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A FEELING MIND: THE EARLY LITERARY CAREER OF ELIZABETH INCHBALD (1753-1821)

City University of New York PH.D. 1984

A FEELING MIND: THE EARLY LITERARY CAREER OF ELIZABETH INCHBALD (1753-1821)

by

CECILIA MACHESKI

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.

1984

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

August 8, 1984
date

Robert B. Day
Chairman of Examining Committee

date

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

A FEELING MIND: THE EARLY LITERARY CAREER OF ELIZABETH INCHBALD

by

CECILIA MACHESKI

Advisor: Professor Robert Adams Day

The focus of this study is on the early part of Inchbald's long career, the years from her first appearance on the stage until 1791, when A Simple Story was published. There are three parts: a brief biographical section, a survey of Inchbald"s apprentice years as an actress and playwright, and, finally, a detailed examination of her best novel, A Simple Story. The conclusion summarizes her career after 1791 with emphasis on Nature and Art and The British Theatre and considers the reasons for Inchbald's neglect by literary historians. These sections are all focussed on a central concern, namely, to understand the situation of this one successful woman writer and by extension to learn more about the conditions of authorship for other women in the late eighteenth century. Mrs. Inchbald's "anxious hope" was described by one of her friends as seeking "some useful moral for the feeling mind." I use these phrases to examine such terms as "jacobin novel" and "humanitarian drama" as they apply to her work. This study is neither a definitive biography nor an exhaustive critical analysis of the career of the actress, playwright, novelist, critic, and journalist who flourished from 1785 to 1815. It is an examination of the sources of one woman's art, and the financial rewards it yielded. The concept of the "feeling mind" provides the critical context for measuring her growth and evaluating her achievement, especially in A Simple Story, as well as connecting her to other women writers of the turbulent and curious decades that mark the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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To my mother, Helen Macheski, and in loving memory, to my father, Andrew, and my brother, Daniel, this work is dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION

In all, her anxious hope was still to find
Some useful moral for the feeling mind.

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Not to Marry

To the eighteenth-century reading public, the plays, novels, and criticism of Elizabeth Inchbald were far superior to the works of many of her contemporaries; the applause of audiences and the respect of critics supported her through a long, successful career. By the late nineteenth century, however, shifts in popular taste and changing attitudes toward women writers caused her name to all but disappear from the mainstream of literary history. By the early twentieth century, Inchbald had become little more than a charming and eccentric figure from the pre-Romantic era, a writer whose books were long out of print and whose fame derived chiefly, if somewhat vaguely, from her association with such literary personalities as William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. A brief flurry of scholarly interest in the 1930's failed to restore Mrs. Inchbald's reputation to its eighteenth-century heights, and for the last fifty years she has remained obscure until the recent resurgence in women's studies once again brought her to serious critical attention under the aegis of feminist theory.[1]

For Elizabeth Inchbald art, propaganda, and the need to earn a living were inextricable. Only if we recognize how completely this fact, as she saw it, summarizes her career can we apply more lofty codes to her literary productions. Hers was writing in which practical and artistic purposes were frequently at loggerheads, and the results, especially by modern critical standards, are seldom judged as first-rate art. The purpose of this study, in part, is to question the value of analyzing a popular figure like Mrs. Inchbald exclusively by the vocabulary of twentieth-century criticism, particularly feminist criticism, and instead to provide a context for studying the writer's relationship to the artistic world of her own day. Far from diminishing her achievement, such an approach in fact clarifies and enhances it. Understood on

her own terms, Elizabeth Inchbald is no longer the pseudo-radical or proto-feminist recent critics have portrayed,[2] but a successful and intelligent writer who combined her faith in liberal political ideals with her talent for appealing to popular literary taste to create plays and novels that celebrated the strengths of ordinary citizens without overlooking their foibles and flaws.

The "feeling mind"[3] is a convenient label for this eighteenth-century perspective through which I have chosen to evaluate Inchbald's career, for it suggests at once how much her artistic sphere was one of compromise, experiment and transition. In literary terms, the product of the "feeling mind" is an art avowedly mixed with political and social theory. As a result, it sometimes becomes bad art. Yet because the writer is anything but a cynical hack, because she is driven by a sincere creative impulse, her work will often sacrifice the best opportunities for propaganda in favor of aesthetic principles, making the results too good to be mere hack work.

Despite its failure to resolve its inherent contradictions, however, the art of the feeling mind is worthy of consideration today, for it has attractions and virtues unique to its form. At its best, and Mrs. Inchbald's work is some of the best of its type, the art of the feeling mind disavows the world of sentimentalism and its implicit egoism in favor of a more humane perspective on public as well as private life. It encourages the reader to experience, but simultaneously to analyze, emotional situations, in contrast to sentimental literature where writers portray, and usually condone, blind and irrational behavior in their characters' responses to a wide range of stimuli. While it is not necessarily dispassionate, the feeling mind is one inclined to apply self-discipline, and to judge a situation with a degree of objectivity before exercising the passions excessively.

From the vantage point of the radical thinkers of the 1780's and 90's, the

art of the feeling mind has its fundamental weakness, as Inchbald's plays and novels reveal: an emphasis on a sensibility which responds with sympathy rather than action to social and moral problems, replacing direct political argument with gentler forms of persuasion. Thus it fosters a popular taste whereby sensitivity to problems is encouraged but solutions postponed. Thus Mrs. Inchbald cannot be classified as one of the more radical writers of the late eighteenth century, despite her close relationships with such thinkers as Godwin and Holcroft.[4]

Yet precisely because it fails as revolutionary literature and as feminist tract, Inchbald's art now has appeal and critical value. Hers is an art of transition, in which new ideas were blended with, or "softened," by more familiar ones, where daring thoughts were cloaked in comfortable genres in an effort to bring them to the attention of wider audiences, and secondarily, it is an art designed to make money for the author. If these two aspects of Inchbald's writing help explain its popularity in the eighteenth century, a third enhances its appeal to modern readers. At the same time that Mrs. Inchbald used familiar genres to disguise new ideas, so she alternately passed more conventional ideas through highly experimental forms, achieving as a result structural innovation, particularly in the novel. While many writers of the 1790's attempted to heighten public awareness of such current problems as the war in France, slavery, the urgency of prison reform, and women's education,[5] Inchbald sought to do so in a manner that would not alienate by its ferocity but rather entice by its association with trusted and established notions.

The term "the feeling mind" is, then, a versatile and elastic phrase for labeling this equally elastic sensibility. In an age when literary values and the forms that expressed them were changing, Elizabeth Inchbald's work proves a useful tool for measuring the degree and direction of that change.

Elizabeth Inchbald reflects the spirit of her age most vividly in her adaptability: an actress, a dramatist, a novelist, a journalist, a critic, a moderate feminist, she is as hard to label as the decades in which she flourished, the 1780's and 1790's. As a Roman Catholic, Mrs. Inchbald experienced first-hand the uneasiness over civil rights that marked her era, from the Gordon riots in 1780 through the French Revolution and into the nineteenth century.[6] With her friends William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft, Elizabeth Inchbald monitored the political pulse of the country and recognized the importance of radical solutions to the problems posed by corrupt and stagnant institutions, including the courts, the prisons, and the Church. At Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Haymarket Inchbald helped to define the popular taste in drama and establish respectability for performers; Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kemble, her lifelong friends, gladly shared the stage with their charming colleague in her dual role as actress and author.[7] Like her contemporaries Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Mary Hays, and Amelia Opie, Inchbald examined the situation of women and recognized the urgency of reform, especially in the system of education for women. Thus the career of this unique woman touched many strands of London life in the decades of the American and French Revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars. Seldom an extremist in her views, Elizabeth Inchbald was ever a thoughtful, pragmatic, intelligent member of her society, and she provides, by the very diversity of her achievement and the moderation of her opinions, an ideal vehicle for studying the transitional and revolutionary decades of which she is, in her own special way, a kind of time capsule.

For the modern reader, Mrs. Inchbald is probably best known as the author of A Simple Story, her first novel, published in 1791. He second novel, Nature and Art, less well known but deserving more attention than it has had, appeared

in 1796. Both novels, in distinctly different ways, examine the social problems of the times and champion reform, especially in the circumstances of women. The earlier novel, with its Roman Catholic hero, Dorriforth, who relinquishes his role as a priest in order to inherit his family's estate, deserves its status as her masterpiece. The latter work, possibly written communally with Godwin and Holcroft, presents a bitter satire on English justice and the clergy. Nature and Art uses a structure of comparison and contrast to examine the lives of two generations, illustrating the effects of prejudice by its destruction of a young woman's life.[8] For these two works alone Inchbald merits recognition today. To her contemporaries, however, she was even better known as a popular and successful playwright, author of twenty-one plays,[9] most of which had unusually long runs and prosperous benefit performances. The years as a practicing dramatist were apprentice years for the novelist, increasing her confidence in her ability to write and establishing her financial independence. Her earliest farce, The Mogul Tale, or the Descent of the Balloon (1784) set the pattern for her success as a writer of comedy: exploitation of an event of current interest, ridicule of fashionable vices, concern with serious humanitarian issues. In her later works, the humanitarian concern becomes stronger, the social satire more stinging, with sentimentality forming an artful counterpoint to comedy of manners. Such Things Are, Every One Has His Fault, Lovers' Vows, To Marry or Not to Marry, and Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are are among her best plays, but she was busy with much more than these full-length works as she supplemented her income with translations, adaptations, and afterpieces including The Widow's Vow, Appearance is Against Them, and Animal Magnetism. Her only tragedies, The Massacre and A Case of Conscience, she never produced, warned by her friends of the danger of such strongly "jacobin" dramas; they

remained unpublished until a dozen years after her death, when James Boaden included them as an appendix to his Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald (1833).

In her later years, following her retirement from the stage in 1789 and the success of her novels a few years later, Inchbald was invited by her publishers, G.G.J. and J. Robinson, to provide prefaces for a massive twenty-five volume anthology to be called The British Theatre.[11] Her name on the title page, the Robinsons knew, would assure the success of their venture. Thus from 1806 to 1808 Inchbald wrote one hundred and twenty-five prefaces, ranging in length from two to four or five pages, for plays the publisher had selected. The scope of the collection was wide, from Shakespeare through her own plays and those of many of her contemporaries, to provide texts and critical prefaces to plays familiar from the London stage of the previous two decades for the benefit of theater-goers and armchair readers alike. Although the idea was not new, since Bell's British Theatre had appeared in 1791, the use of a celebrity to introduce the plays was original and proved successful. While the modern reader often finds the choice of plays uneven, Inchbald's prefaces are full of insight into the craft of playwriting and performance, and show her in an impressive light as a critic. Her views combine commonplaces of the day with original observations in a blend that is surprisingly graceful and informative. (Curiously, until now, no recent critic has studied these prefaces for the insight they cast on Inchbald's ideas.) She followed this collection with the Modern Theatre, for which she selected the plays but wrote no prefaces, and soon after appeared A Collection of Farces and Afterpieces; these anthologies, the first of ten volumes and the second of seven, were published in 1809.[12]

While several studies of Inchbald's career have been published since her death in 1821, only in the last decade has this fascinating woman received her

due from critics and scholars. James Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald (1833) began a tradition of treating its subject as a "personality" rather than a serious writer. Boaden was the only biographer to have Inchbald's own extensive diary and manuscripts available to him, sources to a large extent now lost or scattered beyond recovery. His failure to create more than a hastily edited pastiche of primary material and condescending commentary frustrates the modern researcher, who must inevitably turn to Boaden for background even while doubting his accuracy and his judgment. More serious is the shadow cast by Boaden on so many later biographies.[13] Thus Samuel Littlewood's Elizabeth Inchbald and her Circle (1922) treats its subject as a charming but inconsequential figure. G. Louis Joughin's The Life and Work of Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald (Harvard dissertation, 1932) provides a broad survey of most of the plays and the novels, but fails to suggest a sense of Inchbald's literary originality or her special situation as a woman writer. William McKee's Elizabeth Inchbald, Novelist (Catholic University of America dissertation, 1935) suffers from a narrow focus, considering only the two novels and overemphasizing her Roman Catholic background. Another dissertation, Bruce Park's Thomas Holcroft and Elizabeth Inchbald: Studies in the Eighteenth-Century Drama of Ideas (Columbia, 1952) investigates the philosophic context of their plays written during the 1790's. These studies, along with several articles, essays, notes and queries, did little for Inchbald's reputation in the hundred and fifty years after her death. But by the 1970's, interest in women writers and radical politics had led to reconsideration of Inchbald and her contemporaries. Françoise Moreux published Elizabeth Inchbald et la comedie "sentimentale" anglaise au XVIII siècle in 1971, and two years later, Elizabeth Inchbald et la revendication feminine au dix-huitieme siècle along with a translation into French of Wives as They Were.

Moreux is among the first to apply the lessons of feminist criticism to Inchbald's plays and her personality, but like so many earlier studies Moreux's criticism is either out of print or difficult to obtain; it remains untranslated.[14]

In 1976, Janice Cauwells provided in her dissertation a new edition of Nature and Art with an extensive introduction (University of Virginia). She discusses the many revisions through which Inchbald put her work, and hypothesizes on the role of Holcroft and others as communal authors. In the same year as Cauwells' study appeared, Gary Kelly published The English Jacobin Novel.[15] This work, with chapters on Godwin, Holcroft, Bage, and Inchbald, is indispensible for studying the novels and the politics of the 1790's. The most recently published studies all owe a debt to The English Jacobin Novel for laying the groundwork for serious critical debate on Inchbald and her contemporaries. Recent articles include Katherine M. Rogers' "Inhibitions on Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists: Elizabeth Inchbald and Charlotte Smith," which emphasizes Inchbald's position as a female novelist in the eighteenth century.[16]

Elizabeth Inchbald was a woman rightfully proud of her mind and her talents, faculties she used objectively and pragmatically throughout a literary and theatrical career that spanned more than twenty years. In the prologue he wrote for her last play, To Marry or Not to Marry, John Taylor provides a fitting summary of Inchbald's aesthetic:

> In all, her anxious hope was still to find,
> Some useful moral for the feeling mind.[17]

For the modern reader, such ideas as "useful morals" and "feeling minds" are vaguely uncomfortable, suggesting the excesses of what Oliver Goldsmith pilloried as "weeping comedy" or what, in simpler terms, we label "sentimentalism." Yet it is clear from both her life and work that, for Inchbald

as for many women authors in the eighteenth century, the quality vaguely described as "feeling" was complex and important, and that we lose much by not recognizing its resonances. If many eighteenth-century artists explored the concept, however, Elizabeth Inchbald was among the few popular artists who went much further, seeking to reconcile feeling and its persistent threats of excess with reason and its human limitations. Inchbald would not follow Blake's road to the palace of wisdom, but she could read his map.

She rejected Blake's road, choosing instead a more humble footpath, paved with common sense; she chose popular comedy and domestic realism, recognizing that epic and high tragedy were beyond her reach. The success of her choices can be measured, at least in part, by her enormous appeal to eighteenth-century audiences. The struggle to reconcile reason and the heart, the old neo-classic world with the emerging romantic one, is clear in characters like Sir Oswin, who, in many ways, epitomize a large segment of the public for which she wrote. At the end of To Marry or Not to Marry, Sir Oswin exclaims:

> A confused mass! I am living in this world, and yet a new one seems to have broken upon me, to make me as a stranger to all around.
>
> (II,63)

Sir Oswin represents the more conservative faction of the audience, but his dismay was a common response to a world in transition. The English Jacobin enthusiasm for the French Revolution was dashed by the terror; reasonable plans for religious toleration met with Gordon rioters; science and technology were turning the world upside down with new ideas of geologic time, aeronautic travel, and industrial invention; political and social reforms challenged the familiar structures of slavery, colonialism, and the prison system.[18]

Inchbald's wide popular success stemmed in large part from her audience's uncertainty about that new world breaking upon them and her ability to make the universe feel safer. Thus she made such suspicious notions as rights for women, an end to slavery, political reform and religious toleration palatable to the Sir Oswins who came to Covent Garden. If she lacked the intellectual intensity of her friend William Godwin or the rhetorical exuberance of her close companion Thomas Holcroft, she acquired a complementary skill: she reached a far wider audience and made them listen to her ideas. The "feeling mind" was one which could plot a route to the new world without totally destroying faith in the old one, seeking to humanize the effects of change and lessen the dismay that made one feel "a stranger to all around."

But Mrs. Inchbald's appeal to a modern reader rests in her achievement of these ends without the sacrifice of literary merit. This too she accomplished, maintaining both artistic integrity and popular appeal by her unique attribute, her feeling mind. Feeling emerges as a new sensibility, distinct from sentimentality, less selfish, more compassionate. It is also a sensibility alert to newly-employed autobiographical impulses and to new concepts of how the creative mind works. Inchbald's uniqueness as an artist rests in her synthesis of this sensibility with her sense, her intelligence, her wit, her honesty, her demonstration that "a feeling mind" does not consist of two ideas yoked by violence together, but, on the contrary, describes a temperament that was ideally suited to its time.

Inchbald's unusual diversity of roles helps in part to explain her evolution as a writer and her success as both a popular figure and one of enduring value. She wrote plays, acted in them, and later—often as much as twenty years later—wrote critical prefaces attempting honestly to assess their faults and their

worth. Such a variety of perspectives led her, intuitively, to a unique voice and style in her novel writing. If in her drama the "feeling" dominates, in the novels we recognize the presence of "mind." Still, the two must, naturally, work together if the product is to be successful, and so we look for synthesis. Thus in the drama "feeling" emerges as an intellectual response to the excesses of literary sentimentalism, while the "mind" behind the novels is striking for its compassion, humanitarianism, and energy. To understand how these concepts shape the career of Elizabeth Inchbald is the primary goal of this study.

Thus my focus is on the early part of Inchbald's long career, the years from her first experience on the stage up until 1791, when A Simple Story was published. In choosing these boundaries, I wish to concentrate as much on the sources of Inchbald's creativity as on its products. She is one of the few eighteenth-century women writers for whom a reasonable quantity of personal manuscript material survives, and thus she is an ideal subject for such emphasis. Her position, moreover, as a figure in a transitional period in literary history makes the extra-literary evidence especially interesting in a novelist who was, above all, a woman of her time.

More specifically, my study has three main parts: a brief biographical section, a survey of Inchbald's apprentice years as an actress and playwright, and, finally, a detailed examination of her best novel, A Simple Story. These three sections are all focussed on a central concern, namely to understand the situation of this one successful woman writer and by extension to learn more about the conditions of authorship for other women in the second half of the eighteenth century when, according to Robert Halsband, "Women authors became so numerous and so prolific, in fact, that...they actually produced the majority of all novels that were published."[19] Mrs. Inchbald's "anxious hope" to find "Some

useful moral for the feeling mind" is a key to understanding the woman, her time, and her novel-writing contemporaries.

This dissertation is not a definitive biographical and critical analysis of the career of the actress, playwright, novelist, critic, and journalist who flourished in the challenging decades from 1785 until 1815, although such a study is long overdue. The dimensions of Inchbald's achievement—the many literary spheres she touched, the famous writers and thinkers who formed her circle of friends—make such a goal beyond the range of this or any single study. Moreover, even though I have brought to light significant new manuscript material, there are still too many missing pieces to make a new and definitive biography anything more than risky. Instead, I have chosen a narrower focus. What can we learn about the role of the woman writer in the eighteenth century from the literary career of this one woman? What were her sources of inspiration and what were her financial rewards? What was the texture of life for such a writer, one both popularly successful and artistically original, whose work captured the interest of such notable contemporaries as Godwin, Holcroft, Maria Edgeworth, Lord Byron, Anna Barbauld, and John Philip Kemble? These and related questions form the basis of my study, and in seeking to answer them I have centered the material, somewhat loosely, on Inchbald's first novel, A Simple Story, her best and most widely recognized work, and on the eighteenth-century notion of the "feeling mind." Her novel is an artistic achievement, praised for its originality both by her contemporaries and her more recent critics, and is thus the natural fulcrum of her career. The concept of the "feeling mind" provides the critical context for measuring her growth and evaluating her achievement, as well as connecting her to other women writers of the late eighteenth century.

Chapter One presents a brief conventional biographical portrait of Inchbald

in order to establish a foundation for further exploration of a less traditional type. I use manuscript material from the Folger Shakespeare Library that has not been used in any previous study to illuminate the more conventional source material and to create a fresh picture of Elizabeth Inchbald. I also examine five of the known portraits of this popular writer in an attempt to learn more about her public image and her changing concept of herself.

About the eighteenth-century painter Angelica Kauffman her fellow-artist John Flaxman said, "She was of the time and the time was made for her."[20] The same can be said of Inchbald. In no way intending to diminish her claims to artistic originality, I discuss the writer as a woman of her times. Her daily life, as recorded in her lists and memoranda of such ordinary things as the price of a play ticket, the cost of fabric and workmanship for a new dress, the profits of a benefit night, the lists of visitors, help us understand the relationship between the ordinary and extraordinary woman, as Virginia Woolf would later classify writers and non-writers.[21] Since she was a woman, Inchbald's situation as a successful artist in the eighteenth century is special, and these details of daily life are some of the earliest clues to her strategy for overcoming obstacles that so many others failed to surmount. Money was important to her, and without paying attention to her daily financial records, her hard bargaining with theater managers and publishers about salary and prestige, we cannot grasp her situation as a writer. We must understand the conditions of authorship if we are to appreciate the literary productions of a writer so very representative of both the limitations and the achievements of her era.

One of the difficulties in pursuing biographical research on Mrs. Inchbald is that early censorship or mere accident has destroyed many of the most interesting materials.[22] Only a handful of her original fifty memorandum books

are extant, and these few cover the years of her life when she was least involved in novel writing. A manuscript autobiography she is reported by Boaden to have written was, according to the same biographer, "destroyed at her death by her own peremptory injunction."[23] The record, in short, is fragmentary, but even the available materials have not been given adequate attention by twentieth-century students of Mrs. Inchbald. In fact, the only full-length scholarly study of Inchbald's life and work ever completed, a dissertation by Louis Joughin (Harvard, 1932) speculates on the whereabouts of her "pocket memorandum books or diaries," and asserts that they "have had a curious history." Joughin informs us that "in 1915 or 1916 this remnant (half a dozen or so) was disposed of at a charity bazaar in London and has not yet made another appearance."[24] Yet according to its records, the Folger had acquired what was apparently this very "remnant" by 1930. The seller, Wilfred Egan, a London dealer, affirms in a letter in the Folger collection that he had obtained the diaries from one Mrs. Agnes Croucher. In a letter dated May 20, 1909, Mrs. Croucher declared that:

> the diaries and other items relating to Mrs. Inchbald were bequeathed to my mother, Mrs. Frances Croucher, by Mrs. Huggins of New House Farm, Beaulieu, New Forest, who was a cousin by marriage of Mrs. Inchbald.

Mr. Egan further explains the provenance:

> Father George Huggins (of Blackpool) who is still living and the last descendant of the Inchbald family would guarantee all the above being genuine and never been published or made use of in any way.[25]

Thus Joughin's reference to a "charity bazaar" is either a clue to the existence of additional volumes, or a red herring. Egan's letter strongly implies that the diaries went directly from the family to him and on to Mr. Folger's library.

This kind of "curious history" has plagued studies of Inchbald from the first and has inevitably shaped the direction of my own research. The fact that so many manuscript volumes are missing, and the virtual certainty that Inchbald destroyed her manuscript autobiography, impose limits on any biographer. However much we wish to create an "internal" study of Inchbald, one that considers her psychological and private concerns and the wellsprings of her creativity, the sources for such analysis simply do not exist, or, viewing the matter more optimistically, have not been found. What remains to provide the clues to her character are the products of the writer's creative energy: her plays, novels, and criticism. In addition, we have the material for appreciating the "external" biography, the facts and things of her everyday life as recorded in her extant diaries and miscellaneous papers. From these neglected riches I construct an image of the writer unlike that presented by many of her earlier critics who, like Jougnin, have argued that

> One cannot but feel some regret at finding that ever present emphasis Mrs. Inchbald laid on the commercial value of her work.[26]

On the contrary, I maintain that details about the "commercial value" of her work will enlighten us both about the social history of eighteenth-century London and about the literary accomplishments not only of Inchbald but of many of her contemporaries. In fact, from an understanding of her celebrated muse Necessity we can derive some fresh insights into the broader biographical territory of artistic motivation and decision unavailable in other sources on Mrs. Inchbald's career.

The many portraits of the renowned actress and author offer another kind of evidence of her popularity and her perceptions of herself, evidence neglected by earlier studies.[27] The fact that portraits from as early as 1787 until after her retirement are available supports not only the argument for her continuing and increasing reputation but also provides a pictorial biography, previously unread, of her changing public and private persona. I offer an interpretation of this visual history as a supplement to the otherwise incomplete and biased biographical record.

Chapter Two examines Mrs. Inchbald's apprentice years as an actress and an emerging dramatic writer. No claim is made for her as a literary or intellectual leader; on the contrary she is in most cases, it is plain, a well-read generalist, struggling to become self-educated, sensitive to the changing theories "in the air" in her day, thoughtful about the need to reform corrupt institutions, eager to learn and, especially when writing for the stage, enthusiastic about propagating ideas and social theories that interest her. The Mogul Tale and I'll Tell You What, her two earliest plays, I use to isolate the key themes of her career and to define the historical and social perspectives from which her later work can most profitably be analyzed. Such Things Are, among her best mature plays, is studied as a sample of her developing skill as a serious dramatist and her interest in humanitarian reform. Through these works I examine the shifting literary tastes mirrored in the stage productions of the 1780's. Through the medium of Goldsmith's "Essay on the Theatre" and Inchbald's rejection of sentimentalism I locate her synthesis of a new sensibility, also influenced by her taste for moral comedy, her belief in better education for women, her quest for political and religious toleration. Closely related to these values are the more concrete problems facing the author: her status as a woman and her need for money.

Themes of importance to these early plays influence the novels Inchbald published in the 1790's. The most important of these themes I label "false appearances." This motif underlies the plays, and, I argue, underscores the fiction.

Thus the second chapter of this study covers the apprentice years in which Elizabeth Inchbald established her popular reputation as a playwright, secured financial independence, faced the obstacles the public had set up for ambitious women, and prepared to publish her first novel.

Chapter Three deals exclusively with Inchbald's most significant work, A Simple Story. The many unique features of this, her first novel, justify such extensive criticism: its status as the first Roman Catholic novel in post-Reformation England, its original narrative style, the special praise it received from contemporary writers including Maria Edgeworth and Lord Byron.[28] Nowhere in Inchbald's work is the "useful moral" more confidently and successfully expanded, nowhere else does the "feeling mind" flourish with such vitality, sympathy, and wit. Just as Inchbald rejected in favor of an individual voice the outright sentimentalism that would have gained her an easy stage success, so in the novel she rejected the most likely of eighteenth-century structures for a fledgling fiction writer, the novel in letters. What she learned from her stage work helped her to find an alternative mode for her novel. A third-person narrative shifting strategically from satire to wit to introspection to pedantic lectures creates a fictional sphere unlike that of any of its predecessors. Domestic realism emerges from the portrayal of Dorriforth's household. Social criticism arises from the author's description of the young heroine Miss Milner's improper education and her legacy to her daughter Matilda. Dorriforth's "reform" at the conclusion, and Matilda's resulting spiritual rebirth,

are examined for their links to Inchbald's own autobiography. In getting at the heart of the novel, I draw on Inchbald's many sources: her wide reading, her personal relationships with Kemble and Godwin, her interest in autobiography, the lessons she learned from the stage. I place the novel in its own time and also look at its importance to the novel of the nineteenth century. Fundamental to my analysis of A Simple Story is the fact of its female authorship. I argue that "the feeling mind" as expressed in this novel is a distinctly feminine trait, shaped by a variety of forces in Inchbald's life and by the conditions of eighteenth-century life that molded her sensibilities.

