's movie is a comedy and his use of visual irony occasionally reveals the

characters' misconceptions in broad strokes. Knightley's sense of entitlement is lampooned, for example, when he complains about leaving his home for a ball. "I just want to stay here, where it's cosy," he mutters to Emma as the camera swings around to reveal the enormous proportions of Knightley's home. In a longer scene, an archery game turns ugly when the two disagree about Harriet Smith's rejection of Robert Martin. Dressed in pink and equipped with bow and quiver, Emma resembles nothing so much as a peculiar combination of Diana and Cupid. Although her sense of herself as a virginal goddess remains relatively intact, her incompetence as Cupid quickly becomes apparent. As Emma's defends her actions, her shots grow wilder. "He is not Harriet's equal," she says and her arrow bounces off the target. "It would be a degradation for [Harriet] to marry a man I could not admit as my own acquaintance," she huffs, and her arrow sinks into the outer edge of the target. "Upon my word, Emma," says Knightley, "better be without sense than misapply it as you do." Emma misses the target entirely and almost kills Knightley's dog. The incongruity between what Emma says and what we see on the screen clearly points out that Emma is wrong. As when Knightley insists upon the comforts of home, this juxtaposition of visual image and verbal display provides the most obvious, and most effective way of exposing and commenting on a character's point of view. As the arrows bounce off the target, Emma's snobbery and her poor judgement are not only made apparent, but are also condemned.

So why, with all her faults, is Paltrow's Emma so appealing? Austen herself remarked that Emma was a heroine that "no one but myself will much like" and, to all intents and purposes she should have been right (Austen-Leigh 157). In her review of the

movie, Janet Maslin remarks, “what makes the hauteur of Emma so forgivable are the facts that the heroine will know better by the time the story is over and that her instincts are so reliably wrong” (C1). The movie’s ability to depict Emma ironically, Maslin suggests, releases us from the burden of judging Emma for ourselves. We can like Emma (both the movie and the character) because we are certain that the movie, which espouses our values, will chastise Emma for us.

Or will it? Another aspect of McGrath’s Emma substantially undermines the movie’s efforts to portray its heroine in an ironic light. This movie is banking on its ability to make Paltrow a star. Timed to coincide with the movie’s release, countless articles were written lauding Paltrow’s beauty and charm.¹¹³ Almost all of them mentioned her relationship with Hollywood’s then preeminent heartthrob, Brad Pitt. So prevalent was this deification that Paltrow’s public persona seriously interferes with our view of Emma Woodhouse. Despite her own credible performance, Paltrow cannot avoid her reputation as the golden girl who landed the best-looking guy in the movies. With Paltrow as Emma, Emma’s union with Knightley is a foregone conclusion. Moreover, as a star, Paltrow’s apparent perfections work against the notion that Emma must get off her pedestal and rejoin the human race. Despite her faults, this Emma ends the movie where she begins it, firmly fixed upon Mount Olympus.

Indeed the movie works hard to deify Paltrow. In interior scenes she always

¹¹³ Ben Hendricks’s “The Lovely Gwyneth Paltrow” homepage lists over twenty-five articles on Paltrow in magazines such as Vogue, Time, and New York Magazine. See also Richard Corliss’s profile of Paltrow in Time where he calls her “that cheerfully ravishing wraith on the arm of Hollywood dream supreme Brad Pitt” (74) and Margy Rochlin’s discussion of Paltrow and her celebrity status.

seems to be in a little more light than the rest of the cast. The camera, notes Maslin, loves to linger on her “fine-boned beauty,” often to the detriment of the supporting players (C1). Paltrow is often dressed and posed like a goddess. While her empire waists correctly recall the period’s obsession with the ancient Rome, other details are somewhat anachronistic. Unless she’s at church or visiting the poor, Emma tends to show a substantial amount of bosom and neck. She frequently wears only one color, a device that reinforces the sense that she’s a complete entity unto herself. Her upswept hair is never allowed to curl near her face and she is often bare-headed. Dressed thus she resembles a statue brought to life, or a girl on a pedestal.

Emma’s poses reinforce the impression. As Emma awaits the Coles’ invitation she is shown on a settee built to resemble the double scrolls that top Ionic columns. The white curtain behind her and the two potted orange trees that frame the scene emphasize the neoclassical aesthetic organizing the tableau. At another point, Emma’s superiority to Mrs. Elton is dramatized by her appearance and pose as they sit drinking tea. Dressed in a dark-red long-sleeved dress, Mrs. Elton sits on a couch at least four inches lower than Emma’s chair. Her curls hang to her shoulders. Clad in light green, Emma sits perfectly upright on the edge of her seat. Her hair is pulled back and ornamented with a green and white ribbon. Considered together, Mrs. Elton’s appearance amounts to an ostentatious display of self while Emma’s reflects a fondness for understatement and simple, pure lines. In a movie so besotted by the physical beauty of its hero and heroine, Emma’s good looks thus become an indication of her moral worth. This Emma, the film tells us, *deserves* to be on a pedestal because she truly is a young goddess. She may make

mistakes but she is never, really, in need of any serious improvement. Thus what could have been a Bildungsroman — a story of a young woman’s education — ends up as a simple comedy of manners.

While McGrath’s worship of Paltrow ultimately undermines the movie’s original project, Heckerling’s use of dramatic irony in Clueless comes closest to replicating Austen’s manipulation of her reader’s experience. In the film, Cher’s skewed perspective and the role her environment plays in her misconceptions are dramatized for the viewer by the contrast between her oh-so-literal narration and what we see on the screen. Her insistence, for example, that she is a normal teenager who gets dressed in the morning accompanies a vision of Cher in her dressing room coordinating outfits on a computer. Her matter-of-fact description of her mother’s accidental death during a “routine liposuction” identifies a terrifically tacky portrait of a woman with feathered hair. Later, Cher’s need for a quiet place to relax introduces a shot of the mall. In this manner the film makes the relationship between the realities of Cher’s environment and her self-absorbed image hilariously clear.

Although Heckerling’s Clueless has been dismissed as a charming, but “light” version of Austen, Clueless is the only one of the three movies to recognize and replicate the most profound of Emma’s ironies. The genius of Emma is that it forces its readers to question the values and expectations they bring to the book. As Terry Castle points out, “we enjoy Emma because she is smart and she is good; but we positively dote on her mistakes because they allow *us* to feel superior” (xv). Upon reflection, however, we have to admit that we are not as superior, nor Emma so wrong, as we originally thought. Many

first-time readers, for example, are surprised to learn about the secret engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax.¹¹⁴ Indeed, without the narrator's help, many of us are no more perceptive than Emma herself. Emma, moreover, is not as misguided as she initially appears. "Emma's wish to improve Harriet's situation is not intrinsically wrong" remarks Claudia Johnson (132). As Mr. Knightley remarks, Emma chose better for Mr. Elton than he did himself: "Harriet Smith," he tells Emma, "has some first-rate qualities that Mrs. Elton is totally without" (E 298). Emma is also correct in suspecting Jane Fairfax's involvement in a secret romance. Austen's irony thus functions on multiple levels. While Emma's "mistakes" expose her own arrogance, they also open the door for a critique of those social conventions that deem a Harriet or Jane less of a "catch" than a woman like Mrs. Elton. Austen's irony, I think, encourages her readers to call into question those things we take for granted. If the fact that we misread the evidence suggests that we, like Emma, are shaped by the shape of our worlds, then Emma's awakening suggests that we also are able to consciously improve how we think and behave.

Although it tries, Clueless, does not go this far. Unlike Frank's love for Jane,

¹¹⁴ Here I disagree with Castle who, in her introduction to Emma, remarks that "it must be a colossally incompetent reader who misses . . . that Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax are in some manner romantically involved" (xiv). As Claudia Johnson remarks, "Such is the consummate mastery of Austen's plotting . . . that Emma's misapprehensions seem utterly plausible when we read the novel for the first time, and she appears willfully to 'mis-read' the sunny clarity of truth only when our own repeated readings of this romance, the stuff of literary criticism, have laid her misconstructions bare" (133).

Christian's homosexuality is probably clear to most viewers long before it is apparent to Cher. Cher's union with Josh is also obvious from the start. However, Cher's moral growth and her genuinely likable nature pose a challenge to those of us who harbor stereotypes about spoiled teenagers who live in L.A. More seriously, the film goes to great lengths to reinforce an image of Cher that it eventually dismantles. The first-person narration is extremely important to this endeavor because it makes Cher immensely appealing. It lets us know that a good heart beats in that shell of self-involved ignorance. The fact that Cher finally understands her own heart is — importantly — signaled by a newfound harmony between what she says and what we see on the screen. Like a giant cartoon light bulb, a huge glowing fountain erupts in the background to signify the truth of Cher's revelation. Cher's new perspective is more than a realization about her feelings for Josh. She sees her old conduct as shallow and this gives her the power to change the way she behaves. There is no question that Emma is a less "silly" book than Clueless a movie. But in its own charming way, Clueless is acting in the spirit of Austen's novels by encouraging its viewers to admire Cher's desire to "make over [her] soul."