The fourth and final chapter summarizes Inchbald's career after the success of A Simple Story, with emphasis on Nature and Art and The British Theatre. I consider the reason for this writer's disappearance from the traditional canon of eighteenth-century literature, and argue for her restoration, if not to the peaks of Parnassus at least to some of its foothills. I conclude by suggesting directions for further research into the career of this remarkable and neglected writer.

Endnotes to Introduction

[1]For a survey of critical studies on Elizabeth Inchbald, see pp. 9-11. Although recent studies of eighteenth-century women writers have included Mrs. Inchbald in passing, there is no definitive biography of her, nor is there a published book-length study of her work.

[2]Gary Kelly in particular argues for Inchbald's "Jacobin" politics in The English Jacobin Novel while Katherine Rogers declines to accept Inchbald as an early feminist in a recent article in Eighteenth-Century Studies. (See Chap. III for a discussion of these works). Earlier studies, such as Samuel Littlewood's Elizabeth Inchbald and her Circle, reduce her to the category of "charming" eccentric, and thus reduce her biography to a series of quaint anecdotes. A recent bibliography by F. Moreux lists, for instance, over thirty articles published before 1900, and ten between 1900 and 1972. Of these last ten, five are in Notes and Queries and only two are specifically on Inchbald's literary work. One reason for this situation is the lack of availability of editions of Inchbald's work.

[3]The term "feeling" like the term "nature" in this period is distinctly difficult to define; and yet "feeling" represents a significant aspect of eighteenth-century awareness. I define it as distinct from "sentimental" or "humanitarian" (see p. 3 ff.) but it is related to these terms, and these are, as well, part of Inchbald's theater vocabulary.

[4]See Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel for a disucssion of Inchbald's relationship to the radical politics of her day. I prefer the term "feeling mind" as more useful and broad-based then Kelly's "Jacobin;" see Chap. III.

[5]Not only Holcroft, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft, but Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, Robert Bage, Amelia Opie, John O'Keeffe, and Charlotte Smith, among others, shared Inchbald's interest in politics and the novel in these decades.

[6]Inchbald, a Roman Catholic, arrived in London less than a year before the Gordon riots disrupted the city. One can only imagine the effect of this anarchic time on the young woman; Dr. Johnson, also in London during the summer the disturbances broke out, wrote to Mrs. Thrale, "Such a time of terror you have been happy in not seeing." (quoted in J. Paul de Castro, The Gordon Riots (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 125.) Inchbald had also travelled in France with her husband, who was also Catholic. They apparently at one time considered settling there permanently, perhaps because it was a Roman Catholic country. (See James Boaden, Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald (London, 1833) for a record of her early life.)

[7]Inchbald's friendships with these two "stars" greatly influenced her later life; Kemble became the "model" for Dorriforth, the hero of her first novel (see Chap. III) and Mrs. Siddons helped make the theater a respectable place for women to work by keeping her life free from scandal despite her great popularity.

[8]See Chap. 3 for extended discussion of A Simple Story. Evidence of its success rests in the fact that the novel was issued in 1791, reissued in 1799, 1802, 1801 (as part of Mrs. Barbauld's The British Novelists), 1820, 1823, 1831, 1848, 1849, 1851, 1880, 1885, 1908, and 1967. Nature and Art appeared first in 1796, again in 1797, 1810 (again in The British Novelists) 1823, 1850, 1874, 1880, 1886, and in 1976 as a critical edition by Janice Cauwells, who raises the issue of communal authorship in her introduction. (See List of Sources for further information on Inchbald bibliography.)

[9]G.L. Joughin, "An Inchbald Bibliography," Texas University Studies in Literature and Language, 14 (July, 1934), pp. 59-74 contains the definitive list of her plays along with several attributions which he argues are spurious.

[10]James Boaden's Memoirs (London, 1833) remain the only available text for these plays, although they have been reproduced, but not edited, in Paula Backscheider, The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980), 2 vols. All references to the plays are to this edition unless other specified.

[11]The publishers seem to have selected the plays; see Boaden's discussion in the Memoirs, II, 87.

[12]These three works have been issued in offprint editions in recent years because of the convenient access they provide to plays otherwise very difficult to locate. However, the high cost of these reprintings (The British Theatre was printed by Adler in 1970 and listed at over $700 then) has not necessarily made Inchbald's work more accessible to the general reading public. Even the recent reprinting by Garland (see #10 above) costs about one hundred dollars.

[13]Biographical errors abound in such reference books as British Authors Before 1800 or the nineteenth century Bibliographical Dictionary of the English Catholics. The former claims that Mrs. Inchbald "turned to writing soon after her husband's death" in 1779, (p. 287) when in fact she had been writing for at least two years before that. It further claims that she was "all her life a devout Roman Catholic," also a questionable statement. The Catholic Dictionary cites a payment of only twenty pounds for her first play while both Boaden and The London Stage indicate one hundred. Another curious entry appears in The Cambridge History of English Literature, where H.V. Routh explains that her play Wives As They Were was "later elaborated into" her novel, A Simple Story. Routh then gives the date of Wives as 1797, some six years after the publication of the novel she had in fact begun in 1777.

[14]See bibliography for other works by Moreux.

[15]I am deeply indebted not only to Gary Kelly's excellent book, but also to his personal interest in my study and his assistance in locating the Godwin-Inchbald letters in the Abingdon collection.

[16]Katherine M Rogers, "Inhibitions on Eighteenth-Century Women Novelists: Elizabeth Inchbald and Charlotte Smith," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 11 (Fall, 1977), pp. 63-78.

[17]All references to the plays, unless otherwise noted, are from Paula Backscheider, The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980, 2 vol. Citations refer to volume number and page number of the individual play since pages in the text are not sequentially numbered.

[18]For an excellent summary of the various reform societies, see Peter Faulkner, Robert Bage (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), pp. 19-22. Isaac Kramnick in The Rage of Edmund Burke discusses the connection between political and religious dissent and the rise in technology in this period.

[19]Robert Halsband, "Women and Literature in 18th Century England," in Women in the 18th Century and Other Essays, ed. Paul Fritz and Richard Morton (Toronto: Hakkert and Co., 1976), p. 55.

[20]Dorothy M. Mayer, Angelica Kauffman R.A. 1741-1807 quoted in Karen Petersen and J.J. Wilson, Women Artists: Recognition and Reappraisal from the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century (New York, 1976), p. 45.

[21]Virginia Woolf, "Women and Fiction," in Michele Barrett, ed. Women and Writing (1904; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1977), p. 44.

[22]See Bibliography for extended discussion of manuscripts and papers relating to Inchbald.

[23]Boaden, Memoirs, II, 232-35 for his copy of the table of contents of this autobiography, and his opinion about its destruction. The Dictionary of English Catholics also refers to the destruction of the manuscript (p. 536).

[24]G. Louis Joughin, "The Life and Work of Elizabeth Inchbald," Diss. Harvard, 1932, Preface, n.p.

[25]The letter from Wilfrid Egan, Bookseller, of 6 Heargravine Studio, West Kensington is among the uncatalogued Folger papers. His letter refers to eight diaries, but the Folger contains nine, catalogued M.a. 149-157.

[26]Joughin, Life, pp. 58-59.

[27]Joughin, Life, contains a list of known portraits, pp. 529-35.

[28]See Chap. III for Edgeworth's letter praising A Simple Story. Byron is reported to have said, "Talking of vanity, whose praise do I prefer? Why, Mrs. Inchbald's...because her Simple Story and Nature and Art are, to me, true to their titles;...(Cauwells, p. 192).

Chapter One

The Feeling Mind: Biograhical Sources of Inchbald's Art

Elizabeth Simpson was born on October 15, 1753.[1] Her father was a farmer in the village of Standingfield, near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk; her family were Roman Catholics. As a result of her religious background, in a country where the Catholic minority had to be closely knit, the young Elizabeth was able to mix with Catholic gentry and sample a life richer than her own economic background provided. Although she received no formal education, she did learn to read and write. One difficulty appeared early and plagued her throughout her life: a speech impediment that caused her to stammer. Virtually no details survive of her life during these early years. Her speech problem probably encouraged her to be a solitary child and to rely on writing and reading for companionship, habits that proved of critical importance in her later years. Her father's death on April 15, 1761 further shaped her early life. Her mother was left with only a modest income for the support of nine children; thus Elizabeth's lifelong habits of frugality had an early source.

Elizabeth's older brother George left home to become an actor and in April of 1772 she followed his footsteps. Leaving a note for her mother, she secretly left Standingfield, intent upon a theater career in London. She arrived only to find the large city intimidating. Boaden records that for ten days the young woman, then nineteen years old, wandered about London, fearful and confused, shifting lodgings to avoid imaginary attackers. Convinced that for a young poorly educated woman a career as an actress was the only available source of income besides work as a maid, a seamstress or a prostitute, Elizabeth pursued her dream of life on the stage. Theatrical success, however, proved as difficult as one might imagine. On May 7, shortly after her arrival in the capital, she made an appointment with Mr. Dodd, a theater manager, in order to gain work in his acting company. She had trained herself to speak stage parts in a slow,

measured cadence to suppress her tendency to stammer; the formalized speech that resulted fitted comfortably into the eighteenth-century practice of declamatory theater, and few observers noticed her stammer while she was on stage. Having eliminated this obstacle to theatrical success, she encounted another. Elizabeth Simpson's flaming red hair and striking good looks proved too much of a temptation for Dodd, and she was "so provoked as to snatch up a basin of hot water and dash it in his face."[2]

The young woman's gesture in flinging the hot water at Dodd reveals her spirit of independence and self-respect, and her ability to deal with adversity -all virtues she would develop and exercise in her later years. For any woman convinced of her talent but like Elizabeth Simpson lacking formal education, reputation was more than a principle; it was the indispensible key to survival and success. She sensed from the beginning that without reputation she would be subject to the sexual harassment and then blackmail of stage managers and publishers, to the whim of an unpredictable press, and, in more practical terms, to the hazards of venereal disease and unwanted pregnancy. She would, a few years later, watch her younger sister Debby die of the disease and poverty that resulted from her life as a prostitute. A more immediate cause of her violent gesture toward Dodd was her religious background. Catholicism played a shifting but important role in her life, especially in her last years. At this early date, in 1772, her religious upbringing, combined with her youthful energy and newly discovered independence, conspired to keep Elizabeth Simpson off the London stage for the next few years. The record here is uncertain, but she seems to have moved in with London relatives when her family accepted that she had no intention of returning home.

That this arrangement was not extremely successful is suggested by the fact that by June 9, 1772, she married Joseph Inchbald, an actor and portrait painter.[3] She had first met him a year earlier on a trip to London, and his status as a fellow Catholic no doubt encouraged her to accept his proposal of marriage. Prudence rather than passion, however, dictated her choice, and the marriage seems to have been little more than a refuge from the insecurities of single life.

Inchbald was then thirty-seven, about twice his young wife's age. The marriage, however stormy it became in later years, provided her with the opportunity to act, even if only in small provincial theaters. On September 4, 1772, she made her debut at Brixton in the role of Cordelia; Joseph played Lear.

The success of their stage careers, like the success of their marriage, was minor. Poverty was a major difficulty the couple faced during the 1770's. Money, however, was not the only source of strife; Joseph Inchbald proved an unfortunate choice as a husband. Within two years of the marriage she suspected his unfaithfulness. Only one of Inchbald's extant journals covers the period of the marriage, but it offers sharp evidence of the pair's unhappiness. The volume for 1776 offers insight into the day-to-day life of the couple and a glimpse of the bitterness of their quarrels, for the widening chasm between husband and wife is not always apparent in Boaden's Memoirs. In January, 1776, Elizabeth recorded:

> I was at rehearsal of Philaster Then had high words with Mr. Inchbald about a dress.[4]

A week later the situation was not improved:

> ...when he came home we had amazing high words...Mr. Inchbald after playing did not come home until morning.[5]

Quarreling continues in February:

> Mr. Inchbald and I had words...

she records for the week of February 19. Two weeks later, there were "more words." The pattern continued. In March, she wrote:

> A very windy day—after I came from Prayers walked on my self and was angry with Mr. Inchbald he was not kind...[6]

The entries for June continue to record angry words and Elizabeth again recorded "going to prayers without him."

One can only speculate on the cause of these frequent disagreements, though her reference to "a dress" suggests both her vanity and their mutual poverty. Since it was the custom for actresses to own their stage costumes, the dress in question could have been for her theatrical wardrobe. A second likely source of dissension is Joseph Inchbald's infidelity. He chose to introduce his son Robert into his wife's company, and for a time to her household. Boaden's reserve leaves the record unclear as to whether Robert was the child of a previous marriage or an illegitimate son, but the biographer does say that Mrs. Inchbald "seems to have taken a dislike to the boy Bob, a son of Mr. Inchbald's, by whom she does not say, and after their return to Edinburgh he had separate lodgings."[7] Even if she disliked the boy and disapproved of her husband's conduct, she continued to provide Robert Inchbald with financial assistance long after Joseph's death.[8]

If poverty and angry quarrels embittered these years, there were brighter moments as well. In 1774 Elizabeth Inchbald decided to study French. As a supplement to her earnings as an actress, she began to translate French farces

and comedies for the English stage. The step from translator to original writer was made easy by the freedom with which plays were "adapted" from foreign languages in Inchbald's day, but it would nevertheless be ten years before her first original play was performed. The years from 1774 until the success of The Mogul Tale in 1784 marked a decade of literary apprenticeship and personal growth. Friendships formed during these years significantly affected her later life. In October of 1776 she met Sarah Siddons and a few months later her brother John Philip Kemble. The great actress and her equally famous brother established friendships with Mrs. Inchbald that lasted all their lives. She and Sarah Siddons remained intimate for forty-five years.[9] Siddons drew her friend closer to the theatrical circles of Bath and London, encouraging her to meet the glamorous tribe of her stage contemporaries. Kemble's relationship with Mrs. Inchbald fascinated her friends. That she admired and even loved him was hinted at by many of their circle and suspected by Kemble himself. Though they were never lovers,[10] his influence on her life was still felt strongly in later years. His role as a model for Dorriforth in A Simple Story emphasizes his importance to Inchbald.

In the same year, 1776, the Inchbalds visited France, leaving on July 23. Their motives were practical; she planned to study French, he to study painting. Life in Paris, they no doubt hoped, would be less costly and employment more readily available for actors. The visit to Catholic France may also have appealed to the English couple in the years before the Gordon riots and the First Catholic Relief Act. Whatever their motives, little is recorded of the trip, and they abruptly returned to England when their funds ran low in September. So poor were they that "several times they went into the fields to eat turnips instead of dining."[11]

Inchbald's writing career originated, as did those of so many eighteenth-century women novelists, in necessity. During 1777, she began work on the novel that would become A Simple Story.[12] If talent and imagination were incentives, there is no question that at least one motive for writing was to find a solution to the poverty she and her husband were enduring. Although the work would be extensively revised before its publication in 1791, the experiences of the 1770's were central to much of the plot and the theme of A Simple Story. The definition of a "proper education," so central to the story, emerged from her early trials at beginning her career as a writer without formal training. These apprentice years were filled with personal experiences that were later transformed into the artistically controlled fictional temperaments of Miss Milner and Dorriforth.

In addition to writing, Inchbald read widely in history and in literature, taking copious notes and making detailed outlines.[13] This habit of self-education she continued all her life. A measure of her success is apparent in the ease with which she was later able to mingle in the intellectual circle of Holcroft, Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and others without feeling at a disadvantage. Much of her reading during these years influenced her revisions of A Simple Story as well. She read the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, of Lord Chesterfield, and of Jonathan Swift. She read novels: Frances Brooke's Julia Mandeville, Courtney Melmoth's Liberal Opinions, Gil Blas (probably in Smollett's translation), Henry Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné, Hugh Kelly's Louisa Mildmay, Joseph Cradock's Village Memoirs, and Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield, among others. She read Pope's Essay on Man as well as translations of the Greek and Roman classics. She also continued to study French.[14]

During the 1770's the Inchbalds continued to try their luck on the boards of provincial theaters. They worked for a time in Edinburgh in West Digge's company, but the engagement ended in 1776. After their return from Paris they acted with the Liverpool company of Younger. In 1777 while performing in Canterbury they met Thomas Holcroft, then himself an actor, who was working on his first novel, Alwyn, or the Gentleman Comedian. He became a close friend and later a literary adviser to Mrs. Inchbald. In October, 1777, the Inchbalds joined Tate Wilkinson's York company.

While on tour with this company on June 6, 1779, Joseph Inchbald died suddenly; Boaden suggests that the cause was acute indigestion. The marriage had lasted only seven years, providing the young woman with protection but not with much emotional satisfaction; the couple had no children. Of Joseph Inchbald's side of the story we know very little. Kemble wrote a Latin epitaph for him but few other memorials remain. Boaden claims that at the time of her husband's death, Mrs. Inchbald was no longer penniless; he records that she had "222 Long Annuities, 30 in Consols, and 5s. 3d. in Reduced Annuities, besides 128. 12s. 6d. money in hand."[15] Such an accumulation is remarkable if the Inchbalds were indeed penniless when they returned from France in September of 1776. Precisely where the money came from is not clear. Boaden fails to call attention to the fact, moreover, that these figures come from Mrs. Inchbald's account book, not from her husband. It was she who kept her weekly expenses under a pound a week. We find in Elizabeth Inchbald a woman who was fully able to understand and manage her long and short term investments as well as her pin money. Even while under the protection of her husband, she seems to have developed an eye for security and to have taken measures to insure her financial well-being. If her precaution was selfish, it nevertheless proved invaluable in 1779 and the years to come.

Inchbald's feelings about her husband's death are nowhere bluntly expressed. A clue to her mixture of conventional piety and secret relief found expression many years later in a letter to William Godwin upon Mary Wollstonecraft's death. In 1793, she wrote:

> I felt myself for a time bereft of every comfort the world could bestow but these opinions passed away and gave place to others almost the reverse.[16]

If the example is hardly consoling for Godwin, whose grief was deep and genuine, Elizabeth Inchbald's coolness suggests more than her dislike of Mary Wollstonecraft, or a resurgence of religious feeling. If she experienced some gratitude toward the man who had helped her begin her career, she was nonetheless repelled by his way of living. While Inchbald may indeed have been "bereft of every comfort" at the moment of her husband's sudden death, her letter to Godwin makes clear that she soon found the renewal of her personal independence a welcome change. That she never remarried, despite several proposals, further suggests her disenchantment with marriage and her preference of the single state.

Whatever the emotions with which she faced her change of fortunes in 1779, Elizabeth Inchbald did not let them interfere with her work. By September she had completed the first version of her novel and offered it to a publisher, who declined it. She continued to write farces for the London stage, though these too were for a time rejected. A year later, she joined the Covent Garden theater company, where she continued to work during the regular seasons until her retirement in 1789. During the summer, when the regular London theater closed she worked at the Haymarket with George Colman the elder, starting in

the summer of 1782. Later that year she also played in Dublin on the same stage with Kemble.[17]

Her husband's death, ironically, provided Mrs. Inchbald with the right circumstances for productive authorship. She was alone, and as a woman had few alternatives open to her. Her experience as an actress encouraged her to write for the theater, but it would be almost five years from the time of her husband's death until the young woman, then only twenty-five, could finally count herself a successful author, and feel herself secure financially.

Her emergence as a writer is signalled by her increasing number of literary friends. The decades of Inchbald's popularity and success were marked by a wide acquaintance among other writers, including William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Holcroft, Charlotte Smith and Amelia Opie. She corresponded with and briefly met Maria Edgeworth, and was introduced to Mme de Stael when the latter visited England.[18]

With Godwin in particular her life and career are closely tied. From their earliest acquaintance they were allies on the side of revolutionary France and close critics of each other's writing. Until Godwin married Mary Wollstonecraft, he and Inchbald exchanged manuscripts, met often and exchanged letters. The fact that Mary Wollstonecraft's previously relationship with Gilbert Imlay had attached scandal to her name, and that she lived with Godwin without the legal ties of marriage seems to have distressed Mrs Inchbald to such a degree that her relationship with Godwin became chilly. Even upon Mary's death in 1797 Inchbald shows a striking lack of sympathy for Godwin's loss. In a letter of condolence she does little more than assure him this his grief, like hers upon her husband's death, would pass:

> Be comforted—You will be comforted...I feel for you at present...[19]

Yet earlier in the same letter Inchbald admitted:

> If I did not know her, I never wished to know her—as I avoid every female acquaintance who has no husband, I avoided her...

The two friends quarreled and, apparently at Inchbald's insistence, Godwin for many years ceased to write or visit. On November 28, 1799 Godwin wrote asking to heal the breach. Although Boaden claims that she denied the appeal in 1799, it is clear that the friendship was eventually renewed. A letter of September 18, 1805 from Inchbald to Godwin concludes:

> —but that I once was acquainted with you is a source of great pleasure to me; and it would grieve me very much if I thought I should never see you again.[20]

The intense and troubled friendship with Godwin has caused Inchbald's biographers embarrassment and dismay.[21] Perhaps more than the sexual jealousy seen as the source of the quarrel is at the heart of Inchbald's abrupt and seemingly harsh letter to Godwin in 1797. Perhaps she envied Godwin's growing reputation as a philosopher, a role denied to her as a woman lacking formal education. Her intellectual ambitions were high, after all, a fact not often surmised by those who read only her published works. Her reading habits and the extensive and careful notes she kept reveal a woman who craved learning both for its own sake and for the stature she felt it gave the educated person. She read classical authors, history, political and religious tracts, biographies, novels and drama. That Godwin continued to appeal to her to renew the friendship

indicated just how much he admired her and respected her learning and her general intelligence.

A second cause of her dislike for Mary Wollstonecraft is possible. Inchbald saw the real dangers inherent in the life Wollstonecraft led. She feared that if such a life became a model for other young women they would more than likely suffer rather than benefit from the example. Her outrage at a woman who remained unmarried while co-habiting with a man stemmed not so much from prudery as from a fear that while Mary Wollstonecraft might have been brave enough to endure the social displeasure she aroused, less courageous women who might follow her example, like Inchbald's own sister, might be victims of their anti-social actions.

Further evidence that Inchbald's break with Godwin arose from causes out of the ordinary, or causes that struck close personal notes for her, is evident in the endurance of her many other friendships. With John Philip Kemble she remained friends all her life. Although that relationship, like the one with Godwin, was tinged with romantic notions, she and Kemble stayed friends, and continued to act together, even after his marriage. She and Kemble visited each other as late as 1820, a year before Inchbald's death. She continued her attachment with Holcroft even during his imprisonment on treason charges in 1794,[22] taking the risk of visiting him in jail until his acquittal. With Sarah Siddons she remained an intimate correspondent throughout her life.

Despite these friendships, Mrs. Inchbald's life after 1800 became increasingly solitary. She published fewer works for the stage, and no novels. Instead, she continued writing her autobiography, a reflection of her turning inward, and took a more active interest in religion. She continued, nevertheless, to earn money by her pen.

By 1800 Inchbald's name was so well established and her popularity so great that merely to identify "Mrs. Inchbald" on the title page insured sales of three large anthologies of plays. The British Theatre, in twenty-five volumes, contains about 125 essays and remarks that Inchbald wrote between 1806 and 1809 as prefaces to the plays. Two more collections followed in 1809.[23]

In March, 1815, Boaden tells us, Inchbald "destroyed a vast heap of letters relating to former times, particularly such as were connected with the two sisters who had lost." In the latter part of the year, he continues, she revised her autobiography. "She then locked it up," he adds. By 1817, Boaden concludes, "the probability seems to be that she sacrificed at last to conscience what the publishers had shunned from timidity;...all that escaped her consignment to the flames is a kind of Shandyan table of contents..."[24] A record of that table of contents of the earlier years of her life she included at length in a letter to Godwin dated Good Friday, 1805.[25] This letter, and others of the same period, suggest her motive for writing an autobiography, and her uncertainty about the project as well. At one point she asked Godwin, "Do you think it could be turned into a kind of novel by giving ficticious names, yet such as half the world would guess was meant by each--." She felt this might be one way to "at least escape the reproaches which you drew upon yourself." To his suggestion that she allow the manuscript to be published after her death she replies, "I have no occasion for money when I am dead--nor will my relations either...I am giving this as a reason why the work was never meant to be published except in my life—not even money has the power of tempting me to an act that may do me infinitely more harm as a woman, than any man can receive by a similar publication."[26]

Such a letter is tantalizing, of course, as there is no evidence elsewhere that any of her actions during her lifetime were such as would threaten her

reputation. In an age that enjoyed scandal, and was ingenious at inventing it where none existed, Inchald's life remains remarkably free from slander. The idea that the memoir could do her "infinitely more harm as a woman" may refer not to her virtue but rather to her awareness of the continued prejudice against actresses and actors. The concept of autobiography was also relatively new; Inchbald no doubt knew of the criticism levelled at Colley Cibber almost a century earlier when he had had the audacity to publish his Apology. In more recent times, Rousseau's Confessions (which Inchbald had begun to translate in 1790) had done little to raise the autobiography in public esteem.[27] Nevertheless, her decision not to publish her memoirs resulted in Boaden's feeling free to undertake the task for her in 1833, with more damage to her literary identity than she could have imagined. Boaden accomplished what she at her worst could never do: he made Mrs. Inchbald dull.

The destruction of her manuscript autobiography was a psychological milestone in Elizabeth Inchbald's career. It marked her decision to retire permanently from the public world of stage and literary salon. Relieved of her role as family supporter by the early and tragic deaths of her sisters, Inchbald turned for consolation to religion. She no longer needed to produce plays and novels with the urgency past responsibilities had inspired, and took less interest in a world where many of her friends were already dead. She was also hindered from further literary pursuits by frequent illness.

In 1819 she retired to Kensington House, a genteel lodging primarily for Roman Catholics. She died in August 1, 1821, leaving an estate valued at between five and six thousand pounds.[28] John Philip Kemble affectionately called her the Tenth Muse, because, he explained, her presence was always accompanied by her nine sisters.[29] For the woman who had in her first novel

defiantly asked those nine to "pardon me, that to them I do not feel myself obliged," but acknowledged instead her debt to Necessity and Fortune, perhaps Kemble's tribute is the best epitaph.