Conclusion

When I began this project and was searching for a title, I decided that “Acting Like a Lady” worked well. The phrase called attention to the central point of this dissertation: my belief that theatrical experience of many late eighteenth-century British women novelists profoundly influenced the way they represent gender in their fiction. As we have seen, the theater offered women like Inchbald, Burney, and Austen with a more complex model of womanhood than that represented by conduct material. Throughout the century, actresses and female playwrights proved that women could earn money in the public sphere. On stage and off, they demonstrated that female sexuality was not necessarily the private and passive opposite of male sexuality. Most importantly, they called into question the notion that a woman’s appearance and demeanor was the direct and unmediated reflection of her quality of mind.

If, however, one were to ask Inchbald, Burney, and Austen what does it mean to “act like a lady,” all three, I believe, would answer the question differently. All three use theatrical images and practices in their fiction to empower female readers. Yet each envisions female agency in a different way. These differences, which are linked to the writer’s individual relationship with the theater, revolve around the relationship between women’s subjectivity and the roles they perform.

As a performer and playwright, Inchbald probably was well aware that women can act and appear as something other than themselves. In contrast to Burney and Austen, however, Inchbald does not dramatize this possibility for her readers. Instead, she envisions her heroines as if they were actresses performing a play; like actresses, their

agency depends upon their ability to move the audience's emotions. To this end, Inchbald draws on her knowledge of a standardized language of theatrical gesture in A Simple Story. Throughout the novel, her heroines' bodies express emotion more immediately and more powerfully than through words alone. Inchbald may also have been inspired by her friendship with Sarah Siddons, whose genius for embodying her characters' emotions often moved her audience to their own impassioned displays of sensibility. Like Siddons in performance, Miss Milner and Matilda seem to experience a direct and unmediated relationship between their bodies and hearts. In the novel, the physical expression of their suffering does more than point out the brutal effects of institutional power. It evokes a sympathetic response in the other characters and in the reader that resembles the response of an audience attending a play. Inchbald thus exploits the notion that women are what they seem – or, more precisely, that women's bodies reveal women's hearts – to serve her own ends. By dramatizing the persuasive power of women's bodies, Inchbald suggests that female agency – however limited – depends on a lady's ability to express how she feels.

Burney's vision of female agency is quite different than Inchbald's. For Burney, female agency resides in women's ability to recognize that acting like a lady means performing a role. Burney's theatrical imagination, as I have argued, was shaped by her membership in a theatrical milieu. Of particular significance was her friendship with David Garrick, an actor whom she believed did not experience the emotions he represented on stage. Burney's view of Garrick qualified her reading of conduct material, undermining its insistence on a direct and unmediated relationship between women's

bodies and their emotions. Unlike Inchbald, who suggests that women's bodies reveal their emotions clearly, Burney demonstrates that a woman's appearance and behavior are often misread or misleading. Her novels call attention to the opacity of women's exteriors; they point out the difference between the heroine's self and the way she is perceived by others. Although Burney encourages her readers to overtly conform to contemporary definitions of feminine conduct, she wants her readers to keep in mind that they are essentially different from the roles they assume. Her novels offer their readers a way to conceive of themselves as unique individuals who might resist the control of those who attempt to define who and what ladies are.

Like Burney, Austen also differentiates between women's subjectivity and the roles they assume. She is primarily interested, however, in establishing women's agency as spectators. In her novels, her heroines' moral authority and their skill as performers depends on their ability to see through the theatrical nature of everyday life. Austen's readers are endowed with an even wider perspective, one that resonates with Austen's own experience as a theatergoer. As we have seen, Austen's irony endows her readers with a divided consciousness; at the same time that she encourages us to sympathize with her heroines, Austen also insists that we maintain detached enough to rationally evaluate the social norms that the characters embrace. Austen's idea of female agency, then, is almost diametrically opposed to Inchbald's. For Inchbald, women are actresses who are governed by feeling. Their agency depends on their ability to evoke a sympathetic response in those who surround them. Austen, in contrast, envisions women as both actors and spectators. Their agency depends upon their ability to maintain a

certain degree of detachment from the roles they assume and the performances they see. Women, she suggests, are not only governed by feeling. Like men, she insists, they are able to rationally evaluate the novels they read, the plays they see, and the performances that occur in everyday life.

I am not, however, suggesting that the theater was an unabashedly feminist institution. During the eighteenth-century women playwrights faced considerable obstacles in getting their work produced. Their agency was limited by prejudice against women writers, by their need to secure the theater manager's approval, and by the audience's expectations about what they should write. Overtly, at least, many of their plays reinforce conventional expectations about women's nature and roles. Actresses did this as well by representing idealized models of femininity in performance. Their use of a standardized language of theatrical gesture underscored the notion that a woman's body directly reflected her emotions and thoughts. So did some actresses' reliance on sensibility as an acting technique. Efforts to represent late eighteenth-century actresses and women playwrights according to conventional models of femininity also helped to reassure people that women were what they seemed.

At the same time, however, the theater also undermined the same models of womanhood it seemed to reinforce by calling attention to the performative nature of female experience. Moments in which an actress's individual subjectivity manifested itself in performance often complicated the theatrical representation of ideal femininity by calling attention to the difference between the performer and the role she assumed. So did debates about whether actors felt the emotions they represented on stage.

Meanwhile, the material success of some actresses and playwrights suggested that some women – Pope’s assertions to the contrary – did not belong in the shade. Even discourse which represented theatrical women as ladies proved problematic. After all, if actresses and women playwrights were actually ladies, then ladies could also be also theatrical women.

I believe that the theatrical experience of Inchbald, Burney, and Austen helped them to question ideologically dominant models of gender, but I am not suggesting that every woman writer connected to the theater did so as well. What I am suggesting is that the theater provided women with alternatives to definitions of female nature found in conduct material and with a number of images and strategies which helped them empower female readers. In doing so, I am implicitly contesting a Foucauldian view of the novel that sees women novelists unconsciously internalizing repressive definitions of femininity and then replicating them for their readers. This view, I believe, seriously underestimates the critical capacities of women writers and readers. Inchbald, as I have argued, used the notion that women’s bodies reveal women’s emotions to empower female readers. Burney was well aware of important contradictions in conduct material and Austen made fun of it. A reader of Pride and Prejudice, for example, would have to be unimaginably insensitive to interpret Austen’s description of Mr. Collins boring the Bennet girls silly by reading aloud from Fordyce’s Sermons as anything other than a jab at Fordyce’s work.

The eighteenth-century theater also had a profound influence on many late eighteenth-century women novelists besides Inchbald, Burney, and Austen. As the

appendix demonstrates, about 30% of the women novelists published in Britain between 1660 and 1818 were either actresses and/or playwrights, or they were related to, or closely associated with someone who worked in the professional theater. Although the number of women novelists linked to the theater is slightly higher during the early part of the period, this percentage remains relatively consistent throughout the century. Like their predecessors, many late eighteenth-century women novelists read and commented on each other's work, on the work of women with more tenuously linked to the eighteenth-century stage, and on the work of earlier women writers. Indeed, the use of theatrical images and practices in eighteenth-century novels by women can be read as the byproduct of a "critical conversation" between many women writers who, despite their differences, were all posing the question: "what does it really mean to *act* like a lady?"

Appendix
British Women Novelists and
the Theater, 1660-1818

This appendix lists 188 women novelists who were published in Britain between 1660 and 1818. It notes which women writers were actresses and/or playwrights. If a women novelist was related to or associated with actors or playwrights, those relationships are noted as well. Of the 188 women listed, approximately 72 were definitely involved in the theater in the following ways: forty-nine were professional or amateur actresses and/or playwrights; two others — Anne Damer and Lady Mary Champion de Crespigny — produced private theatricals; Mary Brunton and Mary Hearne dedicated novels to professional playwrights and Helen Maria Jordan interviewed Dora Jordan during the last two years of the actress's life. Through birth or marriage, eight more were related to individuals who worked in the theater.

The theatrical connections of twelve other women novelists listed in the appendix are more tenuous. In most instances, these women were either friends or associates of performers or playwrights. Mary Hays and Letitia Hawkins, for instance, belonged to a milieu which included Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Opie, Anne Plumptre, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Oliver Goldsmith was a family friend of Ellis Knight's. Jane Collier and Sarah Scott were close to Henry Fielding's sister, Sarah. The Duchess of Devonshire was a patron of Mary Robinson.

In a few cases, a novelist's involvement in the theater could not be definitively

established. Maria Susanna Cooper may or may not have been Maria Hunter. Mrs. H. Cartwright may or may not have been a singer at Drury Lane. All unresolved issues are noted in the appendix.

The appendix is arranged alphabetically. Each entry contains a chronological listing of each author's novels and plays. Initial publication dates and the dates and locations of a play's first performance are included whenever possible. Many of these women also wrote in other genres. Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, and Ann Yearsley wrote poetry, for example: Maria Edgeworth wrote about education as did Hannah More and Jane West. Some women wrote travel narratives; others wrote on religion, history, and/or on science and nature. This appendix, however, only lists their novels and plays.¹¹⁵ A list of relevant abbreviations is included below.

The information in this appendix was obtained by cross-referencing information from the following sources: Dictionary of National Biography; Dictionary of Literary Biography, vols. 38 and 39, "British Novelists, 1660-1800"; Ellen Donkin's Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829; Gary Kelly's unpublished bibliography, "Women Dramatists, 1790-1830"; Phillip Highfill Jr., Kalman A. Burnim and Edward Langhans's Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800; the index to The London Stage, 1660-1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments, Afterpieces. Together with Box-Receipts, and Contemporary Comment; Dougald MacMillan's Catalogue to the

¹¹⁵ See Judith Phillip Stanton's "Profile of Women Writing in English, 1660-1800," for a discussion of women's writing in a variety of genres.

Larpent Plays in the Huntington Library; Allardyce Nicoll's Hand-List of Plays in A History of Late Eighteenth-Century Drama, 1750-1800 and in A History of Early Nineteenth-Century Drama, 1800-1850; Dale Spender's list of one-hundred and six women novelists in Mothers of the Novel; Janet Todd's Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660-1800; and Cheryl Turner's Catalogue of Women's Fiction Published in Book Form, 1676-1796 in Living By the Pen.¹¹⁶

List of Abbreviations

Genre: In this appendix the term "novel" refers to prose fiction excluding plays, but including novellas and collections of tales. I do not distinguish between tragedy, comedy, and farce; all are designated by the term "play.". Other forms of theatrical entertainment are, when possible, indicated by the following abbreviations:

b.opera (ballad opera)	d.p. (dramatic poem)	pant. (pantomime)
c.opera (comic opera)	ent. (entertainment)	past. (dramatic pastoral)
opera (opera)	int. (interlude)	

¹¹⁶ Turner's list was compiled from over forty sources including the catalogues of the Bodleian and British Libraries. See Spender and Turner for a description of their sources. In addition to Nicoll and MacMillan, sources for Gary Kelly's bibliography include the University of Alberta Library Holdings: Humanities and Social Science Library, Special Collections, The Eighteenth Century microfilm collection; William Bergquist, Three Centuries of Drama; James Ellis, English and American Drama of the Nineteenth Century. As Betty Rizzo points out in her review of Dale Spender's list in Mother's of the Novel, Dale Spender's list of novels includes works which are actually non-fiction. Whenever possible, the works on Spender's list have been checked against information from Turner and Todd.

Theaters: except for the following, the full names of theaters, or theater locations, are given in the appendix:

CG (Covent Garden)

Crows (Crows St. Theatre, Dublin)

DG (Dorset Gardens)

DL (Drury Lane)

Hay (Little Theatre at the Haymarket)

LIF (Lincoln's Inn Fields)

Marly (Marlybone Gardens)

Author	Genre	Title (pub. date)	Performance Information	Notes
Alexander, Judith	novel	The Young Lady of Fortune (1789)		
Alderson, Amelia (Opie)	novel play novel novel novel novel	The Dangers of Coquetry (1790) T. Adelaide Father and Daughter (1801) Adeline Mowbray (1804) Simple Tales (1806) Valentine's Eve (1816)	T. Adelaide performed at Plumptre's Private Theatre, Norwich	actress, priv. theat.; friends w/Inchbald, Wollstonecraft, Siddons, Williams. Gibaldi; or the Ruffian by Edward Fitzball (Nor. Apr 2, 1820) based on The Ruffian Boy; a Popular Tale by Mrs. Opie
Atkyns, Lady	novel	The Hermit (1769)		
Aubin, Penelope	novel novel novel novel	The Life of Madame de Beaumont (1721) The Strange Adventures of Count DeVinevil and His Family (1721) The Life and Amorous Adventures of Lucinda, an English Lady (1722) The Noble Slaves or the Life and Adventures of Two Lords and Two Ladies. . . (1722)		

Aubin, Penelope (continued)	novel novel novel play	The Life of Charlotta Du Pont, an English Lady (1723) The Life and Adventures of Lady Lucy (1726) The Life and Adventures of the Young Count Albertus (1728) The Humours of the Masqueraders (1733?)	York Buildings, 1737	Austen probably acted in some of the family's theatricals.
Austen, Jane attrib?	playlet playlet playlet play novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel	The First Act of a Comedy (between 1787 and 1793) The Mystery (between 1787 and 1793) The Visit (between 1787 and 1793) Sir Charles Grandison (probably between 1790 and 1800) Lady Susan (probably written between 1793-4) Northanger Abbey (written 1788-9, published posthumously, 1818) The Watsons (fragment, probably composed between 1803-5) Sense and Sensibility (1811) Pride and Prejudice (1813) Mansfield Park (1814) Emma (1816) Persuasion (posthumous, 1818) Sanditon (unfinished, 1817)		
Austin, Mrs.	novel	The Noble Family (1771)		

Ballin, Rosetta	novel	The Statue Room (1790)		
Barker, Jane	novel	Love's Intrigues; or the History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia, as related to Lucasia, in St. Germain's Garden (1713)		
	novel	Exilius; or, the Banish'd Roman (1715)		
	novel	A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies (1723)		
	novel	The Lining for the Patch-Work Screen (1726)		
Barry, Mrs.	novel	The Amorous Merchant; or, Intriguing Husband (1753)		
Behn, Aphra	play	The Forced Marriage, or the Jealous Bridegroom (1671)	LIF 1670	
	play	The Amorous Prince; or the Curious Husband	LIF Feb. 24, 1671	
	play	The Dutch Lover (1673)	DG Feb. 6, 1673	
attrib?	play	The Woman Turned Bully	DG 1673	
	play	Abdelazer; or, the Moor's Revenge (1676)	DG Jul. 3, 1676	
	play	The Town Fop; or, Sir Timothy Tawdry	DG 1676	
	play	The Rover; or, the Banish'd Cavaliers (1677)	DG 1677	
attrib?	play	The Debauchee; or the Credulous Cuckold	DG Feb, 1677	
attrib?	play	The Counterfeit Bridegroom; or, the Defeated Widow	DG 1677	
	play	Sir Patent Fancy (1678)	DG Jan., 1678	
	play	The Young King; or, The Mistake	DG Mar., 1679	

Behn, Aphra (continued)	play play play play play play play past. novel novel play farce novel novel novel novel	The Feigned Courtesans; or, A Night's Intrigue (1679) The Revenge; or, A Match in Newgate The Rover, Part II (1681) The False Count; or, A New Way to Play an Old Game The Roundheads; or, The Good Old Cause The City Heiress; or, Sir Timothy Treatall (1682) Like Father Like Son; or, the Mistaken Brothers The Wavering Nymph; or, Mad Amyntas (1683) Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister (1683 or 84) The Adventures of the Black Lady (1684) The Lucky Chance; or, an Alderman's Bargain The Emperor of the Moon The Unfortunate Bride; or the Blind Lady a Beauty The Dumb Virgin; or the Force of Imagination The Wandering Beauty The History of the Nun; or, the Fair Vow-Breaker The Lucky Mistake (1688 or 89) Agnes de Castro; or the Force of Generous Blood (1688) The Fair Jilt; or the Amours of Prince Tarquin and Miranda (1688)	DG Mar., 1679 DG Jun., 1680 DG Jan., 1681 DG Nov, 1681 DG Dec., 1681 DG Apr., 1682 DG Mar., 1682 unknown DL Apr., 1686 DG Mar., 1767	
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	<p>novel</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave (1688)</p> <p>The Widow Ranter</p> <p>The Younger Brother; or, the Amorous Jilt</p> <p>The Court of the King of Bantam (post., 1696)</p> <p>Love Letters to a Gentleman (post., 1696)</p> <p>The Nun; or the Perjured Beauty (post., 1697)</p> <p>The Unhappy Mistake (posthumous, 1697)</p> <p>The Unfortunate Happy Lady; A True History (posthumous, 1697)</p> <p>The Lady's Looking Glass (1697)</p>	<p>DG Nov., 1689</p> <p>DL Feb., 1686</p>
Bennett, Agnes Maria	<p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welsh Heiress (1783)</p> <p>Juvenile Indiscretions (1786)</p> <p>Agnes De Courci (1789)</p> <p>Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel (1794)</p> <p>The Beggar Girl and Her Benefactors (1797)</p> <p>DeValencourt (1800)</p> <p>Vicissitudes Abroad; or the Ghost of my Father (1806)</p>	
Berry, Miss	<p>novel</p>	<p>The Correspondents (1775)</p>	
Berry, Mary	<p>play</p> <p>fiction?</p>	<p>The Fashionable Friends (1802)</p> <p>Reminiscences Written in MDCCLXXXVIII for the Amusement of Miss Mary Agnes Berry (1805)</p>	<p>DL Apr. 22, 1802</p>

Berry, Mary (cont.)	fiction?	Letters of the Marquis Du Deffand . . . to Walpole (1810)		
Blower, Elizabeth	novel	The Parsonage House (1789)		actress
	novel	George Bateman (1782)		
	novel	Maria (1785)		
	novel	Features from Life; or, A Summer Visit (1788)		
Bonhote, Elizabeth	novel	The Rambles of Mr. Frankley (1772)		
	novel	The Fashionable Friend (1773)		
	novel	Hortensia (1777)		
	novel	Olivia; or, the Deserted Bride (1787)		
	novel	Darnley Vale; or, Emelia Fitzroy (1789)		
	novel	Ellen Woodley (1790)		
	novel	Bungay Castle (1796)		
	novel	Georgina; or, Memoirs of the Bellmour Family (1787)		
Bowes, Mary Eleanor	play	The Siege of Jerusalem (1774)		
	mem?	The Lives of Andrew Robinson Bowes (1810)		
Boyd, Elizabeth	novel	The Happy Unfortunate (1732)		
	play	Don Sancho; or, the Student's Whim (1739)	unacted	
Boys, Mrs. S.	novel	The Coalition; or, Family Anecdotes (1785)		