Preserved in Boaden's Memoirs is a somewhat eccentric but revealing "Description of Me" that helps us round out the biographical narrative into a fuller portrait of Mrs. Inchbald. This description, Boaden says, was written down by "a decided admirer of hers" and he asserts that "She herself preserved, and in her own hand endorsed the paper—" which reads:

Description of Me.

AGE —	Between 30 and 40, which, in the register of a lady's birth, means a little turned of 30.
HEIGHT —	Above the middle size, and rather tall.
FIGURE —	Handsome, and striking in its general air, but a little too stiff and erect.
SHAPE —	Rather too fond of sharp angles.
SKIN —	By nature fair, though a little freckled, and with a tinge of sand, which is the colour of her eye-lashes, but made coarse by ill-treatment upon her cheeks and arms.
BOSOM —	None, or so diminutive, that it's like a needle in a bottle of hay.
HAIR —	Of a sandy auburn, and rather too straight as well as thin.
FACE —	Beautiful in effect, and beautiful in every feature.
COUNTENANCE —	Full of spirit and sweetness; excessively interesting, and, without indelicacy, voluptuous.
DRESS —	Always becoming; and very seldom worth so much as EIGHT-PENCE.[30]

From this self-mocking sketch, then, we can see the basis of Inchbald's reputed charm as recorded by, or perhaps dictated to, the "decided admirer."

The descriptive details preserved here are supported by many of the surviving portraits (see illustrations). Yet the woman behind this playful description like the figure sketched in the numerous oils and engravings, is still the "public" Mrs. Inchbald. The "private" woman has been, to a large extent, lost with the destruction of the manuscript autobiography and most of her personal papers. The only remaining clues to her more private self rest in the Folger Shakespeare Library, the depository for her extant memorandum books and miscellaneous papers.

The Inchald papers in the Folger collection, however, are only a remnant of her original papers. Of the fifty or so small volumes of memoranda, only nine remain.[31] No information available in the records of acquisition or of provenance offers clues about the missing volumes, or the reason for the survival of the selected nine. Sadly, the extant volumes do not cover the years of Inchbald's major literary activity or political activism during the 1790's; perhaps this fact suggests one reason for their survival; they are relatively innocuous. Despite their lack of political and generally even of literary material, the surviving papers are of value to the literary historian for the glimpses they offer into the daily life of this author.

The volumes are tiny, measuring a scant 12.5 X 8 cm. Some covers are brown leather, others green, red, or black. The printing on each title page announces the purpose for which the books were sold; the earliest one, for instance, reads: "The Ladies Own Memorandum-Book: Or, Daily Pocket Journal, for the Year 17__./Designed as a Methodical Register for all their Transactions of Business, as well as Amusement." Into the blank space, Inchbald inserted the year, "76." The left-hand page contains printed ledger markings to guide the diarist in her bookkeeping while the right-hand page is divided into seven spaces, each labeled for a day of the week.

From the physical nature of the books we can deduce something of their intended purpose. Their small size suggests that they were not intended for extensive or complete household records but more likely for "pin money" or personal expenses. The size also leads one to believe the printer designed them to be private, suitable for concealment in the pockets common on eighteenth-century dresses. Clearly they were created for writers with remarkably small and delicate penmanship, or with very inactive lives, if we are to judge on the basis of the allotted space. Unfortunately, Inchbald's handwriting lacked the required size and fineness, and her life the limits implied by the size of the pages; as a result, her volumes are crammed from top to bottom with line after line on frequently illegible entries in ink now of a faded sepia color. The formation of the letters suggests that her frugality extended to her purchase of writing materials; the split and shaky words emerged from split and well-worn quills. The very feel of the tiny books, however, suggests an intensity, a discipline, a persistence and a business-like manner not noted by her biographers.

Some samples from the 1776 journal illustrate the nature of the entries. For the third week in January she records:

Washing	0	3	4
fruit	0	0	1
Pins	0	0	1
I gave George Inchbald to see the Play	0	0	9
1 yard and 3/4 of Irish at 1:10^{d} a yard for a shift with almost a yard I had by me	0	14	1
a yd and three quarters for the sleeves at 4^{s} a yd	0	7	0
(?) P Handkerchiefs ( )	0	0	6

Lent George Inchbald	0	1	0
fruit and sugar barley which Mr. Inchbald bought me after			
dinner	0	0	3
at the Chapel	0	0	6[32]

The notes on the opposite page for the same week tell about her activities. Her brother called to visit. She studied. She received a letter from Mr. Digges, the theater manager. Mrs. MacPherson visited. Entries for the weeks throughout 1776 include mention of other visitors, of her starting French lessons, expenses for washing, pins, fruit, chapel. She carefully records her illnesses and distresses and her quarrels with Joseph Inchbald. Other incidents include the temporary loss of her wedding ring and the reward of five shillings she pays for its recovery. Few references are made in these pages to her reading, although she does mention the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as among her choices.

However mundane, the entries for these early years help us to learn of "the conditions of the average woman's life," as Virginia Woolf encouraged us to do if we are to understand the sources of women's genius.[33] The expense of "washing" heads each week in Inchbald's list, and proves a major item in the writer's budget; thus we learn that she did not do her own laundry, but had it done. During week 14 of 1776, she orders a new gown and petticoat, and, after itemizing the cost of each component in the tailoring process including "lining," "body lining," and "ribbon," she lists "the gowns & petticoats making" at a cost of nine shillings and "the <u>whole</u> of the gown and petticoat" at four pounds, fifteen shillings, five pence. Given that Inchbald's salary as an actress rose no higher than three pounds a week,[34] and that even this was considered an extremely high income (especially for a woman), we have some way to gauge the cost of clothing in the eighteenth century; clearly, it was very expensive. The minutiae in her memoranda tell us further that cleanliness was relatively

important in the actress' life, a circumstance not to be taken for granted in the eighteenth century if we look to the fiction and satire of the period for evidence.[35] The record also reminds us of the poor wages earned by dressmakers, who, in this case, gained only nine shillings out of the almost five pounds Inchbald paid for the complete dress; goods, on the other hand, were dear.[36]

The memoranda for the early years record such expenses, then, for personal purchases, but omit such major items as lodging and meals. Thus we cannot reconstruct a complete picture of Inchbald's daily life from these sources alone. Still, the glimpse they give us of her domestic life and her attention to household duties suggests the basis for her success at creating credible domestic scenes in her fiction, and her failure to capture more than a stereotyped view of upper class life, as I shall discuss in Chapter III. The diaries are a kind of writer's notebook, however unformed the ideas. They are a source book for the studies in marriage, particularly unhappy marriage, which form the basis of many of her plays and of A Simple Story. They are an early record of the writer's desire to gain control of her own financial situation, so as to assure her independence. The details contained in this record are, in themselves, of far less interest or value, in many ways, than the fact of the existence of the diaries as a whole. Not the details, but the process of journal writing, helps to define Inchbald's character. Thus an extensive transcription of the memoranda pages is not part of my study, although such a definitive edition could not but be useful to social and literary historians. Of more immediate interest to our understanding and assessment of Elizabeth Inchbald as a writer is the impression of her character conveyed by these diaries, the clues they provide into the conditions of authorship.

The volume for 1788 provides the best evidence of Inchbald's daily life during the period of her wide acquaintance and general popularity. By this time, she is more secure financially, after her husband's death and the successful production of her first play.[37] The diary mirrors this change, for it no longer includes the detailed lists of expenditures that filled the earlier pages, but instead records the parts she has played and the visitors she has entertained. More references to political events appear as well; for July, 1788 she records, "2 men were killed at the [Westminster] Election...in the evening a great mob and the soldiers called in." She has been reading Gibbon during this time as well, as she notes for the week of July 6. Financial interests continue, too; in January 1788 she notes with apparent satisfaction, "dividends began paying." She is productive and attends rehearsals of The Mogul Tale and I'll Tell You What, clearly both still popular plays. In the week ending June 22, Friday proved "A wet day--a rehearsal of The Mogul Tale, went and returned in a coach--Mrs. Whitfield then Mrs. Wells called. I dined early my landlady's dinner--drank tea, with my sister in my bedchamber..."[38]

From these glimpses into her daily routine we can surmise that she usually walked to the theater, or perhaps took a chair, to save the expense of a coach. During this season when she was developing her reputation as a writer, she clearly continued her friendships with her theater colleagues, Mrs. Wells[39] and Mrs. Whitfield, as well as with her family. Not only did she see her first two plays through rehearsals, but likewise, as the year went on, saw three more produced: Midnight Hour, Animal Magnetism, and towards December, Child of Nature.

It is not until some twenty years later, to judge from the extant memoranda, that her note-keeping habits developed the style one would expect

from a successful author. Long after the success of her two novels and just about the time of the publication of the British Theatre, we find the names of fellow writers more frequently, for instance. On April 3, 1808 Mr. Robinson, her publisher, "sent me Miss Burney's manuscript and I began it..." For the week of April 4, she records, "Finished reading Miss Burney's manuscript and took my opinion of it to Mr. Robinson." (This would seem to be Fanny Burney's manuscript for her last novel, The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties, which was finally published in 1814, since her previous novel, Camilla, or A Picture of Youth, had already been published in 1796.)[40]

In February we find a record of another literary lady, when we read "Mrs. Opie here all evening just came to town." Later that month, Inchbald adds: "At night I went to the market for meat--then read a pamphlet on the Catholic question which Mrs. Opie had just sent me." The entries further record her continual attention to the "Remarks" she was preparing for the British Theatre. She mentions her efforts in reading galleys and writing additional essays. For the first Friday in March, she notes, "Had my windows cleaned." On Monday, April 19, she "...heard for certain that Goldsmith's death was by suicide." More than once the marginal note simply reads "all alone."

She continues to note her investments and the income from the annuities she has bought, and carefully "puts aside" all she can. Lists of books she has read are squeezed between columns of figures, comments on the weather, visits from friends, and the latest news.

This hodgepodge of details, the juxtaposition of clean windows and certain suicide, suggests the honesty with which the record was kept. It is not a polished account which the author secretly yearned to publish, but a personal reminder, a way to measure time. Yet in these external details, we can glimpse the internal ones, the raw material of the feeling mind.

Most evident from the memorandum books is Inchbald's self-training as an observer; she is omnivorous in her collection and recording of data. Her memoranda suggest that the curiosity and common sense that underlie her fiction were deeply rooted in her character. Her earlier passionate record of quarrels with Mr. Inchbald and her later muted note on death and solitude suggest a maturing in her outlook over the years. The life of the ordinary woman captured in these records became the basis for the art of the extraordinary woman, the writer.

The papers in the Folger collection are of value and interest, then, because they illustrate, with a directness and intimacy missing in the existing biographical record, the concerns that shaped Inchbald's daily life with her development as a successful popular writer: a blunt and practical attention to money, a persistent interest in acquiring education, both for herself and other women, and finally her awareness of the importance of autobiographical material to a writer. The writer who emerges from these fragmentary pages has been shaped by her early habits of diary keeping and diverse reading, as my analysis of her drama and fiction will show. When, on the last page of A Simple Story Inchbald files her plea for "a proper education" for women, it becomes clear, in light of her personal papers, that she was not merely affixing a coda to her tale; she was, in fact, affirming a theme central to her own life and integral to the meaning of her art.

As much as the diaries reveal, then, of Mrs. Inchbald's unceasing interest in money, they also shed light on her persistent concern with education, though this latter is evident less directly than her financial anxiety. From her entries emerges the notion that "a proper education" has a variety of uses and motives. On the most basic level, learning is a tool for survival, enabling women in

particular to undertake their daily tasks with appropriate efficiency. To balance budgets, give directions, read contracts, and avoid being duped by shopkeepers, lawyers, and enterprising rakes, simple literacy is essential. Literacy, moreover, enables one to read the Bible and other religious texts and thus encourages virtue. To this extent most educators of the day seem in agreement. The many satires on women ruined by too much reading, on the other hand, represented the second level of education or more exactly, improper education. Charlotte Lennox's Arabella in The Female Quixote, for instance, and later the more famous Lydia Languish, suggest that once a woman is granted literacy she is likely to abuse the skill by indulging her taste for romantic literature that will lead to her ruination. Ironically both feminists and anti-feminists agreed on the dangers of romance reading, though each side offered different suggestions for the cure. Those on the side of tradition encouraged women to give more time to the practice of domestic skills such as needlework and music and to read less. More radical views suggest that not the process of reading but only the choice of material was at fault.[41] Both Lydia Languish and Arabella have their heads turned by dangerous novels, after all, not by reading Shakespeare or sermons. Inchbald, like the other more liberal or "jacobin" novelists,[42] belonged to the latter camp and thus advocated a reform of fiction and a new definition of "proper education" that would offer women alternatives to the romantic notions supplied by the Minerva Press. For Mrs. Inchbald this position is integral with her practice in private life, and thus when she comes to write plays and novels her views on education naturally dominate her material. If we are to recognize her originality as a writer, it is important to note that these views emerge from her own long-standing practice and observation and not merely in response to popular trends.

The records of Inchbald's reading, first of all, indicate to what extent she pursued serious literature. Horace, Gibbon, Swift and Pope join her lists of the fiction of such contemporary writers as Courtney Melmoth, Henry Mackenzie, and Hugh Kelly. She naturally read Shakespeare as part of her preparation for the stage, and likewise became familiar with the dramatic writers popular with London audiences in the 1780's, including Johnson, Mrs. Centlivre, and dozens of lesser talents. While Mrs. Inchbald hardly acquired the range of learning exhibited by contemporaries like Elizabeth Carter or the other Bluestockings, she did study French both as a professional tool, to help her earn a living by translating plays, and to allow her to read more widely in the important literature of the day. No Lydia Languish, then, or foolish Arabella, Inchbald was rather an ambitious and curious reader attempting to overcome the narrow limits of her own background through a steady program of diligent reading. From her reading habits we can derive at least one principle of a "proper education," namely, that women should not be restricted to "women's books" but encouraged instead to browse and study widely in classic and modern literature. From this reading would come several benefits. The basic skill would encourage women to see themselves as independent, capable of carrying out their own business affairs and household management at the same time as they shared in masculine conversation on elevating subjects. In addition, reading and writing were marketable skills, raising the possibilities of employment for women with otherwise greatly restricted opportunities. On a plane closer to the interests of the contemporary novel, education could help a woman make a better choice in her marriage partner because she could apply the philosophical principles derived from literature to her own situation. Thus if she led a sheltered life, a woman could substitute her reading for actual experience and improve her judgement of others.

However naive such ideas may sound to the modern reader, for Mrs. Inchbald they appeared new and important. So important does education become for her that, in A Simple Story, as I will argue in Chapter 3, education virtually replaces religion as the basis for moral choice, even in a novel rich in the presence of two Roman Catholic priests. From the point of view of the young Mrs. Inchbald and her jacobin friends, religion taught too much subservience that derived not from reason but from irrational authority. To counteract this dangerous system, Inchhbald proposed proper education.

But this education is more than just reading books. Her diary suggests that "a proper education" is also a practical application of principles providing a young woman with the skill and discipline to guide her actions and choices toward the best ends, and to recognize the necessity for discretion in her behavior not because such a course reflected conventional attitudes but because it protected her from outrage by less conventional people. Education would not necessarily encourage conventionality in a woman but would help her to understand how to govern her own life with full awareness of society's laws. Virtue, in this view, can be a key to power and independence rather than a device to fetter a free spirit. The contrast between Elizabeth Bennet and her sister Lydia in Pride and Prejudice is a portrait that has much in common with that of Miss Milner and Matilda in this regard.[43]

While rules such as these are never stated in Inchbald's notes, they are implied and emerge rather vividly as the private papers are compared with the published fiction and drama. In her records of the minutiae of her daily life, in her visits with famous and sometimes politically radical friends, in her serious examination of questions of literature, politics, and religion, Mrs. Inchbald compiled the raw material for her fiction. Female education, so central to her

art, is rooted in her own self-discipline and ambition, and through it she sought to broaden and enrich her life and to encourage others to do the same. Reading, moreover, made the writer feel more at ease with a wider audience and by extension feel sympathy for the condition of those in her society who lacked education and those deprived of justice because of their ignorance. From such basic values as these arise the notions of humanitarian reform and toleration for dissent that appear so frequently in her plays and novels.

Inchbald's intense interest in education, then, is a radical political posture for the 1780's and 1790's. By education a person of lower-class origins could after all hope to rise in both fame and fortune, and thus education is a great equalizer, a levelling force in a class-conscious society. Thus as her plays and fiction illustrate the means for achieving "proper education," they also carry the seeds of political change. Viewed in this light, the author's diary and miscellaneous papers are the record of one woman's conscious plan to free herself from the restrictions of her background and achieve social and financial success, one form, at least for her, of radical political change. When this personal revolution is transferred into art, the results are not always successful, but certainly are genuinely interesting.

These are the two themes that emerge from the diaries, then: the necessity for women to acquire a sound and respectable education, and at the same time, the principle that a writer should not avoid grappling with the more worldly side of her art—namely, its financial worth. When, in her preface to A Simple Story, Inchbald invokes Necessity as her Muse, she is not merely being coy about her novel's merit; she is declaring the passing of the age of literary patronage and marking the emergence of the modern literary marketplace.

Money and education are two themes that dominate the artistic and personal temperaments of Elizabeth Inchbald. A third factor complements these first two to complete the sketch of the writer's character: preoccupation with self, and by extension, with self-image as captured in portraits. Beauty is important here, but so are vanity, introspection, and self-analysis, all related to the process of diary keeping; portraits become the visual counterpart for the written record of self.[44]

That a woman of Inchbald's beauty and wide popularity should sit for many portraits is hardly surprising, but these pictures are more than publicity stunts. In the transformations of posture, dress, and general style they mirror the author's remarkable responsiveness to the tastes of the times, and her ability to make the fashions suit her own interests. Like her personal papers, moreover, the portraits suggest how deeply patterned with introspection was her nature, how frequent and intelligent her self-evaluations. Evidence of the changing nature of her self-image provided by the portraits offers a striking contrast to the flatness of the life described by Boaden. While her careful biographer tends to conceal much of the conflict and change in Inchbald's life,the personal papers combined with the portraits intimate a dynamic woman, observant and responsive to her world.

The intense introspection practiced by Mrs. Inchbald may be in part the result of her Roman Catholic heritage with its doctrine of confession, a sacrament demanding much self-analytical meditation. But such introspection also suits the consciousness of a writer, and it is thus not so surprising that Inchbald kept a diary regularly for fifty years. The discipline implied by such a practice carried over into her literary work and, more important, offers persuasive evidence of the depth and sincerity of the values expressed in her

plays and novels. This continuing fascination with her self led to her success in using autobiographical material in her fiction, as I argue in Chapter Three. Thus, while the handful of extant diaries and papers allow us to catch glimpses of the changing surfaces of her mind, we can now turn to the portraits to examine further the curious combination of vanity, charm and insecurity that comprised the wellsprings of Inchbald's creativity. If the diaries let us glimpse the private character, the portraits show us her public self.


Mrs INCHBALD

M^RS. INCHBALD.

ELIZABETH INCHBALD

Joughin's study of Mrs. Inchbald includes an index of all her known portraits.[45] From these I have selected five, chiefly because of their availability as prints and bookplates and because they cover the active years of Inchbald's stage and literary career. Taken together, these five pictures cover the years from 1787, when she had just begun to see her plays become regular items in the London theatre repertory, and 1814, when she was fifty-five years old and living in retirement. Through them we gain yet another perspective on the life of the eighteenth-century woman writer.

The earliest (Fig. I), engraved by Walker from a drawing by Cook, is dated September 1787. It celebrates Inchbald's success as a writer of comic drama, surrounding the oval portrait with iconography suggesting her life in the theatre. Drapery fills the upper left and right corners and forms a dark ground against which glows a quill pen on a bed of roses and a second device, probably a mirror. In the lower left is a lyre, on the right rest the emblems of comedy, including the traditional mask and a small figure of a jester. This formal neo-classical iconography identifies Inchbald's roots in the Augustan world and her apprenticeship on the stage made popular by Garrick and Sheridan. Within this formal and symbolic frame the actress and playwright sits, glancing to her left with a look of accomplishment.

The face is serene, marked by a rather long and slender nose, distinct, slightly rakish eyebrows, forthright eyes and a shapely mouth. The features in this early image are sharpened slightly to suggest classical sculpture, an effect enhanced by the pompous hair, a formal wig, piled high and hanging in long curls on both shoulders. The impression is almost masculine, especially as she is shrouded in a generous piece of drapery that conceals the outline of her figure. The overall effect is distinctly Augustan.

Of the three middle pictures two are undated, while the third, from 1806, is closest to the George Dance drawing dated c. 1808-1814. The two remaining pictures, like the others, present the subject in half-length in costumes varying radically from that of the 1787 bust. In each, Inchbald sports long, romantic hair, a more strikingly youthful and feminine appearance, and a more shapely outline. Thus while each picture shows the changes in artistic taste and style that marked the transitional period of the 1790's and early 1800's, each portrait likewise shows Inchbald's adaptation to her time.

Figure 2 shows the subject in a romantic pose, face resting gently on her left hand as she stares away from the audience as if in a reverie. The hair is again piled high, but the artist suggests the natual color of her curls, free from powder and cascading onto her bosom. Her countenance is softer, her eyes made particularly striking by hints of shadow. The mouth is familiar from the 1787 picture and the nose, softened,is still long and slender. This artist, possibly Thomas Lawrence, gives prominence to her chin and cheek bones, and overall creates the most flattering of the images. Her dress here is cut low in the bodice and is the most ornate of any she wears. A lacy handkerchief frames the neckline and is tied in a knot in the center, while soft white cuffs highlight the wrist that supports her cheek. The suggestion is of pre-Romantic influences, of a free-spirited woman confident of her talent and aware of the newer tastes in fashion that combine eighteenth-century love of ornament with softer lines and contours. If indeed this is the 1795 portrait to which Joughin refers, we find in this image of a liberal mind the author of the successful A Simple Story on the eve of publication of her second novel.

The next picture shows a pronounced simplification of dress as the subject now wears a light-colored Empire dress suggesting the Grecian lines favored

during the Regency. She looks remarkably like a heroine from a novel by Jane Austen. To the clean line of the dress is contrasted an exuberant plumed hat or turban, possibly suggesting an earlier date. Soft curls tumble down her back. The expression is similar, though plainer, than in the previous picture. Drummond captures a more austere visage, although the brow, nose, and lips confirm the authenticity of the subject. It is the portrait of a sensible woman, as if the face were cast to contrast with the extravagant headdress. The eyes look almost directly ahead, unlike the earlier sidewards glances. Behind the standing figure the artist suggests clouds, as if Inchbald had been painted out of doors rather than in the studio.

The portrait dated 1806 is, according to Joughin, by an unknown artist. It was used as the frontispiece for the British Theatre. Here the writer, now in her early fifties, retains the youthful appearance of a girl, although her dress suggests that of an older woman. The hair looks shorter, falling in soft curls only to her collar. She is seated rather stiffly in a small chair and her arms rest on a table as she stares directly at the viewer. The eyes are drawn with thicker lids, softening her frontal glance. The small pointed mouth and long slender nose seem unchanged in the decades since the theater portrait of 1787. There is a look of resignation about her, and an almost inquisitive stare at the viewer. A white handkerchief frames her neck and tucks into the modestly cut bodice of stiff-looking fabric on a dress of plain design. As the reputable Mrs. Inchbald of 1806, she wears a dark-colored dress lacking ornament, and only in this do we find a clue to her age and increasingly conservative tastes as she turned in her later years to serious concern with her religion.

The final drawing presents a profile of the author when she was a least fifty-five, and possibly as old as sixty-one. Finally we see age registered by the

artist, probably because of the less formal nature of the sitting. A matronly cap conceals most of her hair, and the plain dress, similar to the one in the 1806 portrait, suggests a severity in her appearance. The face is still intelligent, but quieter, caught in repose, suggesting introspection but neither pride nor vanity. The simplicity and "ordinary" tone reinforce the impression of her character found in the later diaries.

The overall impression that these assorted images of the artist suggest is one of a woman both of her time and for all time. She, like the art she created, is a parcel of contradictions: a dramatic novelist, a playwright of domestic realism. Inchbald developed works that are neither purely Augustan nor Romantic, yet she is not without a distinct literary voice. Hers is a sensibility responsive to the immediate problems of her society and at the same time prophetic of future trends; it questions the value of pure reason while rejecting the excesses of sentimentality. The portraits show a woman admired for, and conscious of, her beauty while the written record suggests one who was ever-cautious of letting vanity blind her to the needs of others. She altered her clothes or her hair to suit the fashion of the day in part because she objected to eccentricity, seeing it as a thin disguise for vanity, and in part as if to suggest that no fixed formulae were reliable in fashion or in art: one must not be afraid to adapt and experiment.

The contradictory, introspective and transitional character of her personality and her work explains her success, for she mirrors the dominant traits of her society. While there were certainly large segments of the reading public who retained staunch old-fashioned values, and a small portion who had already plunged into the avant-garde, many responded to the imminent social and political changes with cautious sympathy. For this public mood Inchbald's talents

were ideally suited. As her portraits suggest, she was an ideal vehicle for the sensibility of her era.

The dominant impression left by her portraits and diaries, and by her art, moreover, belies the notion held by many critics that this sensibility was one of compromise, this era one without an identity. Inchbald's spirit, like that of her age, was one of independence, where success was tempered with common sense and a respect for personal values. She did not mimic popular modes, but thoughtfully adapted them to accent her own strengths and minimize her weaknesses. Her personality, with its ability to observe, analyze, and sympathize, to employ intelligence, discipline, and wit, was also capable of detachment, generosity, enthusiasm, and energy.

To understand a writer like Elizabeth Inchbald, then, it is not enough merely to read her finished novel or a few of her plays, as so many previous critics have done. She is, like so many of her fellow writers in the late eighteenth century, especially the women writers, a figure who is best understood holistically, in the context of the popular culture where she made her greatest mark. Details of her private life and her physical characteristics are not without importance for an actress and a literary celebrity because the "identities" influence her writing. Earlier critics of Mrs. Inchbald had ignored the diaries because they were "lost" until now; but they have also virtually ignored the available material in the prefaces to The British Theatre where Inchbald, late in life, sketched out her ideas on the role of the artist. This lapse in scholarship has been largely responsbile for Mrs. Inchbald's disappearance from the annals of the "great tradition" of eighteenth-century literature. Even though she began her career emphatically as a popular artist, one determined to make money by her pen, it is short-sighted to assume that her commercial instincts

spoil her life's work. Her plays must not be read without an awareness of the stage history of the 1780's nor her novels studied in isolation from the literary circle in which she worked and the critical ideas she espoused in her essays. In other words, when greater care is taken to investigate Inchbald's work than has previously been alloted her, we begin to gain respect for the author and lose regard for her critics.