Briscoe, Sophia	novel novel	Miss Melmoth; or the New Clarissa (1771) The Fine Lady (1772)			Also see entry for Miss Nugent w/ Miss Taylor. Possibly same.
Bromley, Eliza (Nugent)	novel novel	Laura and Augustus (1784) The Cave of Cosenza: A Romance of the Eighteenth Century . . . (1803)			
Brooke, Frances	novel novel novel novel play c.opera c.opera novel	The History of Lady Julia Mandeville (1763) The History of Emily Montague (1769) All's Right at Last, or the History of Miss West (1774) The Excursion (1777) The Siege of Sinope (1781) Rosina (1783) Marian (1788) The History of Charles Mandeville (1790)	CG Jan. 31, 1781 CG Dec. 31, 1783 CG May 22, 1788		Co-manager, Hay Opera House w/Mary Ann Yates (actress) 1773-1777.2
Brooks, Indiana	novel	Eliza Beaumont and Harriet Osborne (1789)			
Brunton, Mary	novel novel novel	Self Control (1811) Discipline (1814) Emmeline (posthumous, 1818)			Dedicated Self Control to Joanna Baillie
Bullock, Mrs.	novel	Susanna; or, Traits of a Modern Miss (1795)			

Burke, Mrs.	<p>novel novel novel novel novel</p>	<p>Ela; or the Delusions of the Heart (1787) Emilia De St. AuBigne (1788) Adela Northington (1796) The Sorrows of Edith (1796) (attributed) Elliot, or Vicissitudes of Early Life (attrib., 1800)</p>		
Burney, Frances (D'Arblay)	<p>novel play novel play play play novel play play play play novel</p>	<p>Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World (1778) The Wivlings (1779) Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress (1782) The East Indian Edwy and Elgiva (1795) Hubert De Vere (1795) Camilla; or a Picture of Youth (1796) Love and Fashion (1798) A Busy Day (1800) The Woman Hater (1802) The Triumphant Toadeater The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties (1814)</p>	<p>withdrawn Hay Jul 2, 1782 DL Mar. 21, 1782 unfinished withdrawn not produced not produced</p>	<p>acted in private theatricals attrib. by Larpent</p>
Burney, Sarah Harriet	<p>novel novel novel novel</p>	<p>Clarentine (1796) Geraldine Fauconberg (1806) Traits of Nature (1812) Tales of Fancy (1816-20)</p>		<p>Frances Burney's half- sister</p>

Bury, Lady Charlotte (née Campbell)	novel	Self-Indulgence (1812)	more novels after 1818
Cartwright, Mrs. H.	novel novel novel novel	The Generous Sister (1780) The Duped Guardian; or, the Amant Malede (1795) The Platonic Marriage (1787) Retaliation; or, the History of Sir Edward Oswald and Lady Frances Seymour (1787)	a Mrs. Cartwright was a singer at Drury Lane from 1772-1777
Cavendish, Margaret	novel plays novel	Nature's Pictures (1656) Plays Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle (folio, 1662): Love's Adventures; Several Wits: The Wise Wit, the Wild Wit, the Choloric Wit, the Humble Wit; Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet; The Lady Contemplation; Wits' Cabal; The Unnatural Tragedie; The Public Wooing; The Matrimonial Trouble; Nature's Three Daughters: Beauty, Love and Wit; The Religious; the Comical; Bell in Campo; The Apocriphal Ladies; The Female Academy. The New Blazing World (1665)	The New Blazing World is part fiction, part philosophical essay. Cavendish also published other fiction, including poems and translations at her own expense.

Cavendish, Margaret (cont.)	plays	Plays Never Before Printed (Folio, 1668): The Sociable Companions, or the Female Wits; the Presence; the Bridals; the Convent of Pleasure; and A Piece of Glory.		
Chambers, Marianne	novel play play	He Deceived Himself (subscription, 1799) The School for Friends (1805) Ourselves (1811)	DL Dec 10, 1805 Lyceum Mar 2, 1811	
Champion de Crespigny, Lady Mary	novel novel	The Poor Soldier (1789) The Pavilion (1796)		private theater at Camberwell
Charke, Charlotte	play ent. ent. novel novel novel novel	The Art of Management (1735) The Carnival; or Harlequin Blunderer (1735) Tit for Tat; or the Comedy and Tragedy of War (1743) The Mercer (1755) The History of Henry Dumont, esquire and Miss Charlotte Evelyn (1756) The Lovers' Treat (1758) The History of Charles and Patty (no date)	York Buildings, Sept. 1735 LIF James Street, Feb. 1, 1743	actress; father: Colley Cibber; brother, Theophilus Cibber
Charlton, Mary	novel	The Parisian (1794)		

Chilcot, Harriet (Meziere)	novel	Moreton Abbey (1790)		
Clark, Emily	novel novel novel novel novel	Ianthe; or, the Flower of Caernavon (1798) Ermina Montrose, or the Cottage of the Vale (1800) The Banks of the Douro; or the Maid of Portugal (1805) Tales of the Fireside (1817) The Esquimaux; or Fidelity (1819)		Edgeworth subscriber to Montrose
Clarke, Eliza (Cobbold)	novel	The Sword (1791)		
Collier, Jane w/Sarah Fielding	novel	The Cry (1754)		Friendship with Henry Fielding
Collyer, Mary	novel novel stories novel	Felicia to Charlotte (1744) Letters from Felicia to Charlotte (1749) A Christmas Box (1749) The Death of Cain (posthumous, 1789)		
Cooper, Maria Susanna (Hunter)	novel novel novel novel	Letters Between Emilia and Harriet (1762) The School for Wives (1763) The Exemplary Mother (1769) The History of Fanny Meadows (1775)		possibly the same as actress/novelist Maria Hunter
Courtney, Mrs.	novel	Isabinda of Bellefield (1786)		

Cox, Anna (cont.) some as "Ellen of Exeter"	novel novel novel novel novel novel	Orlando and Lavinia (1792) Mysteries Elucidated (1795) The Neapolitan (1796) Dusseldorf, or The Fratricide (1798) Feudal Events of Days of Yore (1800) The Irish Guardian: Errors of Eccentricity (1809)		
Craik, Helen	novel	Julia De St. Pierre (1796)		amateur actress
Craven, Elizabeth (after 1791, the Margravine of Anspach)	novel play play past. ent. play play play	Modern Anecdotes of the Ancient Family of the Kinkervankotsdar sprakengotchederns; a tale for Christmas (1779) The Sleepwalker The Miniature Picture The Arcadian Pastoral The Silver Tankard; or the Point at Portsmouth The Statue Feast Le Philosophe Moderne (1790) The Yorkshire Ghost	Newberry (private, 1778) Newberry (private); DL May 24, 1780 Burlington Gardens (private, 1782) Hay Jul. 18, 1781 Benham House, (private, 1782) not produced Brandenberg House (private, 1799)	novel privately printed

Craven, Elizabeth (continued)	opera pant. past. int. play play	The Princess of Georgia Puss in Boots (1799) Love Rewarded (1799) Nourjahad (1803) Nicodemus in Despair (1803) Love in a Convent (1805)	Brand. House (private, 1799); CG Apr 19, 1799 Brand. House (private, 1799) not produced Brand. House (private, 1803) Hay Aug 31, 1803 Brand. House (private, 1805)	
Damer, Anne S.	novel	Belmour (1801)		produced Mary Berry's play: The Fashionable Friends; priv. theat.
Davys, Mary	novel novel play novel play novel novel	The Amours of Alcippus and Leucippe (17040) The Fugitive (1705) The Northern Heiress; or, the Humours at York (1716) The Reform'd Coquette (1724) The Self Rival (1725) The Accomplish'd Rake (1727) The False Friend (1732)	LIF Apr., 1716 not produced	
Dawe, Anne	novel	The Younger Sister; or. History of Miss Somerset (1770)		

De Acton, Eugenia pseudonym?	novel	Vicissitudes in Genteel Life (1794)		
Devonshire, Georgiana (Duchess of)	novel novel	Emma; or, the Unfortunate Attachment (1773) The Sylph (1779)		Patron of Mary Robinson
Draper, Sarah	novel	Memoirs of the Princess of Zell (1796)		
Dubois, Dorothea	novel ent? ent. play	Theodora (1770) The Magnet (not pub?) The Divorce (1773) The Haunted Grove (not pub.)	Marly 1771 Marly 1771 Crows Apr., 1773	
Eden, Anne	novel	Confidential Letter of Albert (1790)		
Edgeworth, Maria	novel novel stories novel novel tales novel novel	Castle Rackrent (1800) Belinda (1801) Popular Tales (1804) the Modern Griselda (1805) Leonora (1806) Tales of Fashionable Life (1809-12) Patronage (1814) Ormond (1817)		corresponded with Elizabeth Inchbald; friendship with Joanna Baillie

Edgeworth, Maria (cont.)	plays	Comic Dramas: the Rose, Thistle and Shamrock; The Two Guardians; Love and Law (1817)	not produced	
Edwards, Miss	novel or play or both	Otho and Rutha; a dramatic tale (1780)		Turner lists Otho as a novel; Nicoll lists it as a play
Elford, Sophia	novel	The Constant Couple (1709)		possibly an actress
Elliot, Miss	novel novel novel novel novel	The Relapse (1780) The History of the Hon. Mrs. Rosemont and Sir Henry Cardigan (1781) The Masqued Weddings (1781) The Orphan (1783) The Portrait (1783)		
Eyton, Elizabeth	novel	The Fault Was All His Own (1771)		
Fell, Mrs.	novel	The Peasant; or, the Female Philosopher (1792)		
Fenn, Eleanor	novel novel novel novel	Fables in Monosyllables (1783) Sketches of Little Boys (c.1783) The Fairy Spectator (1789) Lilliputian Spectacle De La Nature (c. 1789)		

Fenwick, Eliza	novel	Secresy; or, The Ruin on the Rock (1795)	daughter Eliza a professional actress; friend of Opie, Plumptre, Robinson
Fielding, Sarah	novel novel novel novel novel	The Adventures of David Simple (1744) Familiar Letters Between the Characters in David Simple (1747) The Governess (1749) The History of Betty Barnes (1753) The Adventures of David Simple. Volume the Last (1753)	Brother Henry Fielding, novelist and playwright.
w/Jane Collier	novel novel novel novel	The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia (1757) The History of the Countess of Dellwyn (1759) The History of Ophelia (1760) The Cry (1754)	
Finglass, Esther	novel	The Recluse; or, History of Lady Gertrude Lesley (1790)	
Fitzjohn, Matilda (pseud?)	novel	Joan!!! (1796)	
Fogerty, Mrs.	novel	The Fatal Connexion (1773)	

Foster, Mrs. E.M.	novel novel novel novel novel novel	The Duke of Clarence (1795) Frederic and Caroline (1800) Light and Shade (1803) Federetta (no date) Rebecca (no date) Miriam (no date)		
Fuller, Anne	novel novel novel	The Convent; or, The History of Sophia Nelson (1786) Alan Fitz-Osborne; an Historical Tale (1786) The Son of Ethel Wolf; an Historical Tale (1789)		
Furguss, Miss	novel	The Thoughtless Ward (1777)		
Gales, Winnifred Marshall	novel	The History of Lady Emma Melcombe and Her Family (1787)		
Gibbes, Phebe	novel novel novel novel novel	The Life and Adventures of Mr. Francis Clive (1764) The Woman of Fashion; or, The History of Lady Diana Dormer (1767) Friendship in a Nunnery; or, The American Fugitive (1778) The Niece; or, The history of Sukey Thornby (1788) Hartly House, Calcutta (1789)		

Gomersall, Ann	novel novel novel	Eleonora (1789) The Citizen (1790) The Disappointed Heir (1796)		
Gooch, Elizabeth Sarah (Née Villa-Real)	novel novel novel novel novel	The Contrast (1795) Fancied Events; or the Sorrows of Ellen (1799) The Beggar Boy (1801) Truth and Fiction (1801) Sherwood Forrest (1804)	actress	
Gosling, Jane	novel	Ashdale Village (1794)		
Granger, Lydia	novel	Modern Amours; or, A Secret History of the Adventures of Some Persons of the First Rank (1733)		
Green, Sarah	novel	Charles Henley; or, the Fugitive Restored (1790) (eleven additional novels)		
Griffith, Elizabeth	d.p. play play play novel novel	Amana. A Dramatic Poem (1764) The Platonic Wife, A Comedy (1765) The Double Mistake. A Comedy (1766) The School for Rakes; A Comedy (1769) The Delicate Distress (1769) (in Two novels by the authors of Henry and Frances) The History of Lady Barton (1771)	actress; author of: The Morality of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated (1775)	DL Jan 22, 1765 CG Jan. 9, 1766 DL Feb.4, 1769

Griffith, Elizabeth (cont.)	play novel play	A Wife in the Right (1772) The Story of Lady Juliana Harley (1776) The Times: A Comedy (1780)	CG Mar. 5, 1772 DL Dec. 2, 1779	
Gunning, Elizabeth (later Plunkett)	novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel? novel novel play novel novel novel	The Packet (1794) Lord Fitzhenry (1794) The Foresters (altered from the French, 1796) The Orphans of Snowdon (1797) The Gipsy Countess (1799) Family Stories; or, Evening's at My Grandmothers (1802) The Village Library (1802) The Farmer's Boy (French trans., 1802) Sequel to Family Stories . . . (1803) The Wife with Two Husbands (French trans., 1803) The Exile of Erin (1808) The Man of Fashion (1815)	not produced	
Gunning, Susannah	novel novel novel novel novel novel	The Histories of Lady Frances S___ and Lady Caroline S___ (with Margaret Minfie, 1763) Family Pictures (with Margaret Minfie, 1764) The Picture (with Margaret Minfie, 1766) The Hermit (1770) Anecdotes of the Delborough Family (1792) Memoirs of Mary (1793)		Sister: Margaret Minfie

Gunning, Susannah (cont.)	novel novel novel novel	Delves: A Welch Tale (1796) Love at First Sight (1797) Fashionable Involvements (1800) The Heir Apparent (posthumous, 1802)		The Heir Apparent revised by daughter Elizabeth Gunning (Plunkett)
Gwynn, Albina	novel novel	The Rencontre; or Transition of a Moment (1784) The History of the Honorable Edward Mortimer (1785)		
Hamilton, Elizabeth	novel novel novel	Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796) Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800) The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808)		
Hamilton, Lady Mary (née Walker)	novel novel novel novel novel	Letters from the Duchess de Crui (1776) Memoirs of the Marchioness de Louvi (1777) Munster Village (1778) The Life of Mrs. Justman (1782) Duc de Popoli (1801)		
Hanway, Mary Anne	novel novel novel novel	Elinor; or, the World as It Is (1798) Andrew Stuart; or, the Northern Wanderer (1800) Falconbridge Abby: A Devonshire Story (1808) Christabelle, the Maid of Rouen (1815)		

Harding, Elizabeth	novel	The Masterpiece of Imposture; or, The Adventures of John. Gordon. and the Countess of Gordon . . . (1734)		
Harley, M. (later Hugill, Mrs.)	novel novel novel novel novel novel	St. Bernard's Priory. an Old English Tale (1786) The Castle of Mowbray (1788) The Countess of Hennebon (1789) Juliana Ormiston; or. The Fraternal Victim (1793) The Prince of Leon (1795) Isidora of Galicia (1797-8)		
Harvey, Mrs.	novel	The Memoirs of Fidelis and Harriet (1753)		
Hawke, Lady Cassandra	novel novel	Julia De Gramont (1788) Mausoleum of Julia (no date)		
Hawkins, Laetitia Matilda	novel novel	The Countess and Gertrude; or Modes of Discipline (1811) Rosanne; or Father's Labour Lost (1814)		More novels after 1818 Friendships w/: Helen Maria Williams and Mary Robinson
Hays, Mary	novel novel novel novel novel	Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796) The Victim of Prejudice (1799) Harry Clinton: a Tale of Youth (1804) The Brothers, or Consequences . . . (1815) Family Annals; or, the Sisters (1817)		Friendships: Fenwick, Holcroft, Godwin, Wolstonecraft. Admired Hannah More & Maria Edgeworth.

Haywood, Eliza	<p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>The Fair Captive (1721?)</p> <p>Love in Excess; or the Fatal Inquiry (1719-20)</p> <p>The British Recluse; or the Secret History of Cleomira, Suppos'd Dead (1722)</p> <p>Idalia; or the Unfortunate Mistress (1723)</p> <p>The Injur'd Husband; or the Mistaken Resentment (1723)</p> <p>A Wife to be Let (1723)</p> <p>Lasselia; or the Self-Abandoned (1724)</p> <p>The Fatal Secret; or, Constasy in Distress (1724)</p> <p>The Masqueraders; or Fatal Curiosity (1724-5)</p> <p>The Rash Resolve; or the Untimely Discovery (1724)</p> <p>A Spy Upon the Conjuror (1724)</p> <p>The Surprise; or, Constasy Rewarded (1724)</p> <p>Bath — Intrigues (1725)</p> <p>The Dumb Projector (1725)</p> <p>Fantomina; or, Love in a Maze (1725)</p> <p>Fatal Fondness; or, Love Its Own Opposer (1725)</p> <p>The Force of Nature; or the Lucky Disappointment (1725)</p> <p>Memoirs of the Baron De Brosse (1725)</p> <p>The Tea-Table; or, a Conversation between Some Polite Persons of Both Sexes . . . (1725)</p>	<p>LIF May 21, 1715</p> <p>DL Aug.12, 1723</p> <p>actress</p>
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Haywood, Eliza (continued)	<p>novel</p> <p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>c.opera</p> <p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>The Fair Hebrew; or, a True but Secret History of Two Jewish Ladies . . . (1729)</p> <p>Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenbergh (1729)</p> <p>Love-Letters on All Occasions Lately Passed Between Persons of Distinction (1730)</p> <p>The Opera of Operas; or, Tom Thumb the Great (1733)</p> <p>Arden of Febersham (not pub?)</p> <p>Adventures of Eovaai, princess of Ijaveo . . . (1736)</p> <p>The Fortunate Foundlings (1744)</p> <p>Life's Progress Through the Passions; or, the Adventures of Natura (1748)</p> <p>This History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless (1751)</p> <p>The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy (1753)</p> <p>Modern Characters . . . (1753)</p> <p>The Invisible Spy (1755)</p>	<p>LIF Mar. 4. 1728</p> <p>Hay May 31. 1733</p> <p>Hay Jan 21. 1736</p>	<p>Arden of Febersham is noted in the Index to The London Stage but not by Cotton or Nicol.</p>
Hearne, Mary	<p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novels</p>	<p>The Lover's Week; or The Six Days Adventures of Philander and Amaryllis (1718)</p> <p>The Female Deserters (1719)</p> <p>Honour the Victory and Love the Prize. Illustrated in Ten Novels by Mrs. Hearne (including the two noted above, 1720)</p>		<p>dedicated novel to Manley</p>