Taken together, then, her diaries and portraits represent a far more modest biographia literaria than that of her great contemporary Coleridge, but one that cannot be ignored if we wish to understand the role of lesser writers in the literary history of this fascinating period. By extension, we grow to appreciate the genius of those to whom literary history has been more kind, from Sheridan and Johnson to Byron, Shelley and Keats, all Inchbald's contemporaries. Or, to look at her place in the literary world from another angle, we can see that she produced her first play the same year that Samuel Johnson died, and she herself passed away in the same year as Keats. While longevity is certainly no criterion for fame, Inchbald's years are clearly important ones, spanning as she does the gap between the last Augustans and the young Romantics. Through her life and her work we not only begin to build a bridge between the two eras; we allow ourselves to consider the possibility that the chasm is illusory. Augustan and Romantic become not extreme shores but rather only convenient signposts on the map of a larger territory.

Endnotes to Chapter 1

[1]All biographical information is taken from Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald unless otherwise indicated.

[2]Boaden, I, 29.

[3]Little is known of the life of Joseph Inchbald other than what Boaden tells us; he worked as a portrait painter and pursued a second career of acting. Boaden refers to two sons, George and Robert, but fails to say whether these are the products of an earlier marriage or illegitimate, although his tone strongly suggests the latter. See p. 5 for further discussion.

[4]Elizabeth Inchbald, Diary and account book 1776-1820. This and all other references are the volumes in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. Volumes are catalogued M.a. 149-157, but for convenience will be cited by date. The Folger holds the volumes for 1776, 1780, 1781, 1783, 1788, 1807, 1808, 1814, and 1820. This excerpt is from the volume for 1776, M.a. 149, the entry for January. Month and occasionally date are the only reference; pages are unnumbered.

[5]Diary, January, 1776.

[6]Diary, February 19, 1776.

[7]Boaden, I, 45-46.

[8]It is clear from both her letters and her will that she took upon herself the burden of caring for many members of her family, and that her reputation for frugality in part grew from her need to help not only Inchbald's sons but her sisters and her mother as well. Her will is printed in Boaden, II, and a copy in her own handwriting with her signature is among the papers at the Folger, catalogue Y.d. 592. She left between five and six thousand pounds in bequests to friends and family at the time of her death on August 1, 1821.

[9]Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons are useful here.

[10]In an age easily prone to scandal, Inchbald's name remained quite free from romantic gossip. After her husband's death, Inchbald recorded simply "Kemble no lover" and thus we can be fairly certain that despite rumors, she never had an affair with Kemble, despite her lifelong affection for him. (See Boaden's list of "My Septembers," in vol. II).

[11]Samuel Littlewood, Mrs. Inchbald and Her Circle (London: O'Connor, 1921), p. 45.

[12]Boaden says she starts the novel in 1777 and completes one hundred pages of the first draft in two months. (I, 94).

[13]Among the papers once belonging to Inchbald and now in the Folger Library are others besides the memorandum books. While these include for the most part letters on business and a few brief social notes, there are also some severly damaged pages of interest for the evidence they offer of Inchbald's reading habits. Now torn, water damaged, and virtually illegible, this large handful of pages contained her record of books she read, with summaries or comments. While we can learn little of the content of these pages because of their physical state, we can perhaps derive an impression of their original form and purpose. They are crammed with Inchbald's irregular script, and are impressive for their length and seeming thoroughness. In part the notes probably served the practical purpose of working as memory aids to books she borrowed from friends. If we are to judge from these fragments she took the notion of self-education seriously. (So damaged are these papers that the Library has not catalogued them. I am extremely grateful to Dr. L. Yeandel, the manuscript librarian, for allowing me to examine them).

[14]Boaden, I, 93-4.

[15]Boaden, I, 103.

[16]Elizabeth Inchbald, Letter to William Godwin, 12 Sept. 1792. On microfilm in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, New York City.

[17]The London Stage is the best source of information on Inchbald's stage career, her salary, and her roles.

[18]Boaden discusses these friendships throughout Vol II. See also Littlewood, Kelly, and Cauwells for Inchbald's "circle."

[19]Elizabeth Inchbald, Letter to William Godwin, dated from content. On microfilm in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, New York City.

[20]Elizabeth Inchbald to William Godwin, 18 Sept. 1805. On microfilm in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, New York City.

[21]Biographers of Mary Wollstonecraft tend to be rather unsympathetic to Elizabeth Inchbald.

[22]Holcroft was imprisoned in 1794 in Newgate on charges of high treason primarily because of his active work in the Society for Constitutional Information; he was released after eight weeks but had to struggle to regain his popularity. (see Seamus Deans, "Introduction," in Thomas Holcroft, Hugh Trevor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. vii-viii.

[23]These are The Modern Theatre and A Collection of Farces and Afterpieces.

[24]See Boaden, II, p. 208 and 232-234, and 278.

[25]Boaden reproduces the table of contents called "My Septembers" which seems to be an outline for an autobiography, II, 258-260. The letter is in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library.

[26]Elizabeth Inchbald to William Godwin, Letter undated. On microfilm in the Carl H Pzorzheimer Library, New York City.

[27]Pope crowned Cibber with Duncehood in part because the poet objected to the vanity implicit in the publication of the playwright's Life. It is worth noting that in 1790 Inchbald began to translate Rousseau's Confessions (Boaden, II, 272-73).

[28]Boaden reproduces the will in II, 284-86. It is dated April 29, 1821 from Kensington House, Kensington.

[29]Linda Kelly, The Kemble Era (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 90.

[30]Boaden, I, 175-176.

[31]See Note #4 above.

[32]Diary, January, 1776.

[33]Virginia Woolf, "Women in Fiction" quoted in Michele Barrett, ed. Women and Writing (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1977), p. 44.

[34]Boaden gives the salary as two pounds per week in 1780 but notes that it went as high as five pounds in Dublin in 1782. (II, 132-33; 170). The London Theatre shows the salary as three pounds by 1784.

[35]Pope's satire on Lady Mary Montagu as the Sappho of diamonds and a dirty smock is a good example of how closely female virtue is associated with habits of cleanliness.

[36]I discuss the economic situation of women in more depth in Chapter II.

[37]See Chapter II for more details concerning the financial success of Inchbald's plays; she made over one hundred pounds for her first farce, The Mogul Tale, in 1784.

[38]Diary, 1778.

[39]Mrs. Wells, later Mrs. Sumbel, remembers her friend in several humorous anecdotes in her memoirs, contributing in part to Inchbald's reputation for frugality by her tales. Given the number of times Mrs. Sumbel herself was imprisoned or nearly imprisoned for debt, it is hardly surprising she would find Mrs. Inchbald's attempts to live within her means humorous, having herself no such discipline.

[40]It is unfortunate that the review is lost, or, if published, appears without her name. It is clear that much work is yet to be done in tracking down all of Inchbald's miscellaneous writing.

[41]The "women question" was discussed by many, but among the most valuable sources are Clara Reeve's Plans of Education (1792), Hannah More's

Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799), and Jane West's The Advantages of Education; or, the History of Maria Williams (1793). All post-date Inchbald's interest in "a proper education" in 1791.

[42]See Chapter III for an extended definition of this term.

[43]The comparison structure is used by Inchbald in A Simple Story and again in Nature and Art, where two brothers are contrasted on the basis of their different upbringing, one in civilized and one in primitive environments. Austen's titles--Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility--suggest her affinity with the earlier novelist.

[44]See Joughin, "Life," for a list of portraits, pp. 529-35.

[45]The five portraits chosen for examination cover the range of Inchbald's life. The first two are from eighteenth-century prints in my own collection; the third is reproduced by J.M.S. Tompkins in her edition of A Simple Story; the fourth appeared as the frontispiece to The British Theatre; the fifth is from the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Chapter Two

Her Anxious Hope: Elizabeth Inchbald's Apprenticeship on the Stage

Composition seems to be impossible, with a head
full of joints of mutton and doses of rhubarb.
Jane Austen

If John Philip Kemble affectionately called his friend the Tenth Muse, Elizabeth Inchbald was herself inclined to be less romantic than the great actor when she addressed the topic of inspiration:

> The Muses, I trust, will pardon me, that to them I do not feel myself obliged,—for, in justice to their heavenly inspirations, I believe they have never yet favoured me with one visitation; but sent in their disguise NECESSITY, who, being the mother of invention, gave me all mine—while FORTUNE kindly smiled, and was accessary to the cheat.[1]

Despite its place in the preface to her first novel, this ironic apology more accurately summarized Inchbald's situation in the decade before the success of A Simple Story in 1791. Necessity, as the author's biography reveals, was a daily preoccupation when she and her husband wandered in the provinces as poor actors. Even as late as 1806, when she was financially secure after a long and successful career as playwright and novelist, Inchbald recalled her early poverty as she sympathetically introduced Mrs. Centlivre in The British Theatre:

> When a man follows the occupation of a woman, or a woman the employment 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 objects of compassion, and mercy should be granted to their want of skill in their irregular departments.[2]

Inchbald's two prefaces, with their strong autobiographical overtones, capture in microcosm her public position on her role as a popular dramatist. However irrelevant to artistic achievement we might want to consider such factors as money and gender, they simply cannot be ignored if we are to arrive

at an accurate assessment of her career. The Muse Necessity must be considered a very real inspiration in a career as dependent on popular taste as Inchbald's. The second factor, gender, is likewise of significance to a fair evaluation of the achievement of Mrs. Inchbald. The prologues and epilogues of virtually all of her plays announce the fact of the author's sex and we would lose much be disregarding these proclamations, however dubious their intentions.

I shall begin my examination of Elizabeth Inchbald's emergence as a playright by looking at the facts of female authorship and financial motivation in the late eighteenth century. These factors alone, of course, do not sufficiently explain why this one woman was able to capture the applause of London theatre-goers for two decades, and to develop into a novelist of remarkable skill, but they provide the foundation for appreciating her success. The literary world of the 1780's, with its persistent note of sentimentalism, and the political and social world with its urgent note of reform and reaction, furnish the larger context for the analysis. As Marilyn Butler has argued in her recent study Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries:

> Books have a longer gestation than a few weeks or months, a larger cradle than one man's study. A book is made by its public, the readers it literally finds and the people in the author's eye. Literature, like all art, like language is a collective activity, powerfully conditioned by social forces... Within any community tastes, opinions, values, the shaping stuff of art, are socially generated. Though writers are gifted with tongues to articulate the Spirit of the Age, they are also moulded by the age. Culture is a social phenomenon, and its larger manifestations are not therefore to be understood without recourse to the disciplines of those who study society, whether anthropologists or sociologists or historians.[3]

If Butler's argument applies to the great literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it applies even more closely to the popular literature, to writers like Elizabeth Inchbald, whose dependence on popular taste makes them bend with the spirit of the age even as they forecast its direction.

To appreciate fully Inchbald's choice of profession and the uniqueness of her success we must give consideration to her status as a woman. To some degree her gender helps to explain her emphasis on "feeling" plays, not because women are more emotional than men, as many of her contemporaries argued, but rather because the new sensibility expressed in her plays was a compromise between what she wanted to say in her art and what the public, Butler's social forces would allow her, as a woman, to say; moreover, as a woman dependent for her income on the theater, she had to be sensitive to public taste and know just what the audiences would pay for and what they would not. Mrs. Inchbald, like so many of her sister writers in the eighteenth century, had good reason to avoid scandal if she wanted to continue making a living with her pen. In her recent study, Women Playwrights in England c. 1363-1750, Nancy Cotton outlines the history of opposition to women playwrights, arguing effectively that gender often determined the success or failure of a play, and by extension, a career. She points out that Aphra Behn, for instance, "began her career confident that the novelty of being a woman playwright would help rather than hinder her success," but "as soon as it became clear to the theatrical world that a woman was going to be a serious contender for money and prestige, resistance set in, and a cabal formed against Behn because of her sex." Cotton further notes that Behn soon became careful about flaunting her identity as a woman, and by 1677, "she brought out two plays, possibly three, anonymously. Among them was The Rover, the prologue of which specifically refers to the author as a man." When

Behn does resume using her name on title pages with the appearance of Sir Patient Fancy in 1678, she defends herself forcefully in the epilogue:

> I here and there o'erheard a Coxbomb cry,
> Ah, Rot it—'tis a Woman's Comedy.
> .....
> Why in this Age has Heaven allow's you more,
> And Women less of Wit than heretofore? We
> once were fam'd in story, and could write
> Equal to Men; cou'd govern, nay, cou'd fight.[4]

Cotton studies the careers of Behn's successors, Catherine Trotter, Delariviere Manley, Mary Pix, Susanna Centlivre, and several lesser known women to illustrate the difficulties, or restrictions, faced by women who wrote for the stage in the first half of the eighteenth century. She concludes that two typical personae emerge in the lives of the two best known figures, Astrea (Behn) and Orinda (Katharine Philips). The "Orindas often felt guilty about adventuring in print" since they came from aristocratic families that thought the role of a writer unseemly for women, while the "Astreas often felt guilty about adventuring in life," especially if the adventuring led to public scandal that threatened their income. These two roles later develop into familiar stereotypes—"of the 'lady writer' and 'the female adventuress'..." Writers' attempts to reconcile these "antithetical personae account for some of the anomalies of their careers."[5] Cotton cites the example of Catherine Trotter, who wrote because of economic distress; on the one hand Trotter "set up as a feminist and wit," publishing The Revolution in Sweden with feminist heroines (against the advice of William Congreve), while at the same time "to maintain her respectability she wrote such heavily moralized plays that she failed

commercially, thus losing the income for which she had originally turned to the stage." Finally, Cotton turns to Susanna Centlivre, who, she claims, "eventually found a successful compromise between the Orinda and Astrea modes. Behn wrote comedy of witty sex intrigue; Centlivre moved to 'laughing comedy' with an improved moral tone."[6]

Almost exactly a century after Centlivre's successful play The Busy Body had opened, Mrs. Inchbald published the critical preface quoted earlier. Her feelings for Centlivre suggest that if, as Cotton argues, Centlivre had "solved" the problem of women's roles as writers for the stage, she solved it only for herself; the next few generations of female authors would continue to suffer the effects of prejudice and feel painful ambivalence about their choice of profession, as Inchbald's reference to such writing as an "irregular department" for women suggests. As Inchbald continues in her review of The Busy Body for The British Theatre to narrate the sad tale of Centlivre's life, she might as well have been writing her autobiography. Centlivre, Inchbald relates, "became an actress;—but, notwithstanding her youth, her wit, and her beauty, she was unsuccessful in that profession. To avoid the alternative, female profligacy, or domestic drudgery, she now encountered the masculine enterprise of an author..."[7] Yet in contrast to the careers of her predecessors, Inchbald's life is remarkable for the quiet normality of her years as a writer. If her marriage was brief and unhappy, her later years show her determination to avoid the pitfalls that threatened her independence. She kept to modest lodgings, even when she could afford luxurious ones, and, while encouraging friends, declined suitors.[8] This disciplined style of living was Inchbald's method of maintaining public respect, and unlike Behn, Trotter, and her own contemporary Wollstonecraft, keeping her audience.

Another factor determined Inchbald's greater chances of survival over those of other women writers in the eighteenth century; she maintained, until 1789, her position as an actress. While the three pounds a week she earned as a member of the Covent Garden Company certainly made her life smoother by assuring the necessities of everyday life, this second occupation had another consequence.[9] Her participation in the world of the London stage placed her at the center of an artistic community, a network of writers, critics, managers, publishers, actors and actresses, and thus counterbalanced the isolation of her private life. This theater experience taught her many skills that earlier women writers lacked the opportunity to learn, either because of their aristocratic background or the instability of their personal lives; neither the Orindas or the Astreas, as Professor Cotton defines them, served so long or so fruitful an apprenticeship as Inchbald. Thus from the immediacy of acting before a live audience Inchbald learned the importance of tightly unified, effectively paced dramatic structures. Characters, dialogue, and stage business had to advance the plot as well as be intrinsically stageworthy. The personalities and limitations of actors and actresses had to be considered in the delineation of stage characters. When Inchbald began to write for the stage she had more than ten years of practical training behind her, far more than most women writers of her day could claim. By extension, when she began to write novels, Inchbald carried these techniques and skills into her prose, and accomplished her task in A Simple Story with more professional assurance than would otherwise have been possible for a woman of limited experience. The support of an artistic community likewise offered the writer opportunities for serious critical debate, technical advice, and business expertise shared by few women. Perhaps only Mary Wollstonecraft, through her work with the publisher Joseph Johnson, surpassed

Inchbald in overcoming the isolation that caused so much of the women's writing of the day to become flabby and prolix.[10] Despite Mary Wollstonecraft's very active participation in the intellectual circle that included Blake and Fuseli, it is worth noting that Inchbad had already produced a dozen plays and sold her first novel by the time A Vindication of the Rights of Woman was published in 1792. If Wollstonecraft was attempting to lay the theoretical basis for women's rights, Inchbald had already tackled the same issue by more practical means. Where the former succeeded by emotional intensity, the latter gained by superior craftsmanship, thanks in large part to the discipline of her theater apprenticeship.

The prologues to Inchbald's plays illustrate both her situation as a woman author and the current popular ideas about women's rights, ideas that surely contributed to the Vindication. Written by her friends and theater colleagues, these prologues suggest that while the theater had undergone many changes since the days of Behn's Sir Patient Fancy, the presence of a woman's name as author of a play was still unusual. George Colman, when introducing I'll Tell You What, decided to use the author's sex as a selling point, rather than attempting to disguise it. Unlike Behn's prologue to Sir Patient Fancy, this one illustrates a curiously ambiguous or transitional attitude towards female authors that prevailed in the later eighteenth century. Colman opened the prologue boldly:

> Our Author, is a Woman—that's a
> Charm
> Of Power to guard herself and Play from
> harm. The Muses, Ladies Regent of the
> Pen,
> Grant Women skill, and Force, to write
> like Men. Yet they, like the AEolian
> Maid of Old, Their Sex's Character will
> ever hold:
> Not with bold Quill too roughly strike
> the Lyre,

But with the Feather raise a soft
Desire.[11]

While women writers require the masculine attributes of "Skill, and Force," Colman is quick to qualify his praise by assuring the audience that these characteristics are softened, or feminized in I'll Tell You What. The need for qualification is similarly expressed in the prologue to Such Things Are, staged in 1787, when Thomas Vaughan asks the audience:

Are you all friends?—or here—and there-
-a foe?
Come to protect your literary trade,
Which Mrs. Scribble dares again invade—
But know you not—in all the fair ones do,
'Tis not to please themselves alone—but
you.
(I, Prologue)

Both prologues work on the assumption that the audience will be hostile to a woman playwright and attempt to ward off the expected attacks by portraying the author as meek and without artistic pretensions. That women were "invading" traditionally male territory to the extent that men felt threatened and desirous "to protect (their) literary trade" from the usurpers suggests the success women were having as authors.

The conceit of female humility and softness continues in the prologue to The Midnight Hour, a farce produced in 1787:

Sent by the fair your mercy to
implore,
Who sins again, tho' pardon'ed oft before,
What arts of rhet'rick can your pity
move, Disarm your anger, and excite
your love!
All, all are vain; nor can I well defend
her, Who is, at writing plays, an old
offender.
(I, Prologue)

The prologues of play after play repeat the pattern of trumpeting the author's sex, and a few lines later, apologizing for her "sins," her offenses, in daring to write at all. Such prologues served a practical purpose in addressing the opposing camps represented in the audience and attempting to lull each into sympathy with the new play. The female writer, after all, like the hot-air balloon or the North American Savage, was a kind of spectacle sure to entice viewers into the theater. To the more thoughtful members of the audience, however, the wit of the prologues only thinly disguised what was in fact a pressing social issue; Wollstonecraft's Vindication was only one of many pamphlets and essays being written on the "woman question."[12] For a popular playwright, and a profit-oriented theater manager like Colman, the social question could be exploited for its ability to draw an audience but not allowed to dampen the success of the evening with serious controversy or debate. Thus the prologues celebrate and almost simultaneously deflate the topic of women authors. In only a few instances does a different tone suggest more commitment to the female cause, among them the prologue to All on a Summer's Day.

This play was a disaster, Inchbald's first failure, closing after the first night and never revived by later publication. The prologue, written by Henry S. Woodfall, Jr., who also wrote the prologue for The Midnight Hour, is mock-heroic:

> When haughty man usurp'd fair learning's
> throne
> And made the Empire of the stage his
> own
> He rul'd a realm where Genius seldom
> smil'd
> And Nonsense hail'd him as her darling
> child.
> And oft when meaner subjects would
> avail

Rais'd the loud laugh by Gammer
Gurton's tale
Bard follow's Bard, yet few could justly
claim
The laurell'd trophies of a lasting name
'Till gentle woman seiz'd the pen and
writ
And shone not less in beauty than in wit.
Woman! by honest emulation fir'd
By sense directed & by wit inspir'd
Sportive, yet elegant; tho' pointed,
chaste,
To mend our manners & refine our taste:
Man from her learnt the fascinating art
To please the fancy, captivate the heart
And paint the scenes of happiness and
strife The various scenes that chequer
human life.
(I, Prologue)

Once again the question of the morality of the stage is central to praise for women writers; the refinement of manners, the "gentle" but witty woman who can amuse us at the same time she reforms, is the subject of Woodfall's praise. The historical perspective of the poem is difficult to measure; just how long ago did "haughty man" seize learning's throne for himself? If the allusion to Gammer Gurton's Needle is a clue, are we to assume that women ruled the learned world in the sixteenth century? Aphra Behn evoked the same mythical world of powerful women in her prologue to Sir Patient Fancy, cited previously: "We once were fam'd in story, and could write/ Equal to Men; cou'd govern, nay cou'd fight." Behn's Golden Age, or Amazonian paradise, is a vision that rises from her anger at the injustice with which she felt her play was treated because of her sex; Woodfall's prologue owes any energy it has to the Dunciad or MacFlecknoe.

One additional example from a much later play (1793) is sufficient to illustrate the nature of the argument about women writers that continued in the prologues to Inchbald's plays:

Our Author, who accuses great and
small,
And says so boldly, there are faults in
all;
Sends me with dismal voice, and
lengthen'd phiz,
Humbly to own one dreadful fault of his:
A fault, in modern Authors not
uncommon,
It is,—now don't be angry—He's—a
woman.
....
The Rights of Women, says a female
pen, Are, to do every thing as well as
Men.
To think, to argue, to decide, to write,
To talk, undoubtedly—perhaps, to fight.
....
I grant their nature, and their frailty
such, Women may make too free—and
know too much.
But since the Sex at length had been
inclin'd
To cultivate that useful part—the mind;-
Since they have learned to read, to
write, to spell;—
Since some of them have wit,--and use
it well;—
Let us not force them back with brow
severe,
Within the pale of ignorance and fear,
Confin'd entirely to domestic arts,
Producing only children, pies, and tarts,
The fav'rite fable of the tuneful Nine,
Implies that female genuis is divine.
(II, Prologue)

The later date of Every One Has His Fault, for which this prologue was written, suggests that perhaps the French Revolution and Wollstonecraft's Vindication had caused some changes in popular thinking on the subject of women playwrights. The interval from the Restoration to the Revolution, on the whole, was marked by advances in the status of women authors, but whatever gains were made were celebrated cautiously, as even the later prologue suggests. Despite the disavowals of ambition that mark all the prologues to her plays, moreover,

Inchbald clearly differed from her predecessors in at least one significant way: financially. However uncertain the evidence concerning Behn's life, for instance, most recent studies agree that she died in illness and poverty, even though she wrote at a feverish pace in her last years.[13] In reviewing Centlivre's life, Inchbald reminds us that the earlier writer entered her third marriage, to Mr. Centlivre, "yeoman to the mouth" or principal cook to Queen Anne, much aware of the financial failure of her previous husbands:

> She now united herself to a man, whose very title promised her protection from that ancient and modern visitation upon authors, denominated—hunger.[14]

If Inchbald is joking about Mr. Centlivre's profession, she is not far from the real fears that plagued Mrs. Centlivre's earlier years; poverty and exile were experiences she and Inchbald held in common.[15] Unlike Susanna Centlivre, though, Mrs. Inchbald looked for financial security exclusively from her writing, and thus her financial success sets her apart from her dramatic predecessors, who had other if often not very creditable sources of income to maintain them if they failed on stage.

References to money are never far from Inchbald's mind when she writes about her motives for becoming a dramatist. However incidental these concerns may be to her ultimate artistic achievement, they cannot be ignored if we are to appreciate the uniqueness of her career. The fact that she maintained financial independence entirely by her writing marks Mrs. Inchbald as a pioneer. Her success with I'll Tell You What explains a remark with which she prefaced one of her plays in The British Theatre:

> When it is inquired, why painting, poetry, and sculpture, decline in England? "Want of encouragement," is the sure reply--but this reply cannot be given to the question, "Why dramatic literature fails?" for never was there such high remuneration conferred upon every person, and every work, belonging to the drama.[16]

The truth of her remark is supported by a passage in the memoirs of a contemporary playwright, John O'Keeffe, who recalled that in 1788 an ambitious playwright could indeed receive "high remuneration" if he were industrious; he himself earned three hundred and fifty pounds "for nights and copyright" of The Toy, or Hampton Court Frolics, and the same amount for The Highland Reel. He comments:

> Thus, in one season, I brought out a five-act comedy, a three-act opera, a two-act after piece, and a pantomime; all successful. Dryden could not furnish the theatre with one play a year; therefore, though no Dryden, I may be allowed, at least, to exult on the score of industry--to get a little ready money.[17]

After productivity like hers and O'Keeffe's, it is perhaps no wonder that Inchbald perceived the arts to be in a "decline in England" twenty years later. O'Keeffe's remark likewise reveals that Inchbald was earning on a par with a male playwright of roughly equivalent talent and ambition. A closer look at her finances offers persuasive evidence of her ability to make a living exclusively by her pen.