Helme, Elizabeth	novel	Louisa; or, The Cottage on the Moor (1787)	not produced not produced	
	novel	Clara and Emmeline; or the Maternal Benediction (1788)		
	novel	Duncan and Peggy; a Scottish Tale (1794)		
	novel	The Farmer of Ingleswood Forest (1796)		
	play	Cortez (1800)		
	play	Pizarro (1800)		
	novel	St. Margaret's Cave; or, the Nun's Story (1801)		
	novel	St. Clair of the Isles (1803)		
	novel	Pilgrim of the Cross; or, the Chronicles of Christabelle de Mowbray (1805)		
	novel	Magdalen; or the Penitent of Godstow (1812)		
novel	Modern Times; or, The Age We Live In (posthumous, 1814)			
Herberts, Mary	novel	The Adventures of Proteus, etc. (1727)		
Heron, Mary	novel	The Conflict (1790)		
Hervey, Elizabeth	novel	Melissa and Marcia; or, The Sisters (1788)		
	novel	Louisa; or, the Reward of an Affectionate Daughter (1790)		
	novel	The History of Ned Evans (1796)		
	novel	The Church of St. Siffrid (1797)		
	novel	The Mourtray Family (1800)		

Holford, Margaret	novel play	Fanny (1785) Neither's the Man (1798)	Chester, 1798	
Howell, Ann (Hilditch)	novel novel novel novel novel novel novel	Rosa De Montmorein (1787) Mount Pelham (1789) Rosenberg (1789) Mortimore Castle (1794?) Anzoletta Zadoski (1796) Georgina; or, The Advantages of Grand Connections (1796)		
Hugues, Anne Rice	novel novel novel plays novel	Zoraida; or, Village Annals (1786) Caroline; or The Diversities of Fortune (1787) Henry and Isabella; or, A Trait through Life (1788) Moral Dramas Intended for Private Presentation (1790) Jemima (1795)	not produced	
Hunter, Maria	novel novel	Fitzory; or Impulse of a Moment (1792) Ella; or He's Always in the Way (1798)		actress, see entry for Maria Susanna Cooper
Hurry, Mrs. Ives	novel	Tales of Instruction and Amusement (1795)		

Inchbald, Elizabeth	<p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>novel</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p> <p>play</p>	<p>A Mogul Tale (1824)</p> <p>I'll Tell You What (1786)</p> <p>Appearance is Against Them (1785)</p> <p>The Widow's Vow (1786)</p> <p>The Midnight Hour (1787)</p> <p>All On a Summer's Day</p> <p>Animal Magnetism</p> <p>Such Things Are (1788)</p> <p>The Child of Nature (1788)</p> <p>The Married Man (1789)</p> <p>The Hue and Cry</p> <p>Next Door Neighbors</p> <p>A Simple Story (1791)</p> <p>Young Men and Old Women</p> <p>Cross Partners</p> <p>Everyone Has His Fault (1793)</p> <p>The Wedding Day (1794)</p> <p>Nature and Art (1794)</p> <p>Wives as They Were and Maids as They Are (1797)</p> <p>Lovers' Vows (1798)</p> <p>The Wise Man of the East (1799)</p> <p>The Massacre (1792 pub. 1833)</p> <p>A Case of Conscience (1800, pub 1833)</p> <p>To Marry or Not to Marry (1805)</p>	<p>Hay Jul. 6. 1784</p> <p>Hay Jul. 30. 1785</p> <p>CG Oct. 22. 1785</p> <p>Hay Jun. 20. 1786</p> <p>CG May 22. 1787</p> <p>CG Dec. 15. 1787</p> <p>CG Apr. 24. 1788</p> <p>CG Feb 10. 1787</p> <p>CG Nov. 20. 1788</p> <p>Hay Jul. 15. 1789</p> <p>DL May 11. 1791</p> <p>Hay Jul. 9. 1791</p> <p>Hay Jun. 30. 1792</p> <p>Hay Aug 21. 1792</p> <p>CG Jan. , 19. 1793</p> <p>DL Nov. 1. 1794</p> <p>CG Mar. 4. 1797</p> <p>CG Oct. 11. 1798</p> <p>CG Nov. 30. 1799</p> <p>not produced</p> <p>not produced</p> <p>CG Feb 6. 1805</p>	<p>actress; edited: The British Theatre (1806-9); the Modern Theatre (1809); A Collection of Farces and Other Afterpieces (1809)</p>
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Johnson, Mrs.	<p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>Francis, The Philanthropist (1786)</p> <p>Juliana (1786)</p> <p>The Platonic Guardian; or The History of an Orphan (1787)</p> <p>The Innocent Fugitive; or, Memoirs of a Lady of Quality (1789)</p>	
Keir, Susanna	<p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>Interesting Memoirs (1785)</p> <p>The History of Miss Greville (1787)</p>	
Kelly, Isabella (Hegeland, Mrs.)	<p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>Madeline; or, the Castle of Montgomery (1794)</p> <p>The Abbey of St. Asaph (1795)</p> <p>The Ruins of Avondale Priory (1796)</p> <p>Jocelina; or the Rewards of Benevolence (1797)</p> <p>Eva (1795)</p> <p>Ruthinglenne; or the Critical Moment (1801)</p> <p>The Baron's Daughter (1802)</p> <p>A Modern Incident (1803)</p> <p>The Secret (18050)</p> <p>Jane de Dunstanville, or Characters as They Are (1813)</p>	
Kerr (or Ker), Anne	<p>novel</p> <p>novel</p> <p>novel</p>	<p>The Heiress de Montalduc, or the Castle of Bezarto (1799)</p> <p>Adeline St. Julian; or the Midnight Hour (1800)</p> <p>Ederic the Forester (no date)</p>	

Kerr (or Ker), Anne (cont.)	novel novel	Emmeline; or the Happy Discovery (no date) Modern Faults (no date)		
Kilner, Dorothy (pseudonyms: "M.P." and "M. Pelham)	novel novel novel novel	The History of a Great many Little Boys and Girls Four and Five Years of Age (1781) The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse (1785) Anecdotes of a Boarding School (1790) The Histories of More Children Than One (1795)		
Kilner, Mary Ann (pseudonym: "S.S.")	novel novel novel	The Adventures of a Pincushion (1780) Memoirs of a Peg-Top (1782) William Sedley; or the Evil Day Deferred (1783)		
King, Sophia	novel novel novel novel	Waldorf, or the Dangers of Philosophy (1798) Cordelia; or a Romance in Real Life (1799) The Fatal Secret; or Unknown Warrior (18010 The Victim of Friendship; A German Romance (1801)		Family friend of Oliver Goldsmith.
Knight, Ellis, Cornelia	novel novel	Danarbus (17900 Marcus Flaminius; or a view of the Military, Political and Social Life of the Romans . . . (1792)		
Lansdell, Sarah	novel novel	Manfredi, Baron St. Osmund (1796) The Tower. or the Romance of Ruthyne (1798)		
Lara, Catherine	novel	Durval and Adelaide (1796)		

Lee, Harriet	<p>novel play</p> <p>novel play</p>	<p>The Errors of Innocence (1786) The New Peerage; or, Our Eyes May Deceive Us (1787) Clara Lennox; or, The Distressed Widow (1797) The Mysterious Marriage or the Heirship of Roselva: A Drama (1798)</p>	DL Nov. 10, 1987 not produced	<p>also: The Three Strangers: A Play (1826) Father: Thomas Lee, actor and theater mgr. Sister: Sophia Lee</p>
Lee, Sophia	<p>play novel novel</p> <p>novel play play novel</p>	<p>The Chapter of Accidents (1780) The Recess; or, a Tale of Other Times (1783) Warbeck: A Pathetic Tale (trans. Francois Marie De Baculard d'Arnaud, 1786) A Hermit's Tale . . . (1787) Almeyda: Queen of Granada: A Tragedy (1796) The Assnigation (not pub?) The Life of a Lover in a Series of Letters (1804)</p>	<p>Hay Aug. 5, 1780</p> <p>DL Apr. 20, 1796 DL, Jan. 28, 1807</p>	<p>Father: Thomas Lee, actor and theater mgr. Sister: Harriet Lee</p> <p>one Lee sister (whether Harriet, Sophia, or one born between the two also an actress)</p>
Lennox, Charlotte	<p>novel novel</p> <p>past. novel novel novel play play novel</p>	<p>Life of Harriet Stuart (1751) The Female Quixote; or, the Adventures of Arabella (1752) Philander; a Dramatic Pastoral (1758) Henrietta (1758) Sophia (1762) The History of Eliza (attributed, 1766) The Sister (1769) Old City Manners (1775) Euphemia (1790)</p>	<p>not produced</p> <p>CG Feb. 18, 1769 DL Nov. 9, 1775</p>	<p>actress; poet; translator; author of dramatic criticism. Wrote: Shakespeare Illustrated . . . (1753-4). Translations include: The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy (1759)</p>

<p>Manley, Delariviere</p>	<p>novel play play novel play novel novel novel play b.opera</p>	<p>Letters. To Which Is Added a Letter from a Supposed Nun in Portugal (1696) The Lost Lover; or the Jealous Husband (1696) The Royal Mischief (1696) The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zazazians (1705) Almyna; or the Arabian Vow (1706) Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes, from the new Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean (1709) Court Intrigues . . . (1711) The Power of Love (1720) Lucius, the First Christian King (1717) The Court Legacy (1733)</p>	<p>DL 1696 LIF 1696 Hay 1706 DL May 1717 not produced?</p>	
<p>Marishall, Jean</p>	<p>novel novel play</p>	<p>The History of Clarinda Cathcart and Miss Fanny Renton (1766) The History of Alicia Montague (1767) Sir Harry Gaylove; A Comedy in Embryo (1772)</p>	<p>not produced</p>	
<p>Mathews, Charlote</p>	<p>novel novel</p>	<p>Simple Facts; or, The History of an Orphan (1793) Perplexities; or, The Fortunate Elopement (1794)</p>		
<p>Mathews, Eliza</p>	<p>novel novel novel novel</p>	<p>Constance (1785) Argus, the House Dog at Eadllip (1789) Arnold Zulig: a Swiss Story (1790) Memoirs of a Scots heiress . . . (1791)</p>		<p>Married to actor Charles Mathews (1797)</p>

Mathews, Eliza (cont.)	novel novel novel novel	The Count of Hoensdern: A German Tale (1792 or 1793) Anecdotes of the Clairville Family to which is added the History of Emily Wilmont (1802) Griffith Abbey; or Memoirs of Eugenia (posthumous, 1807) Elina, or the Young Governess (post. 1809)		
McCarthy, Charlotte	novel novel	The Fair Moralist (1745) Justice and Reason (1767)		
Meades, Anna	novel novel	The History of Cleanthes . . . (1757) The History of Sir William Harrington (1771)		
Meeke, Mary as "Gabrielli"	novel novel novel novel novel novels novel novel novel novel	Count de Blanchard (1795) The Abbey of Clugny (1795) Palmira and Ermance (1797) Which is the Man (1801) Midnight Weddings (1802) eleven more novels The Mysterious Wife (1797) Harcourt (1799) The Mysterious Husband (1801) Independence (1802)		

Minifie, Margaret	novel novel novel novel novel novel novel	The Histories of Lady Frances S ___ and Lady Caroline S ___ (with Susannah Gunning 1763) Family Pictures (with S. Gunning, 1764) The Picture (with S. Gunning, 1766) Burford Abbey (1768) The Cottage (1769) The Count of Poland (1780) Coombe Wood (1783)		Niece, Elizabeth Gunning Plunkett
More, Hannah	play play plays novel	Percy (1778) The Fatal Falsehood (1779) Sacred Dramas Chiefly Intended for Young Persons, the Subjects Taken from the Bible (Moses in the Bulrushes; Belshazzar; David and Goliath; Daniel, 1782) Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1809)	CG Dec 10, 1777 CG May 6, 1779 not produced	
Morris, Mrs.	novel novel	The Rival Brothers (1784) Illicit Love (1794)		
Musgrave, Agnes	novel	Cicely; or the Rose of Raby (1795)		
Noake, Dorothy	novel	The Life and Adventures of the Marchioness Urbino (1735)		

Norman, Elizabeth	novel	The Child of Woe (1789)			
Nugent, Miss (w/ Miss Taylor)	novel	The Indiscreet Marriage; or Henry and Sophia Sommerville (1779)			May be same as Eliza Bromley (Nugent)
Owenson, Sidney (Lady Morgan)	novel novel novel opera novel novel novel	St. Clair, or the Heiress of Desmond (1803) The Novice of St. Dominick (1804) The Wild Irish Girl (1806) The First Attempt (1807) Women, or Ida of Athens (1809) O'Donnel (1814) Florence Macarthy (1818)			Father: Robert Owenson, actor. Play: The Cavern; or, the Outlaws (1825)
Palmer, Charlotte	novel novel novel	Female Stability; or the History of Miss Belville (1780) Integrity and Content, an Allegory (1792) It Is and It Is Not (1792)			
Parker, Mary Elizabeth	novel	Orwell Manor (1795)			
Parry, Catherine	novel	Eden Vale (1784)			
Parsons, Eliza (née Phelp)	novel novel play	The History of Miss Meredith (1790) The Errors of Education (1791) The Intrigues of a Morning; or, an Hour in Paris (1792)	CG Apr. 18, 1792		60 novels

Peacock, Lucy (cont.)	novel novel novel novel	The Rambles of Fancy; or. Moral and Interesting Tales (1786) The Knight of the Rose (1793) The Visit for A Week; or Hints on the Improvement of Time . . . (1794) Ambrose and Eleanor; or the Adventures of Two Children Deserted on an Uninhabited Island (1796)		
Pearson, Susanna	novel	The Medallion (1794)		
Peddle, M.	novel	The Life of Jacob (1785)		
Pilkington, Mary	novel novel?	Edward Barnard (1797) The Sorrows of Caesar; or Adventures of a Foundling Dog (1813)		
Pilkington, Miss or Mrs.	novel novel	Delia, A Pathetic and Interesting Tale (1790) Rosina (1793)		
Pinchard, Elizabeth	novel novel	The Blind Child; or, Anecdotes of the Wyndham Family . . . (1791) The Two Cousins (1794)		

Plumptre, Anna or Anne (cont.)	play play play play novel novel novel	The Force of Calumny (trans. Kotzebue, 1799) La-Peyrouse (trans. Kotzebue, 1799) The Virgin of the Sun (trans. Kotzebue, 1799) The Horse and the Widow (trans. Kotzebue, 1799) Something New; or, Adventures at Campbell- House (1801) The History of Myself and My Friend (1813) Tales of Wonder, of Humour, and of Sentiment; Original and Translated (with Annabella Plumptre, 1818).		
Plumptre, Annabella as Bell Plumptre	novel novel novel novel play	Montgomery; or Scenes in Wales (1796) The Western Mail (1801) Stories for Children (1804) Tales of Wonder, of Humour, and of Sentiment; Original and Translated (with Anna Plumptre, 1818). The Forester; a Picture of Rural Manners . . . translated from the German (from Iffland, 1779)	not produced	May have translated more plays by Iffland and by Kotzebue as well.
Porter Maria	novel play play	Artless Tales (1793-5) The Fair Fugitives (1803) Switzerland (1817)	CG DL	

Purbeck, Elizabeth (with Jane Purbeck)	novel novel novel novel	Honorina Sommerville (1789) Raynsford park (1790) William Thornborough, The Benevolent Quixote (1791) Matilda and Elizabeth (1796)	
Purbeck, Jane (with Elizabeth Purbeck)	novel novel novel novel	Honorina Sommerville (1789) Raynsford park (1790) William Thornborough, The Benevolent Quixote (1791) Matilda and Elizabeth (1796)	
Pye, Jael Henrietta	play novel	The Capricious Lady (not published) Theodosius and Arabella (posthumous, 1786)	DL May 10, 1771
Radcliffe, Ann	novel novel novel novel novel	The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789) A Sicilian Romance (1790) The Romance of the Foreset (1791) The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) The Italian (1797)	
Radcliffe, Mary Anne	novel novel novel	The Fate of Velina De Guidova (1790) Radzivil, a romance (1790) Manfrone, or The One Handed Monk (1809)	
Reeve, Clara	novel novel	The Champion of Virtue, A Gothic Story (1777) The Two Mentors; a Modern Story (1783)	

Reeve, Clara (cont.)	novel novel fiction? novel	The Exiles; or, Memoirs of the Count de Cronstadt (1788) The School for Widows (1791) Plans of Education . . . (1792) Memoirs of Sir Roger De Clarendon . . . (1793) Destination (1799)		
Roberts, Miss R.	novel play	Albert, Edward, and Laura, and the Hermit of Priestland (1783) Malcom (1779)		
Robinson, Mary	novel play novel novel novel play novel novel novel novel	Vancenaza; or, The Dangers of Credulity (1792) Nobody (1794) The Widow, or, A Picture of Modern Times (1794) Angelina (1796) Hubert De Sevrac (1796) The Sicilian Lover (1796) The Wanderings of the Imagination (1796) Walshingham: The Pupil of Nature (1797) The False Friend (1799) The Natural Daughter (1799)	DL, Nov. 29, 1794 not produced	actress
Robinson, Maria Elizabeth	novel	The Shrine of Bertha (1794)		Mary Robinson's daughter