At the time of I'll Tell You What, Inchbald was acting with the Covent Garden Company at a weekly salary of three pounds. She increased her income by joining the Haymarket Theatre during the summer season when Covent

Garden was dark. Thus we can estimate her annual salary from acting alone at about one hundred and fifty pounds a year. This is, judging from the records in The London Stage, just about average for a company member. A few made as little as a pound or two a week, and more regular performers five or six pounds.[18] In the case of a major star, as I shall show with Sarah Siddons, the salary and benefits could rise to astronomical heights. The real value of such an income as Inchbald earned on the stage is difficult to assess, but we can measure its worth in comparative terms. According to M. Dorothy George's London Life in the Eighteenth Century, the average yearly income per family by 1803, for artisans and laborers with between four and five persons per family, was about fifty-five pounds.[19] This figure in contrast to similar statistics calculated for 1688, when the equivalent amount was forty pounds, suggests that income for a member of the artisan class rose at a modest rate, if we ignore for the moment the question of inflation. On the other hand, the same tables show the truth of Inchbald's claim that the playwright's potential for earning was great. In 1696, according to Professor George, the group of people classed in the field of "Liberal arts and sciences (medical, literary, and fine arts)" earned a yearly average income of sixty pounds, with an average household size of five. While the size of the household remained the same as 1803, the income increased to two hundred and sixty pounds. In other words, artists had made significant gains during the eighteenth century until by the beginning of the nineteenth century they were earning about five times as much as artisans and laborers, again discounting the effects of inflation, which were especially great after 1793. In another study, George provides even more detail about the real value of money:

> To the difficult question of the spending power of wages there can be no definite

> answer, but some light is thrown by budgets presented to Quarter Sessions in 1779 by journeymen saddlers as evidence that their wages were too low. They are estimates of the expenses of a London "working man and his family consisting of a wife and three children."[20]

The totals presented in these budgets provide some real sense of dollar values during Inchbald's apprentice years; they show beef at three and a half pence a pound, tea at four and a half pence an ounce with estimated weekly consumption costing the family 11¼d, and lodging at two shillings sixpence, among other items. George finds the budgets somewhat unconvincing, being too low to include items such as beer; they look, she says, "like the joint production of a number of unmarried journeymen intent on impressing the justice favourably.[21] Nevertheless, George concludes that the figures "show something of the standard of living." More revealing information focuses on London trade wages for 1786, the year before I'll Tell You What, when saddlers' wages "were given as from 14s. to 16s. a week." Printers did better, as compositors could earn as much as 24s. "for a week of six twleve-hour days in 1777. They rose in 1785...to 27s., in 1800 to...36s., and to...48s. in 1805."[22]

However uneven, these figures at least roughly suggest that Inchbald's theater income of three pounds a week was very respectable, being on the average three times that of a skilled tradesman. Significant, of course, is the fact that most of the trades workers were men. Employment opportunities for women desiring to earn their own incomes were distinctly limited, and paid a good deal less. The textile workers, for example, who included spinners or weavers, sometimes women, generally earned wages "below those of other artisans." Spinners and weavers in one sail-cloth factory included workers "of both sexes from the age of seven to seventy." In 1771, these workers complained

of being able to earn only a maximum of 9s. a week.[23] The aversion to "female drudgery" that Inchbald cites as the lurking alternative to theater life is perhaps best explained by many examples George furnishes of the "poverty and distress and great irregularity of work" that existed in eighteenth-century London. After citing numerous cases of starvation, illness, and lack of opportunity that plagued the city, she concludes:

> It is significant that all the victims should have been women; there can be little doubt that the hardships of the age bore with especial weight upon them. Social conditions tended to produce a high proportion of widows, deserted wives, and unmarried mothers, while women's occupations were over-stocked, ill-paid and irregular.[24]

A single example makes the case. Spitalfields, the great center of the silk trade in London, was a major employer of women, though conditions and opportunities varied greatly. In 1769, for instance, an agreement was passed to keep women out of the trade unless Great Britain went to war: then "every manufacturer shall be at liberty to employ women or girls" as needed. Wages were still extremely low. One master weaver hired a woman, in 1760, as a silkwinder, paying her a mere three shillings a week.[15]

Such figures cast light on the attractiveness of a life in the theater, where the more popular actresses could earn as much as ten or eleven pounds a week, while an extremely popular figure like Sarah Siddons earned the remarkable sum of twenty-four pounds ten shillings weekly during the 1785-86 season.[26] For this salary she was expected to appear on the stage at Drury Lane not less than three times a week. In addition to her regular salary, moreover, Siddons collected substantial amounts from her benefits, and the very high fees she earned during

her summer tours. Her income reached between four and five thousand pounds a year by the time she retired in 1812.[27] By 1786, she had realized a dream:

> I have at last...attained the ten thousand pounds which I set my heart upon, and am now at ease with respect to fortune...[28]

Thus she writes to her friends the Whalleys. Clearly, Mrs. Siddons' position is that of a great star, and her salary cannot be used as a standard for measuring the income of ordinary actresses any more than in our own century John Lennon's or Elvis Presley's earnings tell us about the salaries of mediocre rock and roll singers. Still, Siddons' success, like that of her modern counterparts, inspired others to hope.

Mrs. Siddons' earnest intensity to secure her future rose in part from the unreliability of her husband, in part from her increasing family, and in part from her fear of being upstaged by a younger actress. This last fear was never realized, however, as her popularity grew with the years and she sensibly chose roles suited to her age. By the 1809-10 season, she contracted with Thomas Harris to appear at Covent Garden following the disastrous fire that destroyed Drury Lane in 1808. She received "50 guineas for each normal appearance" and more for a benefit night.[29]

Inchbald no doubt had such figures in mind when she said that "never was there such high remuneration conferred" upon those associated with the drama. Her own life illustrates in less sensational, but more realistic, terms the "high remuneration" of the theater, reflecting as it did the earning potential not of the best, but of the average actress. While her own salary was usually three pounds a week for acting, as I discussed earlier, she supplemented her acting with

writing for the stage. She sold her first farce, The Mogul Tale, for one hundred guineas in 1784. I'll Tell You What opened in the 1784-85 season at the Haymarket and played for twenty nights, an impressive run. Fortunately a detailed record of the income from the author's benefit night survives in a Treasurer's Account from the theater. This bill shows that on August 13, the night of Inchbald's benefit, the theater netted £ 164.17.0. There were 1096 spectators. After theater charges had been deducted, the author collected £101.17.0. The play was performed fourteen times during August, 1785, and such was Inchbald's popularity that on two occasions it was followed by her afterpiece, The Mogul Tale, and on August 17 was staged "By Command of Their Majesties."[30] All of this was clearly a far cry from winding silk in Spitalfields at three shillings a week.

It is worth taking a closer look at her roles as an actress during these years; her stage experience shows the diversity required of any practicing actor or actress and illustrates just how she earned her salary. From the variety of roles she played, from farce and sentimental excess, to laughing comedy and historic pageant, the young woman gained valuable skills she would employ when she wrote her plays, and, in different ways, her novels.

A good sample of Inchbald's roles can be gained from a survey of the 1783-84 theater season, the theatric year that preceded the opening of The Mogul Tale on July 6, 1784. In October, 1783, she played the Queen in Hamlet. On October 14, she appeared as Sukey Tawdry in The Beggar's Opera. In The Spanish Friar the next night she played Leonora. During November she was Anne Bullen in King Henry the Eighth, celebrated on the playbill for the "Procession from the Abbey at the Coronation of Anne Bullen." The Castle of Andalusia was staged on November 19, and Mrs. Inchbald played Florimel. The new year saw her in a

sentimental role as Lavinia in The Fair Penitent. The same month she appeared as the elder Constantia in The Chances and then as Lady Percy in King Henry the Fourth. More Shakespeare in January was deemed likely to succeed, so she portrayed Lady Blanche in King John. In February Inchbald acted the role of Miss Mortimer in The Chapter of Accidents, a play by the novelist Sophia Lee based on Diderot's Le Pere de Famille. In Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, adapted like The Chances from a play by John Fletcher, Inchbald acted Margaretta on March 6, 1784. A noteworthy afterpiece followed this main performance, for Inchbald played Elmira in The Sultan which may have suggested The Mogul Tale. On May 26 the successful actress was invited to Drury Lane for a guest appearance as Mrs. Allworth in A New Way to Pay Old Debts. In May she also moved to the Haymarket, where on the 29th she acted in a comedy by the theater's prolific proprietor, George Colman the Elder, entitled A Separate Maintenance. Her next entrance is especially important to her career. On July 6 she began the evening as Miss Morris in The Fatal Curiosity and concluded it as one of the harem ladies in the premiere of her own afterpiece, The Mogul Tale. In August she played Anna in John Home's popular Douglas and later Olivia in The Good-Natur'd Man. Her increased popularity following The Mogul Tale and I'll Tell You What is suggested by two performances with which she ended the year of 1785. She was invited to Drury Lane to play Caelia in Volpone and then the more demanding role of Lady Sneerwell in The School for Scandal.

Clearly many of these plays are of transitory literary value, and suggest that the stage was in need of new directions to freshen the scenery of Spanish abbeys and Italian dungeons that so often prevailed. In any case, the season of 1783-84 provided Mrs. Inchbald, who had turned thirty on October 15, 1783, with an enormous range of theater experiences. Comedy, tragedy, farce, sentimental

drama, were all part of her regular working life. Elizabeth Inchbald identified the areas in which she recognized her greatest potential strength as a writer; first, traditional comedy, and later, more thoughtful comedy that appealed to the feeling mind. She seems to have found the diversity a stimulant to creativity.

The theater, then, offered many attractions to help a woman overcome any reservations she might harbor about entering a masculine profession. Moreover, because of the efforts by such successful actresses as Mrs. Bracegirdle and Sarah Siddons herself to live without scandal, the image of the theater was changing. The equation of the actress with the prostitute that was almost automatic in the late seventeenth century gradually yielded to a more reputable image of the actress as a paragon of the "moralized" values becoming prevalent on the stage. It is not surprising, then, that despite her sincere sympathy with Susanna Centlivre's personal difficulties, Inchbald could still censure the lack of delicacy in some of her plays. In the preface to A Bold Stroke for a Wife, with which Inchbald introduced her predecessor's play in The British Theater, we find a more strident tone than the one that she used in her earlier discussion of Centlivre's The Busy Body.

> The happy effect of the moral dramas of this aera, 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 former ill consequences, from former plays.
>
> Mrs. Centlivre, as a woman, falls more particularly under censure than her cotemporary writers...the authoress of this comedy should have laid down her pen, and taken, in exchange, the meanest implement of labour, rather than have

> imitated the licentious example given her by the renowned poets of those days (i.e. 1718.)[31]

If this attack on Centlivre seems to contradict Inchbald's earlier sympathy in her preface to The Busy Body, the two points of view offer clues to Inchbald's dilemma as a woman author, and likewise illustrate her value as a kind of time capsule of popular value.

Inchbald's own plays remain remarkably free from bawdy or even suggestive scenes without losing their wit. The closet scene in I'll Tell You What hinges on the very virtue of the characters, for instance, highlighting the fact that no illicit behavior has taken place, whatever the appearances suggest. While there may have been personal reasons for Inchbald's almost priggish moral attitudes, there are also practical ones. Chastity, as she would argue illustratively in A Simple Story, was necessary for a woman's survival in many circumstances. An unwed girl with a child who found herself with no income was not only a worthy subject for fiction, but a real victim of society. Fashionable vices led, as often as not, to unhappy lives, to the broken and fragmentary relationships Inchbald was already sketching in her plays. Virtue was not some abstract moral lesson for her, but a necessary condition for independence for a woman without the protection of a husband. Clearly, the issue of a woman's reputation was also a class issue; while rich women could use money to pay for their mistakes, poor women paid in more personal terms. If Inchbald cast her glance back on the theater of Aphra Behn's day, she no doubt saw a stage that resisted the encroachments of women, and she blamed the opposition on the bawdy nature of the drama. Behn's attempts to "write like a man" met with disaster as far as her personal life and reputation were concerned; she died in poverty. Inchbald, determined to avoid a similar fate, saw the inevitable

solution. If women were to stay on the stage, both as actresses and as authors, their plays, and by extension their lives, had to conform to the middle-class values of the audience. If the theater returned to its former "immoral" state, it would be a less comfortable and less profitable place for women. In order to maintain one of the few employment opportunities available, women had to be discreet in their choice of material. Clearly in Inchbald's case the aversion for immoral material was deeply rooted; she would probably have taken her own advice to Centlivre and stopped writing plays if their success had had to depend on bawdy content.

The pragmatism of such a theory of chastity as the one just outlined would have been too blunt for her to acknowledge; nevertheless, it clearly emerges from her novels and plays and her prose writing. Such a theory also reconciles the apparently disparate sides of her nature: her sure wit and intelligence, her flirtatious personality, and her charm, and on the other side her rather rigid moral views and her intolerance of those, like Mary Wollstonecraft, who violated conventional codes of behavior.

A moderate feminism rooted in pragmatic morality is one of Inchbald's defining features, then; a woman in her view could establish her independence and maintain her personal dignity, given the nature of eighteenth-century life, only if she kept her reputation. This view applied to married and unmarried women alike, and Inchbald is one of the first authors to set both plays and novels in the households of married couples in order to emphasize this point. Quite clearly, any ideas about the indelicacy of a woman turning author are answered by the financial rewards the profession promised and the justification that Necessity, the tenth muse, inspired her work. If Inchbald could wage a campaign to keep the stage a respectable place, talented women would have an alternative

to Spitalfields drudgery that was both profitable and proper. She proved her point by bequeathing her family and friends between five and six thousand pounds when she died in 1821, and likewise leaving them the memory of a woman whose success was untarnished by scandal.

More important to the modern reader, Inchbald's personal morality in part explains her artistic themes and her humanitarianism, her "feeling mind," and helps us place her in the context of her culture. The more traditional interpretation of Inchbald's position in literary history is summarized by George Sherburn when he writes about the history of the novel in England after 1760:

> The incurably sentimental tone of most novels of this period is in part due to feminine influence. Women were the novel-reading public, and there were a surprising number of women novelists.[32]

He lists among the "surprising" writers Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Scott, Frances Sheridan, Frances Brooke and

> ...a further train of other ladies somewhat too seriously sentimental for long popularity. These would include Mrs. Elizabeth Griffith, Clara Reeve, Charlotte Smith, and the romantic Mrs. Inchbald.[33]

When he turns to her drama, Sherburn again dismisses Inchbald with a single adjective, though he finds the drama "humanitarian" rather than "romantic." Neither label is very accurate, and it is difficult to know whether it is her novels or her personality that Professor Sherburn finds "romantic." As Marilyn Butler argues:

> Thought is the prisoner of language, and twentieth-century thinking about

> early nineteenth-century literature is cramped by a single formidable word: Romantic.[34]

If the term confuses our perceptions of the great writers to whom it is most commonly attached, surely it obscures even more our understanding of someone like Inchbald, writing during the 1780's and 1790's, and, as I shall argue, rejecting many of the values most commonly associated with the term; declining, in fact, with a degree of firmness, an invitation to meet that most romantic of all poets, Lord Byron.[35]

Of much more use is Butler's analysis of the period from 1760 to 1790 as an age of revolution:

> The most obvious feature common to all the arts of Western nations after 1750 was the refusal to validate the contemporary social world--even though, to the retrospective eye, those who lived in society were never so prosperous, powerful, or (presumably) happy. The art of the late eighteenth century fell decidedly out of love with material possessions: there was little of the affectionate rendering of silks and fripperies of the rococo art fashionable earlier in the century, and none of the greedy, acquisitive dwelling on things which afterwards characterized the nineteenth-century middle-class taste which has become known as Biedermeier. The strongest single tendency of late eighteenth-century art was to reject the ephemeral in favour of the essential, and the search for purity often took the form of a journey into the remote.[36]

And it is as a moderate representative of this particular revolution in taste that Inchbald is most sympathetically and accurately identified. Just as her portraits show a gradual simplification of personal style, so her life and her art share the

rejection of material possessions and "the acquisitive dwelling on things" which Butler characterizes as revolutionary in this period.

Just as the revolutionary taste rejected the material possessions of the rococo past, so, Butler continues, did it reject the personal extravagances, the premium placed on fashionable vices such as gambling and debauchery. In asserting her preference for a chaste and frugal life, then, Inchbald herself as well as the heroines she created belong more accurately in the transitional era between what is commonly labeled rococo and what is broadly termed romantic. To call her on the one hand romantic, and on the other humanitarian is, finally, a contradiction:

> Romantic rebelliousness is more outrageous and total, the individual rejecting not just his own society but the very principle of living in society—which means that the Romantic and post-Romantic often dismisses political activity of any kind, as external to the self, literal and commonplace. Since it is relatively uncommon for the eighteenth-century artist to complain directly on his own behalf, he seldom achieves such emotional force as his nineteenth-century successor. He is, on the other hand, much more inclined than the Romantic to express sympathy for certain well-defined social groups. Humanitarian feeling for the real-life underdog is a strong vein from the 1760's to the 1790's, often echoing real-life campaigns for reform.[37]

In one sense Professor Sherburn's separation of Inchbald the humanitarian playwright from Inchbald the romantic novelist does point toward a genuine and important difference in her art when she changes genres, as I shall argue; to dismiss her work with little more than two adjectives, however, is unjust. The

closer definition of the social currents of late eighteenth-century society furnished by Marilyn Butler prepares the reader for a more thoughtful and more fruitful study of both Elizabeth Inchbald and the art of the "feeling mind." Against this background, we can turn to a close examination of her plays.

It is only by coincidence that 1772, the year when the young Elizabeth Simpson ran away from home to begin her career as an actress, is within months of the first appearance of Oliver Goldsmith's "An Essay on the Theatre" in The Westminister Magazine.[38] Nevertheless, the comparison, or, more accurately, the conflict, between "laughing" and "weeping" comedy brought to critical attention by Goldsmith's famous campaign against sentimentalism, provides a springboard for identifying the theater as Inchbald inherited it, and for appreciating her role in transforming many of its fashions.

When Oliver Goldsmith wrote "An Essay on the Theatre: Or, a Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy" he was particularly outraged at the success of writers like Richard Cumberland, whose The Fashionable Lover had wept its way to success the previous year. Yet Goldsmith's essay set the tone for criticism of sentimental comedy for years to come. His vitriolic mockery both of the writers and their dramas has left modern critics embarrassed even to attempt the reclamation of "weeping comedy." Early critics such as Ernest Bernbaum approached sentimental comedy by way of apology. In his seminal study The Drama of Sensibility (1915) Bernbaum proposed that "confidence in the goodness of average human nature" was the source of this breed of comedy that "exhibited faith in the natural impulses of contemporary middle-class people," so that unlike Goldsmith, Bernbaum is convinced of the sincerity of the characters' behaviors, and, by implication, the authors' as well.[39] Critics writing after the publication of The Drama of Sensibility have praised, expanded, contradicted or

defied Bernbaum in an attempt to reach a more satisfying explanation of the phenomenon of "weeping comedy." John Harrington Smith traces the decline of the "gay couple" of Restoration drama and the rise of the type of heroine and hero who were "serious, sententious, sincere" in The Gay Couple in Restoration Drama (1948).[40] He notes that a shift from anti-marriage attitudes in comedies to those that favored and even glorified wedlock led to situations where sincerity was to be recommended for females because "through insincerity and affectation a woman could lose a desirable man." The implication that the sentimental mode mirrored changes in society that would restrict the independence of women is important in an era when more and more women were authors.

In a more recent study, Arthur Sherbo argues that sentimental comedy is almost always "sophisticated and deliberately calculated; simplicity and sincerity seldom have a place in it."[41] He has thus reversed Bernbaum's dictum, reading the characters with a more cynical eye and moving back to Goldsmith's position that the writers and the characters are hypocritical in their emotional outpourings. Unsatisfied with Sherbo's conclusions, Paul Parnell attempted, in a series of articles published in the 1960's, to discover why sentimentality grates so strongly on the feelings of modern readers or audiences and concludes that the sentimental character is engaged in a process of rationalization for the increase of his or her own self-esteem, but is unconscious of the inherent hypocrisy of the position. Parnell argues that while the true motivation is insincere, the character is emphatic about his or her own sincerity; or, as he explains, "sentimental thinking is balanced delicately between hypocrisy and sincerity, simplicity and duplicity, self-consciousness and spontaneity."[42] The audience that is made uneasy by sentimental comedy is one that is sensitive to these

uncomfortable contradictions, more likely a modern audience aware of Freudian interpretations of such behavior. However, a pre-Freudian audience, Parnell argues, might take the deception as the character did, and because such an audience identified with the character it would be rewarded with a vicarious boost of its own self-esteem. The popularity of sentimental plays, then, is attributed to the increased self-esteem with which the audience emerged from the theater. Parnell has, for all the psychological sophistication of his argument, essentially affirmed Gldsmith's assertion that sentimental comedy unjustifiably manipulated the emotions of the audience and succeeded on dubious principles.

Only recently has a study of stage comedy in Garrick's day found a more workable strategy for weighing Goldsmith's criticism. In The Laughing Tradition,[43] Richard Bevis closely examines the theater Goldsmith maligned for its weeping excesses, to discover that, contrary to the impression etched into literary history by "An Essay on the Theatre," sentimental dramas were frequently outnumbered by "true" comedies. Traditional five-act plays, comic afterpieces and an increasing number of illegitimate forms such as burletta and comic opera thrived in the days of Garrick and the Kembles. Bevis studied theater records, published plays and hundreds of unpublished but performed theater pieces in order to assess the precentage of plays that might fall into the group attacked by Goldsmith. His conclusion is that a strikingly small percentage—about one fifth—of the plays acted in the London theaters in the period he considers were sentimental. Bevis argues that the eighteenth-century stage does suffer an invasion in the 1770's and 1780's, but not a sentimental one. The increasing popular demand for spectacle, encouraged by the limits imposed on the legitimate theater by the Licensing Act of 1737, served as a much greater threat to good playwriting than did sentimentalism. Criticism of the eighteenth-

century theater in the past, Bevis warns, has been to a large extent based on printed plays. Such a practice yields a lopsided picture of the theater of the period. Sentimental plays were published, Bevis concludes, in a much larger proportion than farces, afterpieces, and even full-length comedies, because the "weeping" plays were meant to be read like novels and wept over in the armchair as well as on the stage. The shorter farces and other comic forms, in contrast, depended heavily on attractive staging and stage business for their success and were less appealing in published form. Only by considering the unpublished as well as the published plays, and recognizing the enormous popularity of farce, burletta, comic opera and traditional five-act comedy do we begin to see the theater as the eighteenth-century audience saw it—despite Goldsmith's sour grapes.

During the first year that Inchbald played in London, during the 1780-81 season, sentimental or weeping comedy did not dominate the stage, despite what Goldsmith would have us believe. In fact, the list of fifty-two plays (excluding afterpieces) performed in Covent Garden during the season when Inchbald joined the company includes twelve by Shakespeare, for instance, among them A Comedy of Errors, Much Ado About Nothing, and The Merry Wives of Windsor in addition to Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, The Merchant of Venice and several of the history plays.[44] While it may be argued that the eighteenth-century actors played some of these with sentimental bias, clearly there remains sufficient material for questioning Goldsmith's criticism. Restoration comedy likewise remained popular in the 1780's; Farquhar, Congreve, and Dryden were played, as well as comedies of equally comic spirit by lesser-known figures like Benjamin Hoadley. What surprises the modern reader familiar with Goldsmith's essay is the relatively small proportion of decidedly "weeping" comedies that

were actually part of the company's favorites. Similar conclusions emerge from the repertory of Drury Lane and the Haymarket, where Inchbald performed during the summer. The West Indian, Cumberland's sentimental sensation, played only two nights in November of 1780. Cibber's best known play, The Careless Husband, with its "weeping" refinement of the repentant husband plot successful in his earlier Love's Last Shift, was still popular; Rowe's Jane Shore and The Fair Penitent illustrate the continuing interest in historical and domestic tragedy, and add some credibility to Goldsmith's diatribe. The taste for lavish spectacle, pantomime, musical extravaganzas and the like that were the bread and butter of Garrick's and Rich's careers as managers survived into the 1770's and 1780's with performances of Isaac Bickerstaffe's Love in a Village and Sheridan's The Duenna, to name a few. While such medleys of stage entertainment might not rate highly with a modern audience, they point out the danger of taking Goldsmith's essay at face value.[45]

At the same time, sentimental comedy was hardly absent, and even such popular "traditional" comedies as The Beaux' Stratagem contain a sentimental subplot. Returning to Bevis' The Laughing Tradition, we find further evidence that the definition of sentimentalism is not always clear, either to eighteenth-century critics or to modern ones. Nevertheless, the dominance of laughing comedy emerges from even a conservative definition:

> Performances of laughing comedies account for 79 percent of the comic masterpieces according to George Winchester Stone, Jr.'s definition of sentimental comedy, and at least 83 percent according to mine. In his list of the top fifteen comedies at each patent house, Stone counts both The Provoked Husband and The Suspicious Husband as "sentimental comedy." I disagree with

> both judgments, and Goldsmith evidently disagreed with the first. If we removed both from our lists (admittedly an extreme procedure), a full seven-eighths of the mainpiece comic performance would be laughing; the only sentimental comedies left would be The Conscious Lovers and The West Indian. Even a conservative reckoning, however, places the proportion of laughing comedy at roughly four in every five comic mainpieces.[46]

Thus the theater in which Elizabeth Inchbald acted was a comic theater to a much greater extent than criticism derived from Goldsmith's essay would lead us to believe. Nevertheless, there was another theater in the eighteenth century—the printed one. In discussing the sources of the novel before Richardson, Robert A. Day, in Told in Letters, observes that, "Among the possible sources, the drama at once suggests itself." Further, he argues convincingly that:

> ...before dismissing a connection between plays and novels as too hypothetical to consider, we should bear in mind the seldom-remembered importance which playbooks had in the literary situation of the early eighteenth century. For every denunciation of the effect of novels and romances on women and the young, we find one or more scathing references to the reading of plays... The playbook and the novel catered to the same tastes, and it has been remarked that the novel was ready to fill the vacuum caused by the decline of the drama early in the eighteenth century. The milieu of the emerging epistolary novel, for author or reader, was one in which the drama bulked large.[47]

The popularity of plays as armchair entertainment was no less influential by the later part of the century, and, of particular importance to a writer like Inchbald, the process of cross-fertilization Professor Day identifies continues to shape readers' and writers' tastes. Bevis takes the argument one step further by suggesting that much of the printed drama was of the "weeping" variety, while the comic pieces, because of their dependence on theater business for success, were much less frequently printed and read. This distinction is important for at least two reasons. The printed plays, less ephemeral, have been the source of most theater history and thus the sentimental dramas, because of their availability as texts, dominate modern impressions of the taste of the period. The second reason emerges less directly from Bevis' conclusions. Considering the printed plays, he argues that even these are not extreme enough "to justify the conclusion that gentility and hypocrisy ruled...It is rather..that the eighteenth century was 'a time of confusion for comedy.' Playwrights were collectively divided, and in some cases individually uncertain, as to what they or the public wanted."[48] Certainly the "confusion" is evident in the plays Inchbald wrote that balance a laughing plot with a sentimental one, as in I'll Tell You What, or even, to a lesser degree, in The Mogul Tale, with its seraglio escapades juxtaposed to the relatively sentimental figures of Fanny and her cobbler husband. To a large extent, her achievement as a playwright was, in her later plays, to find a resolution to this confusion through the definition of a new sensibility that attempted to reconcile and modify the extremes of farce and tears, the sensibility I call "the feeling mind." But the split between acted plays and printed plays suggests another hypothesis about Inchbald's sources and those of many of her contemporaries. If in the earlier half of the century, as Professor Day argues, the drama "bulked large" in the "milieu of the

emerging...novel," it seems reasonable to argue that, in the later part of the century, if "weeping" dramas were widely read, then it is these plays in particular, as opposed to the comic drama, that would become influential in shaping the novel. These sentimental plots familiarized the reading public with a type of literary convention that would make novels that drew on the same conventions more appealing, and more familiar. Similarly, writers, as well as readers, would be more likely to draw on the sentimental drama than on the comic stage drama when looking for clues to popular taste in reading because the latter relied too much on non-textual apparatus for success (scenery, costumes, stage business). Obviously novelists drew on other novelists as well, but during the 1780's and 1790's the novel was as much in a "time of confusion," or transition, as the drama. Thus it is fair to identify the drama as a significant arbiter of literary taste, especially for Elizabeth Inchbald, who was both acting and writing plays.