<p>Roche, Regina Maria (née Dalton)</p>	<p>novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel</p>	<p>The Vicar of Lansdowne (1789) The Maid of the Hamlet (1793) The Children of the Abbey (1796) Clermont (1798) The Nocturnal Visit (1800) The Discarded Son (1806) Alvondown Vicarage The House of Asthma and Almerida (1810) The Monastery of St. Colombe (1812) Trectothic Bower (1813) Anna of Edinburgh (1814)</p>	
<p>Rowson, Susanna (née Haswell)</p>	<p>novel novel novel novel novel novel novel play play novel play novel</p>	<p>Victoria (1786) The Inquisitor (1788) Mary; or, the Test of Honour (1789) Charlotte (1791) Menoria; or, the Young Lady's Friend (1791) Rebecca, or the Fille de Chambre (1792) Slaves in Algiers; or a Struggle for Freedom (1794) The Volunteers (1795) The Trials of the Human Heart (1795) Americans in England (1797) Sarah (1813)</p>	<p>actress</p>

Rudd, Margaret Caroline	novel	The Belle Widows (1789)		
Ryves, Elizabeth	opera play novel	The Prude (1777) Debt of Honour (no date) The Hermit of Snowden; or Memoirs of Albert and Lavinia (1789)	not produced not produced	
Sanders or Saunders, Charlotte Elizabeth	novel	Embarrassed Attachment (1787)		
Sandham, Elizabeth	novel	The Twin Sisters; or the effects of education (1788-9)		
Scott, Sarah (née Robinson)	novel novel novel novel novel novel	This History of Cornelia (1750) Agreeable Ugliness . . . (1754) A Journey Through Every State of Life . . . (1754) A Description of Millenium Hall . . . (1762) The Man of Real Sensibility; or, the History of Sir George Ellison (1763) The Test of Filial Duty (1772)		Friendship with Sarah and Henry Fielding

Seward, Anna	novel	Louisa (1782)		Maria Edgeworth's first stepmother; knew Helen Maria Williams; sympathetic to Godwin & Wollstonecraft
Seymour, Mrs.	novel	The Conduct of Married Life (1753)		
Sheridan, Frances	novel play play novel novel novel	Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph (1761) The Discovery: A Comedy (1763) The Dupe: A Comedy (1764) Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph (posthumous, 1767) The History of Nourjahad (posthumous, 1767) Eugenia and Adelaide (posthumous, 1791)	DL Feb. 2, 1763 DL Dec. 10, 1763 Nourjahad produced as spectacle with music at Drury Lane as: Illusion, or the Trances of Nourjahad by Michael Kelly (1813)	Husband: Thomas Sheridan, actor and theater manager; Son: Richard Brinsley Sheridan, dramatist and theater manager
Sherwood, Mary Martha (née Butt)	novel	The Traditions: A Legendary Tale (1795)		Friend of Hannah More
Sleath, Eleanor	novel novel	The Orphan of the Rhine (1798) Who's the Murderer?; or, the Mysteries of the Forest (1802)		

Stratton, Jemima Maria	novel	The Maid of the Castle (1794)		
Street, Miss	novel novel novel	The Lake of Winander Mere (1791) The Recluse of the Appenines (1792) Theodore; a domestic tale (1792)		
Taylor, Miss (w/Miss Nugent)	novel novel	Josephine (1799) The Indiscreet Marriage; or Henry and Sophia Somerville (1779)		
Thomas, Ann	novel	Adolphus De Biron (1795)		
Thomson, Harriet	novel novel novel	Excessive Sensibility; or, The History of Lady St. Laurence (1787) Fatal Follies; or the History of the Countess of Stanmore (1788) The Labyrinths of Life (1791)		
Timbury, Jane	novel novel novel	The Male Coquet (1788) The Triumph of Friendship; or the History of Charles Courtney and Miss Julia Melville (1789) The Philanthropic Rambler (1790)		
Todd, Elizabeth	novel	The History of Lady Caroline Rivers (1788)		

Tomlins, Elizabeth Sophia	novel novel novel	The Conquests of the Heart (1785) The Victim of Fancy (1787) Memoirs of a Baroness (1792)		
Trimmer, Sarah	novel novel novel play	Fabulous Histories; the History of the Robins (1786) The Servant's Friend (1787) The Two Farmers (1787) The Little Hermit (in the Juvenile Magazine, 1788)		
Trotter, Catherine	novel play play play play play	Olinda's Adventures (1693) Agnes de Castro Fatal Friendship Love at a Loss; or Most Votes Carries It The Revolution of Sweden The Unhappy Penitent	DL 1695 LIF 1698 DL 1700 Hay 1706 DL 1709	
Warton, Jane	novel	Peggy and Patty; or the Sisters of Ashdale (1783)		
Watts, Susanna	novel	Wonderful Travels of Prince Fanferedin in the Country of Arcadia (1793)		
West, Jane (Some novels written by Prudentia Homespun,	play novel novel	Fdmund, Surnamed Ironside (in Miscellaneous Poems and a Tragedy, 1791) The Advantages of Education; or the History of Maria Williams (1793) A Gossip's Story, and A Legedary Tale (1796)	not produced	

West, Jane (cont.)	novel play play novel novel novel novel novel	A Tale of the Times (1799) Adela (Poems and Plays, 1799-1805) How Will It End? (Poems and Plays, 1799-1805) Letters to a Young Man (1801) The Infidel Father: a Novel (1802) The Refusal: a Novel (1810) The Loyalists: an Historical Novel (1812) Alicia de Lacy: an Historical Romance (1814)	not produced not produced	
Williams, Helen Maria	novel novel	Julia (1790) Perourou, the Bellow Mender (1801)		Interviewed Dora Jordan during last 2 yrs of actress's life. Perourou adapted for stage by Edward Lytton as the Lady of Lyons
Wollstonecraft, Mary	novel novel play	Mary, A Fiction (1788) Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman (unfinished, posthumous, 1798) (autobiographical comedy, now lost, no date)		Wrote a comedy based on her life which Godwin destroyed after her death
Woodfin, Mrs.	novel novel	The Auction: a Modern Novel (1760) The History of Miss Harriot Watson (1762)		
Yearsley, Ann	play novel	Earl Goodwin: An historical Play (1789) The Royal Captives (1795)	Bath, 1798	

<p>Young, Mary Julia</p>	<p>novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel novel</p>	<p>The Family Party (1791) Ragamount Castle (1799) Lindorf and Caroline (1803) Moss Cliff Abbey (1803) Right and Wrong (1803) The Mother and Daughter (1804) Donatan (1805) A Summer at Brighton (1807) A Summer at Weymouth (1808) The Heir of Drumoindra (1810) Leonora (no date)</p>		
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List of Abbreviations

- BD A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Managers, Musicians, Dancers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800. By Phillip H. Highfill Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans. 16 vols. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1975.
- BT The British Theatre; Or, A Collection of Plays which are Acted at the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket, with biographical and critical remarks by Mrs. Inchbald. 25 vols. London: Longman, Hurt, Rees and Orne, 1808.
- CC "A Case of Conscience." The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald. Vol 2. Ed. Paula Backscheider. New York & London: Garland, 1980. 276-351.
- D&L Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay edited by her niece Charlotte Francis Barret. London, 1842-46. 7 vols. Revised by August Dobson. London. 6 vols. 1904-5.
- DLB Dictionary of Literary Biography. vols. 38 & 39. "British Novelists 1660-1800." Ed. Martin C. Battestin. Michigan: Brucoli Clark & Gale Research Co., 1985.
- DNB Dictionary of National Biography. 22 vols. London: Oxford UP, 1963-65.
- E Emma. By Jane Austen. 1815. The Novels of Jane Austen. Ed. R. W. Chapman. Vol. 4. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923.
- EJ&L The Early Journals and Letters of Frances Burney. Ed. Lars Troide, et. al. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988-.
- EV Evelina: Or, The History of a Yong Lady's Entrance into the World. By Frances Burney. 1778. London and New York: Norton, 1965.
- JAL Jane Austen's Letters. Ed. Deirdre Le Faye. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- J&L The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay). Ed. Joyce Hemlow et al. 12 vols. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972-1984.
- LS The London Stage, 1660-1800; A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments and Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment. 11 vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1968
- LV "Lovers' Vows." By Elizabeth Inchbald. The Novels of Jane Austen. Ed. R. W.

Chapman. Vol. 3. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923.

MP Mansfield Park. By Jane Austen. 1814. New York: Penguin Classics. 1985.

SAS Sense and Sensibility. By Jane Austen. 1811. New York: Bantam. 1982.

SS A Simple Story. By Elizabeth Inchbald. Ed. J. M. S. Tompkins. 1791. London: Oxford UP, 1967.

W The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties. By Frances Burney. 1814. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

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