That there was sentimental comedy on the stage as well as in the playbook, however, and that it was remarkably successful, cannot be denied. Cumberland's The West Indian and Hugh Kelly's False Delicacy were perfect targets for Goldsmith's criticism, both in their sentimental excesses and their financial success. What the research of Bevis and others illuminates, and Goldsmith's essay obscures, is that the English stage at mid-century was diverse, even contradictory, filled with laughing and weeping.

Nevertheless, the penultimate paragraph of Goldsmith's essay, read in the light of this research, suggests a new way of understanding the theatrical heritage Elizabeth Inchbald assumed when she began to write for the stage in the 1780's. Goldsmith concludes:

> But there is one Argument in favour of Sentimental Comedy which will keep it on the Stage in spite of all that can be said against it. It is, of all others, the most easily written. Those abilities that can hammer out a Novel, are fully sufficient for the production of a Sentimental Comedy. It is only sufficient to raise the Characters a little, to deck out the Hero with a Ribband, or give the Heroine a Title; then to put an Insipid Dialogue, without Character or Humour, into their mouths, give them mighty good hearts, very fine cloathes, furnish a new set of Scenes, make a Pathetic Scene or two, with a sprinkling of tender melancholy Conversation through the whole, and there is no doubt but all the Ladies will cry, and all the Gentlemen applaud.[49]

It is Goldsmith's reference to the ease with which sentimental comedy is written that most clearly reveals the depth of his distaste for the form, although his high artistic standards may be seen to cover a certain amount of envy. Playwrights who were able to write to suit the public taste, and to write quickly enough to keep pace with changing fashion, could become prosperous, as the earlier evidence from John O'Keeffe's memoirs reveals. His phrase "Those abilities that can hammer out a Novel" further suggests that the sentimental play and the rising popularity of the novel were intricately linked. Many of the successful dramatists were novelists as well; many were women. Most, like O'Keeffe, Cumberland, Kelly, and later Inchbald, at least initially, wrote to make a living. All of these factors are important for understanding Inchbald's career.

Elizabeth Inchbald's first successful play, a farce entitled The Mogul Tale, or, the Descent of the Balloon, though of minor literary value, illustrates the rivalry between weeping and laughing comedy and furnishes a useful example of

the kind of theater spectacle the popular audience enjoyed. Even in its light and frothy plot and thinly developed characters, moreover, we find early evidence of the interests and values she will later develop in her full-length plays.

Perhaps no newsworthy event captured the imagination of Inchbald's reading public as did the flight of the Montgolfier balloon. Newspaper accounts and contemporary prints celebrated the ascent of hot air balloons by the Mongolfier brothers near Lyons on June 5, 1783 and at the court of Versailles in September of the same year. The number of satirical prints suggesting balloon skirts and balloon motifs on fans, hats, and shoes illustrate the degree to which the popular press exploited the technological advance. [50]

Inspired by the concept of ballooning, and eager to capitalize on such a popular event, playwrights and novelists wove fantasies on the theme of flight. The Man in the Moon, or Travels into the lunar regions by the man of the people appeared in 1783, followed in 1785 by The Aerostatic Spy; or, excursions with an air balloon. Fredrick Pilon's play Aerostation (1784) likewise exploited the interest in ballooning aroused by the Montgolfier ascent. In 1784, Elizabeth Inchbald received one hundred guineas for The Mogul Tale, a farce employing the popular motif. It was an overnight success, running for ten days at the Haymarket.[51]

As further evidence of the popularity of the balloon, a brief digression into theater history is worth making here. A note in The London Stage for February, 1784 informs us that on a playbill inviting the audience to see Harlequin Junior, one of the plethora of harlequin farces popularized by Garrick, the audience will enjoy the added spectacle of "a Real Air Balloon." This event was designed to fill Drury Lane, but if we look at the listing for February 3, four days earlier, we find that Harlequin Rambler played at Covent Garden, at which performance,

the audience was assured "will be introduced, for the First time in any Theatre, a Real Air Balloon." On February 7, the same day as the Drury Lane balloon show, Covent Garden announced its second thoughts:

> The Real Air Balloon having been found, in the confined Air of a Theatre, to be not only very offensive, but in a degree dangerous, it cannot be again exhibited.[52]

Perhaps Thomas Harris had sold the white elephant to his rivals in Drury Lane. In any case, the incident, however trivial, captures something of the daily life of the London stage to which in July of 1784 Inchbald brought her little farce, The Mogul Tale. Although an apprentice piece, this short play reveals much about Inchbald's techniques as a playwright. She had begun to write farces as early as 1776, but none had been accepted for the stage. While it certainly lacks the subtle skill of her later plays and her novels, this early farce nevertheless is cleverly designed and anticipates many of Inchbald's later, more sophisticated comedies. After the success of The Mogul Tale, Inchald, then thirty years old, was able to interest theater managers in her work. Five years later, in 1789, she could retire as an actress and devote herself full-time to writing, assured of continuing approval and financial security. Thus, even in the farcical setting of an afterpiece requiring no more than exotic spectacle and belly laughs, we recognize the outlines of Elizabeth Inchbald's evolving interests, particularly her ability to exploit a topical event for dramatic possibilities, and to transform it into an above-average production.

The Mogul Tale, or, the Descent of the Balloon tells the tale of a British cobbler named Johnny and his wife Fanny who pay five guineas to take a balloon ride. The Doctor, a slightly mad scientist, pilots the ballon, only to discover that

he cannot control its flight path or land at will. The hot air eventually runs out and the three adventurers are forced to descent into the "Gardens of the Mogul, adjoining the Seraglio." Terrified of the danger they anticipate, they concoct a story to explain their arrival and to frighten the Mogul. The Doctor claims that he is a Royal Ambassador, and Johnny is announced as the Pope. In developing the comedy of this easily risible situation, Inchbald constructs a deft yet surprisingly humane farce.

The Great Mogul, for instance, is well-informed about world events:

> Admirable! incomparable! most excellent! in a retreat of the gardens I saw the wretches fall—overheard their conversation. We were amazed at the miraculous manner of their arrival, but such acts I knew had been lately discovered in Europe.[53]
>
> (7)

He also is philosophical as he instructs his servant:

> Aggravate their fears, as much as possible, tell then, I am the abstract of cruelty, the essence of tyranny; tell them the Divan shall open with all its terrors. For tho' I mean to save their lives, I want to see the effect of their fears, for in the hour of reflection I love to contemplate that greatest work of heaven, the mind of man.
>
> (7)

Thus the Mogul is both a cousin of the Noble Savage and a denizen of the increasingly popular oriental tale.

In the conclusion, he teaches the Christians about Christian virtues:

> I am an Indian, a Mahometan, my laws are cruel and my nature savage—you have imposed upon me, and attempted to defraud me, but know that I have been taught mercy and compassion for the suffering of human nature; however differing in laws, temper and colour from myself. Yes from you Christians whose laws teach charity to all the world, have I learn'd these virtues? For your countrymen's cruelty to the poor Gentoos has shewn me tyranny in so foul a light, that I was determined henceforth to be only mild, just and merciful...all three may freely depart.
>
> (19-20)

However conventional the Mogul's sentiments, he expressed for Mrs. Inchbald values that would endure and in fact become more pronounced in her later work. The unchristianity of the Christian church she attacked as late as 1796 in Nature and Art, where she analyzed on a far more serious level the lack of mercy in both the contemporary church and in jurisprudence in Britian. Inchbald expanded the Great Mogul's gesture into plays pleading for humanitarian reform; Such Things Are is the best example.

The other characters in the early farce, however, provide better instances of those areas in which Inchbald would later excel: the depiction of conjugal love that creates an endearing portrait of domestic happiness, touched with gentle but precise satire. Johnny the Cobbler and his Fanny recall the quiet moments before their foolhardy balloon adventure in scenes that anticipate the domestic realism of the nineteenth-century novel:

> Johnny: Oh Fan, Fan, if we were at Wapping again, mending shoes, in our little two pair of stairs room backwards—with the bed just turn'd up in one corner of the room
>
> Fanny: My Johnny and I sitting so comfortable together at

> breakfast, where we had pawn'd your waistcoat to get one, with one child crying on my knee, and one on yours; My poor old mother shaking with the ague, in one corner of the room—the many happy mornings Johnny that we have got up together shaking with the cold—No balloon to vex us.
>
> (11-12)

If the breathy speeches become mauldin, one can still find in them a certain charm. It is worth noticing that the two characters with heir humble social position are quite contrary to Goldsmith's formula for sentimental success, "deck out the hero with a Ribband, or give the Heroine a Title." While Inchbald's two citizens may be no more than the traditional clowns of early comedy, the difference is worth noting; they are urbanized. Wapping, if only a riverside slum in the 1780's, was still in London. Moreover, domestic detail, such as the "bed just turn'd up in one corner of the room," reveals Inchbald's sensitivity to realistic setting both for its own sake and as a device to enhance character and plot. The Dorriforth household in A Simple Story owes much to these modestly romanticed reminiscences of Johnny and Fanny. The two pair of stairs might also have their origins in Inchald's own lodgings, which remained modest throughout her life.

If the tourists from Wapping are blunt, comic, limited, they nevertheless are amusing in their lack of self-consciousness, and here lies one of the chief sources of comedy in The Mogul Tale. When one of the ladies in the Emperor's harem attempts to make Fanny jealous, the wife of great experience replies:

> No he didn't make love to you, and if he did, I'm sure he was tipsy, for though I say it, that should not say it, he is never so loving as when he is tipsy.
>
> (15)

Their lower-class manners create comedy when they defer to the Mogul's eunuch:

> And I am very much obliged to [The Mogul] for not ravishing my wife.
>
> (20)

says Johnny as they embark for Europe at the end of the play. The simple domesticity implied in their recollections and behavior is perhaps best summed up in Johnny's closing line:

> Well, then thank heaven, I shall see dear Wapping again.
>
> (20)

To accord too much serious literary purpose to Inchbald's depiction of this clownish couple would be to distort literary history and abuse common sense. Just the same, The Mogul Tale was Inchbald's first work, and as such is valuable for the evidence it provides of her early interests in themes she develops in later plays and in the novels. These themes include the analysis of conjugal happiness, or its failure, the ill effects on the individual and society of deceit, hypocrisy and what she calls false appearances and, in a broader sphere, the importance of education for women and for humanitarian reform in society as a whole.

This early farce is, in addition, useful for locating another technique Inchbald wil use in more sophisticated ways in later works, namely, contrast for comic effect and for satire. Over and over in The Mogul Tale, exotic Eastern scenes are abruptly juxtaposed with lowly British settings:

> Fanny: Oh Johnny...will you leave me here in a strange land, amongst tigers, land monsters, and sea monsters?
> Johnny: Oh Fan, Fan, if we were at Wapping again, mending shoes...
>
> (11)

Or, in another scene, the First Eunuch reads a list of the Mogul's titles:

> Emperor of all India—The Great Mogul—Brother of the Sun and Moon—of the Right Giver of all earthly Crowns...Lord of Ethiopia, Grand Sultan of all the beautiful females of Circassian, Barbary, Media, and both the Tartaries, Prince of the River Ganges, Zanthur, and Euphrates—Sultan of seventeen kingdoms—King of eight thousand islands, and husband of one thousand wives.
>
> (9)

The Doctor's response offers British counterpoint and comedy:

> The King his master is by the Grace of God king of Great Britain, France, Ireland, Scotland, Northumberland, Lincolnshire, Sheffield, and Birmingham; giver of all Green, Blue, Red, and pale Blue ribbons...Grand Master of every Mason Lodge in Christendom, Prince of the River Thames, Trent, Severn, Tyne, New-River, Fleet-Ditch, and the Tweed: Sovereign Lord, and master of many loyal subjects, husband of one good wife, and father of eighteen fine children.
>
> (9-10)

The technique of comic contrast deflates the pompous titles of the Mogul, but likewise undercuts the entire idea of royal titles. Not only the Emperor, but the King as well, is ridiculed. (King George III sired, by some counts, only fifteen children). Even in this farce, there is a hint of rather risky political satire. Inchbald's jacobin leanings clearly had an early beginning.

The technique of comic contrast and of deflation owes much to Inchbald's appreciation of Swift, whose works and letters she read during the 1770's.[54] Like Swift, too, she found in contemporary science an appealing target for satire. Throughout her career as a playwright, Inchbald found occasion to examine the

claims of popular science or pseudo-science as advocated by charlatans and quacks as well as the genuine advances in technology made by men like the Montgolfiers, Priestley, and Wedgwood. She seems always to have been entranced by the possibility of new discoveries by legitimate researchers but alert for hypocrisy and double-dealing behind ideas like mesmerism or fortune telling. Her suspicions about modern science are personified in the figure of the Doctor in The Mogul Tale, a character both capable of flying the balloon and at the same time incapable of landing or piloting it. Clearly the balloon is not at fault, and the invention has merit, but the Doctor is guilty of profiteering from the device he cannot operate. Thus ridicule of the Doctor is intertwined with allusions to the process of flying the hot air machine as Johnny in an early scene dismisses the Doctor as a threat to women's honor:

> Why Lord [The Mogul] can't be jealous of me, and as to the Doctor there he is nobody—it is all over with him, he has no longer any inflammable air about him, either in his balloon or himself...
>
> (4)

His sexuality is again alluded to in a scientific context when in a note to Johnny he writes:

> ...help me to repair the Balloon. Contrive if you can to bring one of the females with you, as I want to try an experiment, which can live longest in the air, the women of this country, or our own—N.B. Let her have black eyes, neither too large or too small, lest my experiment should fail.
>
> (12)

Whether or not Johnny has underestimated the Doctor's virility is never resolved, but the Mogul, as the play concludes, sees to it that the experiment does fail. He exposes the balloonists' comic disguise, but not before exercising further his power to terrorize them. The Doctor translates his terror into his own idiom:

> They are going to try some experiment on me, to broil me—to implame[55] perhaps to anatomize me.
>
> (18)

The Mogul, fortunately, is no member of the Royal Society nor an inhabitant of Laputa. Instead, he commands the three balloonists to pay a price for their lives typical of the resolutions in Inchbald's later works: they must drop false appearances and claim their real identities. They are quick to see the value of honesty when the alternative is the "racks...chaldrons of boiling oil—The cages of hot irons, and the trampling elephants" with which the Mogul threatens them. The Doctor confesses:

> I am a Doctor of music universally known and acknowledged—master of legerdemain, adept in philosophy, giver of health, prolonger of life, child of the sun, interpreter of stars, and privy councellor to the moon.
>
> (18)

Johnny and Fanny are less flowery and more honest as befits their characters:

> Johnny: I'm a poor innocent Cobler decoyed by the Doctor here, from Wapping, for five guineas.
> Fanny: And he's as good a father, and as good a husband, and as good a Cobler as any in London.
>
> (19)

Finally the Great Mogul, in the speech cited earlier, cautions his three visitors on the evils of religious hypocrisy and releases them so that they may repair their balloon and return to England.

The Mogul Tale, with its seraglio gardens, philosophical monarch, and whispers of racks and irons, is early science fiction; innocent, farcical, moral in purpose, appealing to adolescent fantasies of adventure, and taking quick advantage of the topicality of balloon flight. Yet the seeds of Inchbald's mature writing are planted in these seraglio gardens. With comic distortion and almost cartoon-like exaggeration she had, in 1784, begun her career as a writer in earnest. Pleas for religious and political tolerance, conjugal fidelity and domestic content, and cautious technological appreciation conflict with the realities she perceived of intolerance, deceit, chicanery, and fashionable vice. As she moved her scenes to middle and upper-class London in later plays, the racks and trampling elephants became the less tangible forces of peer pressure, poverty, social ostracism, and political inequality. Education, personal esteem, and common sense evolve from the simple virtues of shoe making as Inchbald expands her subject and her structure. If her techniques became more subtle, her plays became no less popular. The balloon that descended in the seraglio gardens had been inspired by Necessity, perhaps, but the tenth muse was firmly guided if not by her nine sisters then at least by Fortune who "kindly smiled, and was accessary to the cheat." With the ascent of that balloon, Elizabeth Inchbald's literary career took off.

Following her quick success of The Mogul Tale, she began her second play. That she chose to write plays that employed comic techniques is hardly surprising if we accept the evidence of The London Stage and Bevis' study on the popularity of comedy. At the same time, that her plays should exploit the equal

popularity of sentimental conventions evident in the printed drama and in some of her "weeping" roles is almost inevitable. She was, as I have emphasized, writing for money, and thus writing to meet the demands of her audience. If, as Bevis argues, "playwrights were collectively divided, and in some cases individually uncertain, as to what they or the public wanted," the success of Inchbald's first two plays showed that she, at least, had a remarkably sure instinct for learning what would work, and for taking advantage of her discoveries by translating them into successful plays. In the very uncertainty of her theater, in its ambivalence between laughter and tears, she located an opportunity for new directions. Uncertainty may also be a sign of cultural transition, and an indicator of the need for a new sensibility. So it seems to have been for Mrs. Inchbald. With the production of I'll Tell You What she capitalized on the success of The Mogul Tale and experimented with the five-act structure of a full-length play.

I'll Tell You What, or the Indescribable Something opens with the prologue apologizing for female authorship quoted earlier, but the play itself quickly moves on to broader issues. Central to the plot is the notion of false appearances, which develops into a theme Inchbald will use in many of her later plays. Thus the motif of false appearances is a convenient forum for examining Inchbald's techniques for integrating elements of traditional comedy and conventions of farce into the newer, fresher genre she made her own, the drama of the "feeling mind." Colman's prologue serves as a reminder that gender and genre are, for this author, inextricably bound. To understand this bond, we must first look at the themes in which are manifested her early consciousness as a writer.

The plot of I'll Tell You What turns on the confusion that results from the recent divorce of Lady Harriet from George Euston and her second marriage to Major Cyprus close upon Euston's second marriage to the new Lady Euston. The divorce had occurred because the Major had been found hiding in a closet in Lady Harriet's bedroom. The Major's discovery is suspicious but, in legal terms at least, innocent; appearance, however, is against them, as Inchbald expressed the idea in the title of a later play, and the irate George Euston has no choice but to divorce Lady Harriet, leaving the Major with no choice but to marry her. Through Lady Harriet's tendency to dwell on her past happiness in conversations with her maid Bloom, the audience learns early that this second marriage has not been very successful.

As the play opens, Anthony Euston, a wealthy uncle, has just returned to London after years abroad, and visits his nephew George, unaware that the divorce has taken place some three months before his arrival. Fearful of losing his inheritance, George Euston tries to conceal, or delay, the news of the separation from his uncle, who strongly disapproves of divorce. At the same time Lady Harriet mistakenly thinks she has discovered evidence of the new Lady Euston's infidelity and summons George Euston, under false pretences, to her house. He arrives only minutes before the unexpected return of the Major, and in a wonderfully farcical scene is shoved into the famous closet to avoid the embarrassing "appearances." As the inevitable discovery is made, George Euston recognized the poor judgement he had exhibited in finding the Major in similar circumstances. The implications of the concealment and the exposure are serious enough, however, for Lady Harriet and the Major to recognize that their brief marriage is ill-fated. They decide to separate.

A third marriage is linked to uncle Anthony Euston and offers a sentimental subplot to counterbalance the comic antics of the main plot. Charles Euston, Anthony's son,had been disinherited for marrying without parental approval shortly before the father departed for his West Indian Plantation. On his first night back in London Anthony Euston rescues a young woman from danger, and in the unmasking so familiar in sentimental plots, she is revealed to be the wife of his son Charles. Anthony accepts her, and restores his son's inheritance. Thus Inchbald intertwines a "laughing" comedy plot with a "weeping" one as she seeks just the right balance for popular success.

Between these plots, the play analyzes several marriages, contrasting their values and at the same time juxtaposing two comic traditions. The first set--Lady Harriet, George Euston, and Major Cyprus—find their ancestry on the Restoration stage. They are victims of fashionable marriage and fashionable vice, displaying the well-established anti-marriage views modified only slightly from the characters of Dryden, Cibber, and Farquhar. Inchbald knew these characters well from her life at Covent Garden. The younger couple, Charles and his wife, belong to the newer sentimental generation where marriage is based not on fashion or family interest but on love, love even to the exclusion of common sense. Sir George Euston's second wife provides the one rational voice, as she is something of a satirist, using ridicule to discourage rakes and maintain her honor. She is a witty and vibrant character and furnishes clear evidence of Inchbald's ability to write crisp, funny dialogue.

The relatively complex plot is expertly handled. The action is quick and the story is unravelled with skill and wit as the various couples slip in out out of each other's closets, inheritances, and, finally, lives. The unhappy couple, Charles and his wife, impoverished at the beginning, are restored to the father's

good graces while the fashionable and flirtatious Lady Harriet faces yet another divorce by the close of Act V. Anthony Euston experiences a sentimental conversion, acknowledging the value of love and virtue above parental law. Sir George Euston is confirmed in the true value of his new wife, Lady Euston, whose voice contributes social commentary and who, we discover at the end, has been actively virtuous, not just a lady with no occasion to sin.

Inchbald dexterously shifts the characters about, writes crisp and stage-worthy diaglogue, and within this intricate plot draws morals that are not too pedantic or ponderous for the taste of her audience. At the heart of her play's meaning is the theme of false appearances, giving the action coherence and enhancing the literary interest of the social comedy. Moreover, if we occasionally look ahead to A Simple Story from the vantage point of this early play, we are able to understand more clearly many aspects of the novel. Masquerades, deceptions, lies, hypocrisy are among the types of false appearances, both literal and metaphoric, that Inchbald uses in the plays and later presents with greater subtlety in the novel. I'll Tell You What is an early but carefully designed sample of Inchbald's preoccupation with this theme, which she uses to convey social criticism and political opinion, and even to reveal autobiographical material. In fact, by springing from the play to the novel, and the novel to the play, we can establish at least one specific "case history" of the connection between plays and novels discussed earlier. As a result of Inchbald's continuing interest in this idea, her work, taken as a whole, reveals fairly consistent artistic development and unity. In the plays, especially the early ones, the theme is conveyed—as makes good sense for dramatic comedy--more literally: through disguise, physical antics (like the closet concealment or, in another play, the picaresque travels of a certain Indian shawl), and other characteristics easily enacted on stage, such as

foppish dress and manners or eccentric personal habits. In the novels, the theme of false appearances is used with greater subtlety, on more psychological and symbolic levels, to portray characters and social problems. Even in the early I'll Tell You What, some evidence of Inchbald's more serious use of the theme is traceable, and, as with The Mogul Tale, the apprentice work lays the foundation for understanding the more mature writing. Within the somewhat farcical plot of her first full-length play, or perhaps it is more accurate to say beneath it, Inchbald develops several variations on the theme of deception with much more seriousness than she was able to bring to the scant twenty pages of The Mogul Tale, and even more seriously, at times, than one expects in a stage comedy of this period. What emerges from this interplay between play and novel is clear evidence of the writer's willingness to experiment with different modes as she begins to find her unique voice.

I'll Tell You What, after all, is a play about conjugal relations, about unhappy marriages, mistaken notions of other people, and divorce. Even as the sentimental plot concludes with the reconciliation of Anthony and Charles Euston, we cannot overlook the fact that Lady Harriet and Major Cyprus are about to separate. If comedy of the romantic kind traditionally ends in marriage, Inchbald has turned the tables here, both starting and ending, in the main plot line, with divorce. The character of Lady Harriet bears further examination on these grounds, and moves us closer to the theme of false appearances.

Lady Harriet belongs, at least in part, to the type of the "gay couple" defined by John Harrington Smith in his study of Restoration drama cited earlier. She is witty, bright, fashionable, vain, and not too serious about her role as a wife. By the 1780's, however, this type of character has lost some of her charm

for the popular audience, as has her partner the rake. A century after the "gay couple" delighted London audiences loyal to Charles II and his courtiers, notions of morality had changed dramatically. Lady Harriet certainly carries some of the genes of the earlier stage favorites, being motivated in part by what Smith calls "sex antagonism" and anxiety for her reputation. But as a representative of a type she has lost some of her charm because it is clear that she is aware of dishonesty in her own behavior and suffers from doubts about the nature of her actions. A truly "gay" heroine like Cibber's Hillaria in Love's Last Shift, for instance, or even Anna Howe, Clarissa's confidante (who belongs to the same tradition) may reform at the end but expresses no concern about her rakish values while she is enjoying the rebellious life that would horrify later audiences. Lady Harriet is a figure who illustrates the changing and transitional values of the 1780's and 1790's. We discover early, for instance, her streak of cynicism and her view that marriage is a competition or game rather than a "sincere" exchange of feelings. Speaking to her maid, who has just told her of Sir George Euston's re-marriage, Lady Harriet remarks of the new Lady Euston:

> Insignificant girl--I triumphed, when I snatched him from her, and now I suppose she thinks to triumph equally.
> (8)

If Lady Harriet's vanity is wounded, she also reveals a little jealousy, blaming the charms of the "insignificant" rival so that she need not ask herself about George Euston's feelings. During a quarrel with Major Cyprus, Lady Harriet further discloses her lingering preference for her first husband, again based on the principles, and even a bit of the language, of the old stage:

> Dear Major, say what you will, Sir George had his virtues—He seldom asked me where I was going; or who visited me in his absence?—Where I had been walking?—What made me so remarkably cheerful, or why I looked so very ill-natured?—In short, he was truly and literally, in every respect, a fashionable husband.
>
> (30)

Her comment is ironic on several levels. While Lady Harriet might nostalgically prefer the less suspicious Sir George to the vigilant Major Cyprus, her description reveals, to the morally inclined audience of the 1780's, a bleak marriage based on indifference rather than trust. It was, after, all, this laissez-faire policy that led Major Cyprus to her bedroom and led to her divorce and re-marriage.

Lady Harriet puts a higher value on appearances—on reputation and social place—than on honesty, and thus she has never expained to Sir George the "innocence" of Major Cyprus' presence in her closet. Like Miss Milner in A Simple Story, though, Lady Harriet is portrayed with sympathy, and Inchbald attributes both heroines' similar characters to faults in their education and their expectations, although this conclusion is much sharper in the novel than in the earlier play. Lady Harriet's husband reinfores the notion of a double standard in education and values for, even knowing the circumstances of her loss of George Euston's respect, and having himself been a party to it, Cyprus is overheard to say that her "Ladyship's honor would require the guard of a file of musketeers." (9) She rationalizes her situation by blaming her brother, who, after the Major's presence in the closet was discovered, felt compelled to defend her honor for the sake of reputation; she would still be with Sir George

> Did not my brother, from Sir George's humiliating suspicions and cruel treatment of me, compel us to a divorce. (9)

Nevertheless, she admits "my indiscreet partiality to this ingrate," the Major, and realizes that she is herself largely responsible for her present situation. This acceptance of her position is in part due to her learning that, from the point of view of society, the appearance of adultery is just as bad as the act itself. Chastity, in other words, is more than a physical condition for a woman in the eighteenth century; it encompasses a state of mind, and conscience, as well. To allow the scene with Major Cyprus to occur, then, was almost as bad as to have in fact carried on a liasion with him. This code of behavior excuses her brother's threat of a duel and Sir George's "cruel treatment" of a wife who has made him appear a cuckold. Inchbald will give these moral codes and their consequences more serious analysis in A Simple Story, where Dorriforth's young wife succumbs to the seductive charms of Frederick Lawnley and goes beyond the appearance of adultery to the actual sin.

Lady Harriet, unlike the tragic Miss Milner, whom she anticipates, does survive to consider new directions for her third marriage. Still, she fails to learn all that she should from the past, and shows signs of once again foiling her own chances at happiness by continuing to deceive. First, she lures Sir George to her house with the false news that she is mortally ill so that she may show him a letter she incorrectly believes will reveal his wife's infidelity. Sir George questions the "rectitude of complying" with her request, but his wife, he tells us,

"surmounted all my scruples, and her tenderness and generosity have endeared her to me more than ever." (78) Lady Harriet's trap is sprung by the virtue of the very woman it was set to snare. George Euston, with his wife's knowledge, then, visits his former wife, only to arrive a few moments before Major Cyprus returns unexpectedly to the hours. Bloom, the maid, panics, in good farce tradition:

> Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!—that's the Major—that's my master!—Oh, what will become of us all?

Bloom quickly urges Sir George to hide, "opening the closet door" and calling

> Here!--in here, Sir, for Heaven's sake.

Sir George, caught up in the frenzied concern over the appearances of the situation, yields to Bloom's demand:

> "Sdeath!--What shall I do? See <u>him</u>? Damnation!--And see him <u>here</u> too? No, I can't bear it--I must avoid him.
> (79)

And into the closet he goes, the same closet, of course, in which the Major had been hidden only a few months before.

Lady Harriet, now familiar with deception, immediately adapts to the crisis. As the Major storms into her room he asks

> <u>Major</u>: What's the matter? You tremble--you look pale!
> <u>Lady Harriet</u>: (<u>Trembling</u>) Tremble!— Bless me—I've been fast asleep--

and such a dream! I thought I was falling—

Bloom: Ay, my Lady, I always dream of falling too!

Lady Harriet: (Yawns and rubs her eyes.) How long have you been home?—What's the o'clock? How long do you think I have slept, Bloom?

Bloom: I dare say, pretty near an hour and half, my Lady.

Lady Harriet: A miserable dull book—fell out of my hand! and I dropp'd insensibly—

(81)

She continues her play acting despite her husband's foul temper, and his desire to taunt her by calling for music when she says she will continue her nap:

But, Mrs. Bloom, first order the French horns up—I'm out of spirits.

(81)

As Bloom exits to call the musicians, Anthony Euston and several others enter, having discovered Sir George's plan to visit the jealous Major's house; they are fearful of Cyprus' temper and as they intervene Anthony Euston explains:

I have no fears but for Sir George—nor will now your utmost rage induce me to quit the house till I am assured of his safety—

Major Cyprus: And pray, Sir, who in this house is to assure you of it?—

Sir George: (Bursting from the closet)—Himself!

(85)

After the stuttered attempts at explanation, Bloom enters and announces, with wonderful dramatic irony to the Major:

> The horns are ready, Sir—wou'd you choose to have them?
>
> (85)

The net of deception and false appearances is cast wide, then. The Major appears to be, and believes himself to be, a cuckold because Lady Harriet appeared to be concealing Sir George under suspicious circumstances. Sir George in seeming to be an adulterer is in fact only guilty of wishing to avoid that precise false appearance. Even Bloom is involved, and attempts to lie to Anthony Euston about her previous visit to deliver Lady Harriet's invitation to Sir George. All the characters are deceiving themselves as well as the others as they approach the denouement.

The scene is, on some levels, no more than a familiar farcical resolution, recalling the discovery of "the Philosopher Square, in a Posture (for the Place would not near admit his standing upright) as ridiculous as can possibly be conceived"[57] or the even more famous discovery of Lady Teazle behind the screen in The School for Scandal. Certainly Inchbald knew Sheridan's scene, even alluding to Joseph Surface's explanation in the title of one of her farces: "Sir Peter, notwithstanding--I confess--that appearances are against me—if you will afford me your patience, I make no doubt—but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction" (Act IV). Explanation comes in I'll Tell You What, too, but what is significant is the different spirit of Inchbald's conclusion from Sheridan's. Major Cyprus dampens the comedy of the moment:

> Sir George, I am perfectly satisfied with this explanation.—But, after what has happened, the world may despise me for being so, and therefore, Lady Harriet, from this moment we separate...
>
> Lady Harriet: Most willingly separate—Your unkind treatment—and my own constant inquietude—have long since taught a woman of the world too feelingly to acknowledge, "No lasting friendship is form'd on vice."
>
> (87)

Major Cyprus is still more concerned with how he will look to the world than on how virtuous his wife really is; and Inchbald accordingly condemns him. If Lady Harriet shows signs of learning a lesson in the dangers of deception, she nevertheless affirms her affinity with heroines of the earlier tradition as she concludes her scene with a just punishment in the world of comedy—no marriage. Hillaria, for instance, in Love's Last Shift, is similarly condemned, though the sentence is modified to gaining a weak and priggish husband rather than none at all. Likewise Anna Howe, in the same tradition, marries the silly Hickman, a concession, in the end, to social norms, and perhaps, a bit of penance for her previous outbursts of wit and independent thinking. It is hard to forget her sprightly irreverence when she first hints in a letter to Clarissa of her suitor's pretensions: "Hickman came in, making his legs, and stroking his cravat and ruffles."[58]

Lady Euston, Sir George's wife, shares Anna Howe's talent for ridicule. She, unlike Lady Harriet, strives to avoid fashionable love: "...the exertion of a little thought and fancy will more powerfully vindicate innocence, than that

brilliant piece of steel," she assures her husband as he offers to draw his sword against a fop who has dared to flirt with her. She continues her philosophy much in the vein of Anna Howe:

> There is as severe a punishment to men of gallantry (as they call themselves) as sword or pistol; laugh at them—that is a ball which cannot miss, and yet kills only their vanity.
> (49)

Lady Euston is thus a mender, a healer of the wounds caused by vanity, deception, and hypocrisy. She, like Charles Euston and his wife, wins the reward of a happy marriage. These characters are, in different ways, undeceivers, working much of the time to reveal rather than conceal identities, schemes and plots. They aim to bring appearance closer to truth, to create harmony rather than separations, breaks, and embarrassments. She is a deflator of swollen egos, a satirist, one whose wit saves her marriage. One of the disappointments of I'll Tell You What is that her role is so brief. Yet Lady Euston is, despite her wit, not in the same tradition as the heroines of the Restoration stage, Smith's "gay couples." She does not represent anti-marriage views nor is she one to encourage flirtation in order to increase her sense of self-esteem. On the contrary, Lady Euston is one of Inchbald's better types of heroine, a virtuous woman with wit, one of the early portrayals of a woman with a "feeling mind" inclined to "useful morals."

As in The Mogul Tale, Inchbald is clearly still a stage apprentice in I'll Tell You What. Many of the scenes rely on conventional situations for humor, many of the characters are drawn from the familiar ranks of stage types: the

blustering Major, the fashionable Lady Harriet, the ingenue Lady Euston, the silly maid Bloom. Yet in this play, even more than in the balloon farce, Inchbald began to shape the conventional material to her own ends and to develop her personal themes. As Paula Backscheider has commented:

> Unlike her less skilled contemporaries, Inchbald usually supplies a unifying theme. In this play, the plot lines share the concept of a "critical minute," specifically the discoveries in the closets and Anthony's rescue. Both discoveries end marriages and represent deeper domestic disharmonies and immoralities.

Further:

> Inchbald chose to write about conjugal love, a love she found more conducive to the arousal fo sympathy and suspense. The years of companionship threatened, the shared pleasures and hardships, the strains on the bond, the hopes, and the difficulties, of age, children, and poverty interested her far more than the perils of getting acquainted and the obstacles of courtship. The efforts to save a marriage appeared more praise-worthy to her than any girl's schemes to get married. She could make mutual respect and abiding affection convincing, but passion eluded her. (xxxv)[59]

It is the theme of conjugal love, the emphasis on mature relationships, that marks Inchbald's originality. Lydia Languishes are absent from I'll Tell You What, and this choice, clearly deliberate, indicates Inchbald's preference for the stronger, more independent and thoughful heroine. Even Lady Harriet, despite her fashionable vices, is not a vicious character. Toward the end, one can see a gentle repentance and the possibility of sincere reform, but no loss of dignity, in

her thoughtful comment:

> More willingly separate—Your unkind treatment—and my own constant inquietude—have long since taught a woman of the world too feelingly to acknowledge, "No lasting friendship is form'd on vice."

Unlike so many earlier stage comedies, with their emphasis on marriage as it relates to money and scandal, their lurks beneath the surface of wit, charm and farcical situations in Inchbald's play a genuine appeal for comedy that explores real human relationships. Ironically, the characters' lives in this play are connected by separations: divorces and disinheritances link each of the principals to any other. Backscheider notes that "the play concludes with a comic dilemma...and the serious contention that all are related by 'kindred ties of each other's passions, weaknesses, and imperfections'".[60] The point is worth expanding, for it is one that informs many of Inchbald's plots as well as later influencing the behavior of Dorriforth in A Simple Story when he rejects and later reclaims his daughter Matilda. One is reminded of the cameo made by Wedgwood to popularize the anti-slavery movement. Its inscription over the captive, "Am I not a man and brother?"[61] is echoed in Inchbald's plea for a broad definition of "family" and its implied wish for a more generous interpretation of human rights. The false appearances that create comic turns in the plot of I'll Tell You What thus take on modestly satirical overtones in the final lines of the play. Appearances may reveal that we are confused about our relationships to one another, as Euston exclaims:

> I wish some learned gentleman, of the law, would tell us what relations we all are...And, for fear the gentlemen of the long robe shou'd not be able to find out the present company's affinity, let us apply to the kindred ties of each other's passions, weaknesses, and imperfections; and, thereupon, agree to part, this evening, not only near relations but good friends.
>
> (88)

While it is hardly Swiftian satire, the jibe at the law's inability to identify the kinship bonds raises a theme Inchbald later expanded in Nature and Art. Mankind cannot rely on the letter of the law to help clarify human values or obligations. Justice is a social institution subject to corruption, and, even if it were above reproach, its definitions are simply not broad enough to meet present needs. By law, after all, these characters are divorced and disinherited, but, in terms of human law rather than British justice, such separations are invalid. Inchbald's conclusion to her play urges us to recognize our relations and our responsibilities to one another and to build society on those principles. Appearances may be false, then, because they frequently depend on social and legal formulas and rules that exclude the claims of charity, of the "kindred ties." Inchbald illustrates her theme with greater force in A Simple Story, where when Dorriforth's marriage ties are severed by his wife's adultery he separates his life from his daughter's. Casting her out of the household, as he discovers after much suffering, cannot break the "kindred tie" and he renews his paternal bond in the second book of the novel. In social terms, the theme is illustrated in Nature and Art by the cruelty of a young ambitious man who abandons the girl he

seduces in his youth, only to have her appear before his bench when he becomes a famous judge. His second denial of his tie with her indicts not only himself but also the institution he represents which makes his inhumane judgment legal.

Thus Inchbald, in her first full-length play, announces themes that will preoccupy her as a playwright and a novelist for the rest of her career. Her plots, over and over, illustrate and elaborate the values expressed in I'll Tell You What. Conjugal happiness and unhappiness, the latter expressed in divorce, adultery, and the fragmentation of the family, show the dangers of the instinct to put self before others, to choose law over charity, to be more concerned with how we appear than with what we really are.

Elaboration of this theme occurs through a structural device Inchbald used for the first time in her portrayal of Lady Harriet. We meet her caught in her second marriage, and through her ability to look back to the past, and her choice about the future, we understand her feelings of guilt, indecision, and repentance. By comparing and contrasting Inchbald weaves plots that readily lend themselves to plays and novels of social criticism and satire; what is stands in stark relief against what was or what might be. Lady Harriet reveals the present by a few words about the past and her hints about the future; the technique makes for efficient dramatic exposition. Similarly, A Simple Story contrasts Miss Milner, a figure much like Lady Harriet, with her daughter Matilda. The significant differences between the two generations, between Dorriforth's wife and his daughter, link the two halves of the plot and lead naturally to Inchbald's conclusions about the necessity of "a Proper Education," especially for young women. In Nature and Art, two generations are once again contrasted, this time in a plot with more radical political overtones as Inchbald pillories the inequities

of British justice and the hypocrisy of organized religion. In this later novel, the contrast is enhanced by her use of the "noble savage" motif of sending one child to grow up in a savage land while his cousin matures in England. The "primitive" cousin, upon returning to his father's homeland, becomes a vehicle for satiric observations on the "civilization" of Britain.

Society no longer fulfills its proper role of joining people into useful relationships, according to Inchbald, but on the contrary, corrupt social institutions destroy natural and necessary human bonds. One of the goals of humanitarian reform is to reinstate the "kindred ties," and thus improve the lot of humanity. This is the "jacobin" spirit that underlies Inchbald's early plays and finds expression in her novels. Implied by her theme, though never stated, is the idea that if the society is so corrupt as actually to obstruct the fulfillment of these humanitarian reforms, then revolution is justified. Inchbald's rhetoric is far from Tom Paine's, and Godwin's Political Justice is a decade in the future, but the stirrings of stronger political and social sentiment can be heard in these early plays by the woman who would, in 1794, jeopardize her own freedom in order to visit Thomas Holcroft during his imprisonment on charges of treason.

A clue to Inchbald's literary response to the society she challenged emerges in Ronald Paulson's theory about satire and the novel in an earlier period of English history:

> In literature a new and original impulse may have to be expressed through old conventions which may, in turn, carry antithetic assumptions. To complicate the picture further, the new impulse itself will not be pure but inevitably influenced to some degree by older generic aims, as well as by social,

> moral and other contemporary conventions. The possibilities of relationship, influence, and effect are almost infinite.[62]

Paulson's hypothesis helps explain the hesitancy with which Inchbald expressed her political ideas and the limitations she set for herself on her artistic experimentation. To apply Paulson's idea to Elizabeth Inchbald's situation, we turn once again to Goldsmith's "Essay on the Theatre." Paulson argues that new feelings may have to be expressed in hackneyed modes until a new literary vocabulary is created that epitomized the new impulses. However, in using conventional modes, an author may absorb some of the values that cannot be dissociated from the older literary convention. In addition, the writer's own "moral, social and other contemporary conventions" carry their own values. Goldsmith, as I argued earlier, divides the English stage into two opposing camps, leaving little room for compromise. The fallacy of his position has been demonstrated, but another look at his essay is required in the light of Paulson's conclusions. Clearly, Goldsmith, and to a greater extent Inchbald, belong to a period of literary transition. Goldsmith's reaction is conservative to a large extent: in his criticism he wishes to eradicate the "new impulse," the "weeping comedy," and return to the old comedy of laughter. That no two such clear-cut schools of comedy ever existed is beside the point, and Goldsmith may have recognized that fact. And what, in the light of this conservative stance, are we to make of The Vicar of Wakefield, rich in the new impulse of tears? Goldsmith has perceived the very process Paulson describes and is himself its unwilling exemplar. Goldsmith expresses his uneasiness in his essay, using the old mode of

Augustan satire, but the process illustrates the very antithesis Paulson identifies: the terms of Augustan criticism are ill-suited for the emotions of sentimental drama. In other words, playwrights in this age of transition were beginning to feel the new impulse that would eventually be labelled Romanticism, but they were unable to define the necessary new conventions or to shake off the "older generic aims." Thus Goldsmith suggests ironically:

> If Mankind find delight in weeping at Comedy, it would be cruel to abridge them in that or any other innocent pleasure. If those Pieces are denied the name of Comedies; yet call them by any other name, and if they are delightful, they are good.

He proceeds to flay the straw man in his next paragraph:

> These objections, however, are rather specious than solid. It is true, that Amusement is a great object of the Theatre; and it will be allowed, that these Sentimental Pieces do often amuse us: but the question is, Whether the True Comedy would not amuse us more?[63]

It is revealing that Goldsmith toys with the notion of simply renaming the hybrid genre, an impulse related to Paulson's hypothesis that new ideas need to be dissociated from old generic identities before they can thrive.

The question ignored by Goldsmith gets closer to the heart of the matter. He correctly senses the presence of a new impulse, but he connects it with the aims of the older form in using "amusement" as the unit of measure. What Paulson says is that the newer genre will have to find its own aim; it cannot be judged fruitfully, or practiced successfully, if its aims are confused with those of another mode. To amuse, in other words, may not be the primary end of the new

comedy. By extension, drama may not be the most fitting genre for the "new impluse."

Inchbald's career, in several ways, is abstracted in Paulson's paragraph. She is very much a figure of "new and original impulse," yet one intricately linked to old conventions. The link is partially the urgency of her financial dependence on popular success, but there are also more esthetic connections. In writing plays, Inchbald relied not only on printed literary conventions, as she could in her novels, but also on the medium of her everyday work, her life and livelihood in the theater. The psychological reinforcement of actually participating in a play immeasurably increased her loyalty, even if only on a subconscious level, to the traditional conventions of comedy. That her income was derived largely from the stage offered another more practical motive for any tendency she harbored to support what had been shown to be successful rather than experimenting with new techniques. Nevertheless, she was talented, intelligent, sensitive to the times in which she lived, and thus the exponent of new impulses. In the evolution of the drama of the "feeling mind" we find her resolution to this conflict between new impulse and old convention. The old comedy, rooted in the values of conserving society through the preservation of conventions like marriage, parental authority, and the good of society at the cost of individuality, lacked the resilience necessary for adaptation to the more individual notions of human rights and social reform. Thus we do not find very radical statements made in Inchbald's plays, or, for that matter, in the plays of her contemporaries. It is to the novel that we turn to find the new impulses merging with a suitable new form.

In at least one drama, however, Inchbald explores political and social issues; Such Things Are, in 1788, centered on ideas of penal reform promulgated by John Howard. In this five-act drama, a subplot of sentimental love is counterbalanced with a plot illustrating humanitarian notions of reform. As in the early plays, hypocrisy is an important theme and fashionable vice leads to serious consequences.

Unlike the earlier plays, Such Things Are, despite the presence of wit and social satire, is serious and even pessimistic in its vision. The play illustrates Inchbald's ability to take a pressing topical issue, in this case prison reform, and create a popular play without diminishing the social message. While there is an occasional note of melodrama, she is careful to control it, balancing scenes of prison life with settings in fashionable society. Thus, as in earlier plays, she uses contrasts to create both satire and sentiment.

Inchbald implies in an advertisement prefaced to the printed version of the play that its central character, Haswell, owes his origins to

> The travels of an Englishman throughout Europe, and even in some parts of Asia, to soften the sorrows of the Prisoner...[64]

No Englishman is more eligible as a model for Haswell than John Howard, and her contemporaries recognized the allusion. Howard's mission was both philanthropic and practical. As one social historian records:

> He travelled all over the country, penetrating the most noisome dungeons, bringing fearlessly to light the widespread horrors he found. From one end of the kingdom to the other our

> prisons were a standing disgrace to civilization. Imprisonment...meant consignment to a living tomb, an existence of acute suffering.[65]

John Howard was remarkable for the practicality of his goals as he drew attention not only to the miserable spiritual state of prisoners' lives, but to the sanitary conditions in their wards and cells. In an attempt to find a method for eliminating "gaol fever," a form of typhoid that infected not only prisoners but also judges, barristers, hangmen and prison visitors, Howard travelled to Italy, India and elsewhere to study the lazarettos for techniques to contain infectious diseases. Inchbald's interest in Howard was probably aroused by the reprinting, in 1784, of his State of Prisons with a new appendix and, in the same year, the appearance of a new edition of his entire works. Howard himself died in 1790, two years after the play appeared for the first time.[66]

Another topical event, however, may have been a more immediate source of Inchbald's choice of a subject. In June, 1787, the notorious Lord George Gordon was on trial in London for various accusations of libel. Gordon would have been a familiar name to Inchbald, a Roman Catholic, for his role in the riots of 1780 that still bear his name. During the weeks of the sober "no popery" demonstrations that turned to anarchic mob violence, rioters actually succeeded in breaking into Newgate Prison an releasing the felons. The prison remained open for public inspection for several days and some renowned visitors, including Dr. Johnson, took advantage of the chance to see the legendary precincts at first hand.[67] Inchbald, who joined the Covent Garden Company in September 1780, only a few months after the riots, may have been present in the capital that terrible summer. The image of her brushing elbows with Dr. Johnson in the

mazes of the Newgate dungeons may be fanciful, but certainly her interest in the anti-Catholic violence was unlikely to be dispassionate. Lord George Gordon's reappearance on the public scene in 1787 no doubt stirred memories of the earlier trial, and certainly was partly responsible for the increasing public interest in humanitarian reform. His failure during the riots to control the demonstators as the situation worsened was a reminder of the dangers of intolerance; whoever was responsible for the mob's violence, the initial situation arose from the Protestant Association's intolerance towards civil rights for Catholics. The presence of a mob in London no doubt also stirred feelings of a less humane sort; the necessity of improving the lives of the lower classes, including prisoners, was perceived as a way of preventing similar outbreaks in the future. Surely it is no coincidence that between 1785 and 1790, according to Carl B. Cone in The English Jacobins, more than eight societies for various kinds of reform were founded. These included The Philanthropic Society founded for the Prevention of Crime, The Lock Asylum for the Reception of Penitent Females, and the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.[68] While the violence in June, 1789 can be attributed to far deeper causes than Lord George's ambitions, it is clear that in the public eye he was a primary cause of it. His trial in 1787 was, moreover, followed by his dramatic escape and disappearance until, seven months later, he was discovered living in the Jewish ghetto as an acknowledged convert. His recapture and imprisonment made him, and all the ideas associated with his career, topical at the time Inchbald was working on her play.

Reform, then, was in the air in 1787 and 1788, both because of public interest in Howard and Lord George Gordon and the emergence of the many

reform societies. A description of Newgate prison as Gordon found it in 1788 confirms the belief of reformers that change was necessary. Christopher Hibbert says that Gordon spent:

> a few days of terrible discomfort in the Common Felons' Ward, where the appalling stench hung like a fog in the dark stagnant air and the prisoners fought each other and the rats for the scraps of food thrown at them by the jailers.[69]

Gordon had the money to move from the Common Ward to a private room where he entertained numerous guests with elegant dinner parties and maintained the practice of Judaism. Few of his fellow prisoners were so fortunate. Such Things Are is concerned with prisoners who are unable to buy their way to the better conditions, and examines the influence of the corrupting prison environment on their characters. By setting her play in Sumatra, Inchbald avoids any challenges from the censor, even though, it is worth noting, her inmates are political prisoners rather than thieves or murderers. The prison scenes, however, form only one part of the whole; as a closer look reveals, prisons in Inchbald's play are both literal and symbolic.

Such Things Are is set on the island of Sumatra, which was, for a short time in the late eighteenth century, under English control.[70] Except for Haswell, the play has few exemplary characters. Sir Luke Tremor and his wife Lady Tremor are as weak as their name suggests. Sir Luke's history reveals him as a coward and his wife as a vain creature with false notions of her social position. Their marriage, like so many in Inchbald's plays, is unhappy, based as it is on each character's desire to dominate the other and their lack of compassion

for each other's weaknesses. The play opens in a parlor at Sir Luke Tremor's where the dialogue quickly reveals the Tremors' mutual disregard and introduces their fear of the Sultan who rules Sumatra with a tyrannic hand. A servant introduces Lord Flint, whose name again suggests his lack of compassion for others. Flint is a courtier with the affectation of being fashionably forgetful, but his memory proves acute when he hears of a conspiracy against the Sultan which he can turn to his own advantage. As the Tremors and Flint are discussing the latest news, Twineall is announced. This character will live up to his name, behaving as a parasite, flatterer and hypocrite. Into this crowd of figures representative of most of the vices of fashionable society Inchbald next introduces Haswell. Amid more riducule of Twineall's faults, this time his foppery and his conversational style, the group begins to discuss the tyranny of the Sultan's government, which includes selling his enemies into slavery or locking them in prison without recourse to a trial. Haswell's open hostility to the Sultan's practices, in sharp contrast to Tremor's vague noises, quickly mark him as a forthright, admirable character, an exemplary hero. In response to Haswell's attacks on the Sultan, Sir Luke tries to change the topic of conversation, fearful as he is that Flint will have them all jailed for treason. Frustrated by the situation because he cannot discuss the ideas he came to air, Haswell leaves. Sir Luke attempts to lighten the atmosphere by proposing a walk in the garden, and uses the opportunity to assure Flint, in a cringing and apologetic manner, of his own political neutrality.

Against these scenes of exposition, Inchbald places Twineall as an example of personal, rather than political, vice. While the political situation forms the basis for Flint's and Tremor's actions, Twineall is intent on flattering his way to

a fortune and a place at court, whatever the political climate. Thus he asks Meanright, a shipmate on his voyage to Sumatra, for gossip about the island's society. He plans to use the information to flatter his way to a position, and assures Meanright that a portion of the gain will be his as reward for the information. Meanright, however, deliberately misinforms Twineall about the secret foibles of the other characters, providing precisely the opposite of what will help Twineall insinuate himself to their good graces. Thus he tells Twineall that Lady Tremor is excessively proud of her aristocratic background, when in fact she is deeply embarrassed about her middle-class origins. Meanright asserts that Sir Luke should be praised for his military exploits and bravery, when in fact Tremor's secret dread is that everyone may know that he ran away from a battle when he served in the army. Thus the stage is set for dramatic irony and satire both of Twineall's hypocrisy and the Tremors' false appearances.

In Act II, immediately following the interchange between Meanright and Twineall that opens the act, the setting changes to a prison interior. Haswell is walking through the prison with the keeper, who must carry lights since the rooms are otherwise dark:

> Keeper: This way, Sir--the prisons this way are more extensive still--you seem to feel for these unthinking men--but they are a set of unruly people, whom no severity can make such as they ought to be.
> Haswell: And wou'd not gentleness, or mercy, do you think, reclaim them?
> Keeper: That I can't say--we never try those means in this part of the world--that man yonder, suspected of disaffection, is sentenced to be here for life, unless his friends can lay down a

> large sum by way of penalty, which he finds they cannot do, and he is turned melancholy.
> Haswell: (After a pause.) Who is that? (To another.)
> Keeper: He has been try'd for heading an insurrection, and acquitted.
> Haswell: What keeps him here?
> Keeper: Fees due to the Court—a debt contracted while he proved his innocence.
> Haswell: Lead on, my friend—let us go to some other part. (Putting his hand to his eyes.)
>
> (p.20)

However melodramatic, the dialogue emphasizes one of the contemporary concerns about prison life: not the crime, but the exorbitant "fees," both legal ones and bribes, determined the prisoner's true sentence. As the scene continues, the keeper offers Haswell a cloak, warning him that they must pass a "damp vault, which to those who are not used to it—-." He leaves the line unfinished, and thus Inchbald evokes the general horrors of jail fever and other contagious diseases rampant in the prisons while at the same time illustrating Haswell's courage as he brushes off the Keeper's conclusion "--or will you postpone your visit?" with "No--go on."

While Haswell continues his tour, a "tawny Indian Prisoner" named Zedan manages to pick his pocket. The thief, we quickly learn, is motivated by unusual inclinations:

> 1st Prisoner: A treasure—our certain ransom!
> Zedan: Liberty! our wives, our children, and our friends, will these papers purchase.

But Inchbald tries to create in Zedan a more complex motivation, certainly more than the plot requires:

> Zedan: And then the pleasure it will be to hear the stranger fret, and complain of his loss!—O, how my heart loves to see sorrow!—Misery such as I have known, on men who spurn me—who treat me as if (in my own island) I had no friends that loved me—no servants that paid me honour—no children that revered me—who forget I am a husband—a father—nay, a man.--

However awkward, such a speech is an attempt on Inchbald's part to offer psychological insight into Zedan's action. Like many speeches in the drama of the period, it offers shifts in mood that are too extreme to be realistic to modern readers. Still, the speech fulfills Inchbald's humanitarian purpose in writing the drama, for through it she argues, as would Godwin in later works, that circumstances shape character. Zedan, as his outburst reminds us, is a thief because his captors have denied his humanity and forced him into criminal behavior. Later, Zedan again meets Haswell and recognizes that here is a man who does not spurn him. Haswell's humanitarian spirit moves Zedan to return the purse he stole and to confess a new emotion:

> Haswell: You like me then?
> Zedan: (Shakes his head and holds his heart.) 'Tis something that I never felt before—it makes me like not only you, but all the world besides—the love of my family was confined to them alone; but this makes me feel I could love even my enemies.
>
> (p.28)

Haswell emerges from this encounter as a gentle but manly hero, in eighteenth-century terms, a Christ-figure whose very presence soothes and even reforms those around him. Yet Inchbald is able to knit him into the fabric of the social life of the Tremors, Twineall and Flint with as much smoothness as she displayed in leading him through the prison. Haswell is at once a gentleman respected in the society world of Flint and the Tremors and also at ease in the prison because he avoids extremes of behavior, and because he is not selfish. Inchbald's increasing skill in building dramatic tension through carefully plotted small scenes that provide both exposition and motivation is especially evident in her portrayal of Haswell in Such Things Are. This play, more than the earlier ones, demonstrates her maturing craftsmanship as a playwright. The crisp pace of the scenes prevents the melodrama of the prison from unbalancing the play, while the humanitarian theme of these scenes provides a softer, more "feeling" note to counterbalance the scenes of fashionable hypocrisy and ambition among the Tremors, Flint, and Twineall.

In Such Things Are, clearly, the "feeling mind" is manifest. The prison scenes and the society scenes each represent half of the equation: "feeling" is dominant in the former, while "mind," expressed through satire, colors the latter. Yet the prison and society characters belong in the same play, and the same political world, because Inchbald links the two by their common element, symbolized by Haswell. The Tremors act purely on the motives of self-protection and self-aggrandizement, seeking to keep up the appearances of superior breeding and courage their society requires until Twineall unwittingly gives the lie to their lives. The prisoners, particularly Zedan, likewise respond to their circumstances. When Zedan steals the wallet from Haswell, he blames the

fact of his imprisonment for the theft. Inchbald expects her audience to sympathize with the prisoner more than with the Tremors, as the later plot action reveals, and thus in the two first acts she directs us, through the use of Haswell, to compare and contrast the two groups. However aware we are of the idealization of her prisoners and the "tawny Indian's" relation to the many Noble Savages that precede him, we reach the conclusion that the prisoners are superior to the Tremors, Flint, and Twineall by virtue of their ability to recognize Haswell's special goodness. The Europeans, after all, are in a prison of their own, trapped by their ambition and their indebtedness to fashion. The Tremors are trapped by the lies they wish to conceal; Twineall is trapped by his scheme of flattering his way to a place; Flint is trapped by his loyalty to the tyrannic Sultan. Haswell offers them an escape from their prisons, from themselves, through his model of selfless behavior. But the humanitarian goals of Haswell have no interest for the Europeans. Lady Tremor continues to take delight in seeing prisoners tortured, for instance. The Tremors are metaphorically imprisoned, then, by their anti-humanitarian nature; their crime is selfishness and hypocrisy. To every dilemma, their first response is to consider their own interest. The prisoners, in contrast, while indeed they have more to gain by accepting Haswell, who represents a chance for freedom, still display superior hearts. Their first concern, in the case of two prisoners named Elvirus and Arabella, who enter later in the play, is not self-interest but precisely the opposite. Elvirus offers his own life in exchange for his father's freedom; Arabella decides to remain in prison because her husband will benefit from her act. Even Zedan considers his suffering as more miserable then the mere physical surroundings make it because his family suffers as a result. To all

these prisoners, Haswell is a redeemer because they, like him, recognize the virtue of unselfish acts.

The two groups of characters are linked in a second way, besides Haswell's intervention in both spheres. Twineall, by a carefully constructed twist in the plot, eventually ends up in prison, on trial for his life, as further discussion of the plot will reveal. It is worth noting here that, as in her earlier plays, Inchbald plans a series of plots and subplots that credibly join the disparate elements in her story in a way that wastes very few words, and enables her to use the drama as a tool for social reform without damaging the artistic composition. If Such Things Are is melodramatic by modern standards, it nevertheless would play well on a twentieth-century stage.

Inchbald's own audience was not so unlike a modern one that unalloyed virtuous behavior would be found sufficiently appealing if there were not some more worldly reward for it, of course. In much sentimental comedy, like The Conscious Lovers or Love's Last Shift, the hero or heroine acquires an aura of self-righteousness and increased self-esteem as payment for the earlier sacrifices, but likewise pockets a large fortune, a desirable spouse, and/or the esteem of his or her peers. Cibber's rake reforms and acquires a wife with the virtue of Penelope and the fortune of an heiress. Steele's Indiana gains not only young Bevil as a reward for her goodness, but a lost father and a large fortune. Inchbald, too, tempers her plea for humanitarian reform with evidence of its earthly rewards but her play is quite different in this respect from the earlier sentimental plays cited. Money is striking in its absence, as an examination of the rest of the plot reveals.

In Act III Haswell appeals to the Sultan's humane instincts when he is offered a favor for helping restore health to the royal army:

> Haswell: Sultan—the reward I ask, is to preserve more of your people still.
> Sultan: How more? my subjects are in health --no contagion reigns amongst them.
> Haswell: The prisoner is your subject—there misery—more contagious than disease, preys on the lives of hundreds—sentenced but to confinement, their doom is death.—Immured in damp and dreary vaults, they daily perish—and who can tell but that amongst the many hapless sufferers, there may be hearts, bent down with penitence to Heaven and you, for every slight offence—there may be some amongst the wretched multitude, even innocent victims.—
> Let me seek them out—let me save them, and you.
> Sultan: Amazement! retract your application—curb this weak pity; and receive our thanks.

Haswell continues to try to persuade the Sultan to grant the request, until finally the Sultan expresses his curiosity at Haswell's motives:

> Sultan: I wish to ask why you have done all this?—What is it prompts you thus to befriend the wretched and forlorn?
> Haswell: In vain for me to explain—the time it wou'd take to tell you why I act thus—
> Sultan: Send it in writing then.
> Haswell: Nay, if you will read, I'll send a book, in which is already written why I act thus.
> Sultan: What book?—What is it called?
> Haswell: "The Christian Doctrine." (Haswell bows here with the utmost reverence.) There you will find all I have done was but my duty. (p.39)

At this, the Sultan dismisses the guards and speaks to Haswell alone. He confesses:

> Your words recall reflections that distract me; nor can I bear the pressure on my mind without confessing—I am a Christian.

The Sultan explains that a lovely European girl with whom he once lived happily converted him to Christianity, but that she was lost during the last rebellion. Within this sentimental narrative the political element again emerges. During the same rebellion, the Sultan continues:

> ...I chose the imputed rebels' side, and fought for the young aspirer.—An arrow, in the midst of the engagement, pierced his heart; and his officers, alarmed at the terror this stroke of fate might cause amongst their troops, urged me (as I bore his likeness) to counterfeit it farther, and shew myself to the soldiers as their king recovered. I yielded to their suit, because it gave me ample power to avenge the loss of my Arabella...
>
> (p.40)

The Sultan, then, like so many of Inchbald's characters, is quilty of living under false appearances. He is trapped in a role he can no longer abandon except at great cost. In the case of the Sultan, there are several levels of falseness; he is not the true king, and he is in fact a Christian, not an infidel, as his behavior makes him appear. Haswell, having loosened the Sultan's tongue into making this confession, can now offer both a cure for "the mind's disease" for the ruler and "the body's cure" for all the suffering prisoners. Unlike his predecessor the

Great Mogul, this sultan is sympathetic to Christianity when reprimanded by Haswell, but in fact illustrates the Great Mogul's thesis that much violenced is committed by Christian rulers. Aware that he has moved the Sultan by his exemplary behavior, Haswell presses his advantage. He makes an appointment for later in the evening, at which time he promises the "cures." After a number of other developments, Haswell keeps his promise by bringing the female prisoner, Arabella, into the royal chamber:

> Sultan: Hah! have a care—what tortures are you preparing for me?—My mind shrinks at the idea.
> Haswell: Your wife you will behold—whom you have kept in want, in wretchedness, in a damp dungeon, for these fourteen years, because you wou'd not listen to the voice of pity.—Dread her look—her frown—not for herself alone, but for hundreds of her fellow sufferers—and while your selfish fancy was searching, with wild anxiety, for her you loved, unpitying, you forgot others might love like you.
>
> (p.66)

Arabella is introduced, and the Sultan at last removes his turban and reveals his true identity to her. After she recovers from her faint, the Sultan grants Haswell his request, giving him a ring which enpowers him to free the prisoners. The Sultan's reward for accepting Haswell, then, is renewal of his former happiness. The Sultan regains his wife, and likewise keeps his kingdom. For Haswell, the rewards remain spiritual; nonetheless, he must like other heroes, "suffer all these encomiums" as in the last act the united cast of characters praise him:

> He must suffer them—there are vitures, which praise cannot taint—such are Mr. Haswell's— for they are the offspring of a mind, superior even to the love of fame—neither can they, through malice, suffer by applause, since they are too sacred to incite envy, and must conciliate the respect, the love, and the admiration of all.
>
> (p.74)

Such tenuous rewards are clearly adequate for Haswell, but frailer humans need more concrete incentives to virtue. Thus Arabella is reunited with her lover, the pseudo-Sultan. Elvirus, who had offered his life in exchange for the release of his imprisoned father, is likewise rewarded with a wife, Aurelia. It is worth noting that these two unions are the only ones that take place, and both are of minor importance to the main action. (Inchbald is remarkable for her avoidance of romantic interest in this and many of her plays; instead she focuses on love after marriage, or loss of love in unsuccessful marriages, as in the case of the Tremors.)

Sir Luke and his wife, like the Sultan, are cornered into admitting their false appearances by the end of the play, and again, Haswell performs the priestly role of audience to the confession:

> Sir Luke: Who are we to tell our story to?—There does not seem to be any one sitting in judgement.—
> Haswell: Tell it to me, Sir—I will report it.

The Tremors accept Haswell as an intercessor, a sure sign of their repentance in the world of this play, and proceed with a long story which leads to Twineall, who, because of his deceptions, has been imprisoned. Yet even as they move to

release Twineall, it is clear that the Tremors are a long way from being true Christians. Like the couples in I'll Tell You What, the Tremors' future contains little promise of happiness. As Lady Tremor enters the prison looking for Twineall, her first remark is:

> Oh! if his head is off, pray let me look at it?—

The subsequent dialogue makes clear her shallow values:

> Twineall: No, Madam, it is on—and I am very happy to be able to tell you so.—
> Lady: Dear Heaven!—I expected to have seen it off!—but no matter—as it is on—I am come that it may be kept on—and have brought my Lord Flint, and Sir Luke as witnesses.
>
> (71)

Sir Luke and Flint are similarly without compassion for Twineall:

> Haswell: And what do you hope from this confession?
> Sir Luke: To remit the prisoner's punishment of death to something less, if the Sultan will please to annul the sentence.
> Lord Flint: Yes—and grant ten or twelve years imprisonment—or the Gallies for fourteen years—or——
> Sir Luke: Ay, ay, something in that way.

Haswell's response reminds the two speakers that they are angry with Twineall because he ridiculed them, not because he committed a true crime:

> Haswell: For shame—for shame—Gentlemen!—the extreme rigour you shew in punishing a dissension from your

> opinion, or a satire upon your folly, proves to convinction, what reward you had bestowed upon a skilful flatterer.

Finally, the Tremors confess their true natures to Twineall and the others in an attempt to explain why his flattery had an effect the reverse of what he had expected and Flint offers the last word of advice to Twineall:

> Lord Flint: If Mr. Haswell has obtained your pardon, Sir, it is all very well—but let me advise you to keep your sentiments on politics to yourself, for the future—as you value that pretty head of yours.
> Twineall: I thank you, Sir—I do value it.

Thus Twineall's ambition and his scheme to insinuate himself into the good graces of the Tremors has led him into more serious crime, or at least the appearance of it. Private vices become public vices in a world where the individual is constantly reminded that he is part of a larger community. Haswell's benevolence, his participation in all spheres of society—the court, the beau monde, the prison—illustrates the moral of the play. Selfishness leads to self-destruction, while selfless behavior improves both the individual and society.

Following the absolution of Twineall and the Tremors, Elvirus and Zedan enter to announce their good fortune, thus reinforcing the notion that goodness gets rewarded. Elvirus will marry the young woman Aurelia to whose family the Sultan has restored forfeited lands; he clearly descends from the true sentimental heroes of Cibber and Steele. Zedan comes to Haswell

> ...to bid you farewell—which I wou'd never do, had I not a family in wretchedness, till my return—for you shou'd be my master, and I wou'd be your slave.
>
> (73)

Again, Zedan benefits from his unselfish act; he regains his family when he decides not to pursue his own desire in following Haswell.

The conclusion of Such Things Are echoes Inchbald's earlier plays in its note of incomplete resolution for some of the fashionable characters. The Tremors, like Lady Harriet in I'll Tell You What, suffer the effects of a bad marriage and of preoccupation with fashionable vices. In the later play, the edge of cruelty is sharper, however, and any hope that the characters would live happily beyond the fifth act is undercut by evidence of their insistently blood-thirsty plans for Twineall and Twineall's persistent attempts to flatter Haswell. Yet on the very consistency of these characters rests Inchbald's skill as a playwright. Fifth-act conversions are the weakness of most sentimental comedies; Vanbrugh was quick to stage The Relapse as a sequel to Love's Last Shift to show the unlikeliness of Lovelace's continuing virtue, or of the domestic harmony possible if Amanda maintained her self-righteous posture. Inchbald limits the reformation to the Sultan, whose motivation is both political and personal. He secures not only Arabella but, we assume, his kingdom, by following Haswell's advice. The released prisoners in asserting their goodness are in fact only affirming the personalities they already possessed, but which they risked losing during their imprisonment. Thus Inchbald's play is a plea for humanitarian reform in a dramatic structure where characters' behavior is psychologically consistent and where virtue is inspired by practical as well as moral motives. Like her other plays, Such Things Are advocates a pragmatic morality. Whereas I'll Tell You What focuses on personal morality, the later play

broadens the writer's scope by examining a code of behavior for society, placing characters in a political setting and using the prison as a literal setting and as a metaphor for fashionable society.

In 1808, Inchald wrote a preface for Such Things Are when it was included in The British Theatre. She affirms that John Howard was her inspiration for Haswell, and adds a further explanation of her sources that illuminates her creative methods:

> As Haswell is the hero of the serious part of this play, so is Twineall of the comic half. His character and conduct is formed on the plan of Lord Chesterfield's finished gentleman. That nobleman's Letters to his Son excited, at least, the idea of Twineall in the author's mind and the public appeared to be well acquainted with his despicable reputation, as with the highly honourable one of Howard.
>
> (71)

The comment reveals that, even twenty years later,her contempt for the fashionable life immortalized in Chesterfield's letters left her with as much distaste for his lordship as Dr. Johnson himself expressed. If she was writing popular plays in 1788, Inchbald was not writing against her own convictions. Moreover, the preface suggests how very conscious Inchbald was about the craft of playwrighting. Her comparison of Haswell and Twineall shows how she designed the structures of her plays with more thoughtful attention to balance and antithesis than was common in her day. This attention to structure would help her enormously when she turned to novel writing. Haswell and Twineall divide the play structurally, into the "serious" and the "comic" components; they

likewise divide the moral from the immoral. Structure and theme, then, are built together and reinforce each other throughout the play. Such Things Are, as a result, is the work of an accomplished craftsman as well as a popular artist.

In Such Things Are, moreover, Inchbald anticipates themes that would become popular with many Romantic writers. It is likely, given their close literary exchange, that Godwin's Caleb Williams, for example, which carries the alternate title Things As They Are, may owe something to the ideas of his friend's play. It is curious, too, that Caleb Williams was later dramatized as The Iron Chest. Perhaps Godwin's intense and often gloomy exploration of "how circumstances have created character" owes something to Such Things Are. The use of fiction to "express the same historical vision, the same hopes and fears for the future" as were postulated in Enquiry Concerning Political Justice shows Godwin's desire to find a form "more universal, and...more open to the expression of the meaning of history because it was free from merely historical facts".[72] What Inchbald had attempted to do in the drama, Godwin adapted to the novel. The two writers share a concern with reforming social institutions, and both focus on prisons and the metaphor of imprisonment to explore their ideas. If Inchbald's play disturbs modern readers because of its mixture of the serious and the comic and its use of melodrama in the prison scenes, this discomfort partly arises from our expectation that these topics require both tragic form and psychological depth to be accurate. We may be experiencing the same discomfort Goldsmith expressed in the "Essay on the Theatre." Ronald Paulson's theory, cited earlier, suggests that Goldsmith's unease emerged from his position as an advocate of "old comedy" in an age of transition, and perhaps his recognition that he was himself an advocate of the "weeping" esthetic. Thus

when Inchbald, according to Paulson's hypothesis, expressed "a new and original impulse through old conventions" she created a play that carried "anthithetic assumptions." While such an explanation does not necessarily make Such Things Are a better play, it does help explain Inchbald's intentions and help us to place her as a woman very much of her time. The greater success, at least to modern critics, of Caleb Williams suggests that Godwin, by using a new genre for the "new and original impulses" eliminated some of the antithetical feedback, so to speak; he channeled the radical ideas into a novel, for which there were fewer conventional expectations. The more elastic form was thus better suited to the new ideas, and there is less feeling of tension between old and new; Godwin creates a more uniform tone by eliminating the comedy in favor of sentiment. Yet in the adaptation of history to literary form and specifically the interest in prisons as shapers of personalities, Inchbald anticipated Godwin by half a dozen years. If the Tremors, moreover, owe their origins to the old comedy of careless wit and anti-marriage gaiety, the prisoners, significantly, are new characters, belonging in part to the newer theater of sentiment but also looking ahead to the Romantic taste for the imagery of prisons to express the human condition.

If, too, I'll Tell You What anticipates many of Inchbald's concerns in A Simple Story, Such Things Are is closer to Nature and Art with its satire on social institutions, particularly the justice system, and in its portrayal of Hannah Primrose, the young village girl seduced by a wealthy young boy whose conduct follows the dangerous codes of behavior laid down by Lord Chesterfield. Like the later novel, this play condemns society for judging its citizens by their wealth rather than their character.

For the prisoners in Such Things Are stand accused of nothing so much as poverty. Over and over the Keeper reminds Haswell that if the inmates could pay their "fees," their freedom would be assured. In many ways, the excess of feeling evident in the play is an expression of the very real cruelty of the prison system and the prisoners' lives. The feeling is intense in direct proportion to the seriousness of the problem. Sentiment, from Inchbald's pen, is a humane outcry against an almost hopelessly corrupt system. The fact that these pleas are leavened by wit and dry satire only reinforces our conviction of her sincerity and her "feeling mind."

Endnotes to Chapter Two

[1]Elizabeth Inchbald, A Simple Story, ed. J.M.S. Tompkins (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), Preface, p. 1. Unless otherwise stated, all references are to this, the most recent and best, edition of the novel. Page numbers are indicated in parentheses after subsequent quotations.

[2]Elizabeth Inchbald, The British Theatre (London: 1808), see Volume II for the preface to Susanna Centlivre's The Busy Body.

[3]Marilyn Butler, Romance, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 9-10.

[4]Nancy Cotton, Women Playwrights in England c. 1363-1750 (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980), see pages 71-73; the quotation from Behn appears on p. 73.

[5]Cotton, p. 205.

[6]Cotton, p. 207.

[7]Inchbald, British Theatre, Vol. II.

[8]Boaden is fond of aneceotes that reveal Mrs. Inchbald's frugality; a typical one tells how she kept a caller waiting because she had not finished scrubbing her floors. See I.

[9]The best source of information on salary is The London Stage. Since the book is arranged by years, we find Inchbald's salary for each year she spent in London as an actress, i.e., 1780-1789.

[10]A good study of this is Gerald P. Tyson, Joseph Johnson: A Liberal Publisher (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979).

[11]Elizabeth Inchbald, I'll Tell You What in The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald, ed. Paula Backscheider (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980), Vol. I. All references to the plays are from this two volume reprint edition. Citations are to volume and page numbers of individual plays since the volumes are not sequentially paginated; all further references will be in the text unless otherwise indicated.

[12]See previous note, Chap. 1, #41 for a list of books on "the woman question."

[13]Angelina Goreau, Reconstructing Aphra (New York: The Dial Press, 1980), p. 290-292.

[14]Inchbald, The British Theatre, Vol. II. Preface to The Busy Body.

[15]See F.P. Lock, Susanna Centlivre (Boston: Twayne, 1979) for a good summary of her life.

[16]Inchbald, The British Theatre, Every One Has His Fault, Preface, Vol. 18.

[17]John O'Keeffe, Recollections of the Life of John O'Keeffe (London: H. Colburn, 1826), II, 143.

[18]Salary information is from The London Stage.

[19]M. Dorothy George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), p. 163.

[20]George, p. 166.

[21]George, p. 167.

[22]George, p. 164.

[23]George, p. 165.

[24]George, p. 172.

[25]George, p. 183.

[26]Roger Manvell, Sarah Siddons: Portrait of an Actress (New York: Putnam, 1971), p. 116.

[27]Manvell, p. 117 and see also Linda Kelly, The Kemble Era (New York: Random House, 1980), p. 182 for Siddons' retirement.

[28]Manvell, p. 149.

[29]Manvell, p. 293.

[30]Charles Beecher Hogan, The London Stage 1776-1800 A Critical Introduction (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), reproduced following p. lxxii. Bill dated Aug. 13, 1785.

[31]Inchbald, The British Theatre, Preface to A Bold Stroke for a Wife, Vol. IV.

[32]George Sherburn, The Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1660-1789) Vol. III of A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 1024.

[33]Sherburn, p. 1099.

[34]Butler, p. 1.

[35]Boaden, II, 208.

[36]Butler, p. 16.

[37]Butler, pp. 30-31.

[38]Oliver Goldsmith, "An Essay on the Theatre," originally appeared in the Westminster Magazine, or the Pantheon of Taste in 1773. Goldsmith's subtitle is "A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy." I quote from the 1773 text as it is reproduced in Geoffrey Tillotson, et. al. Eighteenth-Century English Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1969), p. 1258.

[39]Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility (1915; rpt. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 2.

[40]John Harrington Smith, The Gay Couple in Restoration Drama (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966). p. 238.

[41]Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama (Michigan: Michigan State University Press), p. 123.

[42]Paul E. Parnell, "The Sentimental Mask," PMLA, 78 (1963), rpt. in John Loftis, ed., Restoration Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism (New York: Oxford-Galaxy Books, 1966), p. 287.

[43]Richard Bevis, The Laughing Tradition: Stage Comedy in Garrick's Day (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), p. 5.

[44]See The London Stage for 1780-81 season.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Bevis, p. 83.

[47]Robert Adams Day, Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 195.

[48]Bevis. p.

[49]Goldsmith, in Tillotson, et. al., p. 1259.

[50] Illustrations are in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum Library, and are only a few from among their large collection of balloon ephemera.

[51]See London Stage for 1784.

[52]London Stage.

[53]This and all subsequent references to The Mogul Tale are from the Backscheider edition. Page references will be given in the text. These numbers refer to pages of the individual play; the volume itself is not sequentially paginated, nor are lines numbered.

[54]Boaden includes Swift among the authors Inchbald read, specifically his letters. The complete list is discussed in Chapter Three.

[55]The text contains the curious word "implame" for which I have been unable to find a meaning. The context suggests a rather violent form of torture; he will be placed on a table and cut up, he fears.

[56]See The London Stage for 1783-84 season.

[57]Henry Fielding, Tom Jones (New York, Norton, 1973), p. 61.

[58]Samual Richardson, Clarissa (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1962), p. 98.

[59]Paula Backscheider, The Plays of Elizabeth Inchbald, p. xxv.

[60]Backscheier, p. xxxi.

[61]Wedgwood's medallion is illustrated in Anthony Burton, Josiah Wedgwood (New York: Stein and Day, 1976) opposite p. 176. The logo "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?" surrounds a raised figure of a Black slave kneeling in an attitude of urgent prayer.

[62]Ronald Paulson, Satire and The Novel in the Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 11.

[63]Goldsmith, "Essay on the Theatre," in Tillotson et. al. p. 1259.

[64]This quote appears in the "Advertisement" to Such Things Are in Backsheider's edition; no page is given.

[65]H.D. Traill, ed. Social England (London: Cassell and Co., 1896), V, 483.

[66]Howard's The State of Prisons was first published in 1777 and centered in prisons in England and Wales but included foreign prisons as well, mainly for comparative purposes.

[67]Christopher Hibbert, King Mob (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1958), p. 125.

[68]Carl Cone, The English Jacobins (New York: Scribner's, 1968), p. 75.

[69]Hibbert, p. 226.

[70]The English briefly ruled Sumatra in the late eighteenth century. Other than its distance from England, Inchbald seems to have no particular reason for her choice of setting except that the island was reported to be one of the places Howard visited on his humanitarian tour of prisons.

[71]Inchbald, The British Theatre, Such Things Are, Vol. IV.

[72]Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel, p. 77 and see also Inchbald's preface to The Iron Chest in The British Theatre, between the younger Colman's play and Godwin's novel.

Chapter Three

A Useful Moral: Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*

In an essay published in The Artist for June, 1807, Mrs. Inchbald discussed the practice of writing novels. At one point in her frequently satirical essay she took a more serious tone and remarked on the differences between the craft of writing plays and that of writing fiction:

> The Novelist 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 an author of plays is held by the Lord Chamberlain's office, and the degree of dependence which 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. Some auditors of a theatre, like some aforesaid novel-readers, love to see that which they have seen before; and originality, under the opprobrious name of innovation, might be fatal to a drama, where the will of such critics is the law, and execution instantly follows judgment...
>
> A dramatist must not speak of national concerns, except in one dull round of panegyrick. He must not allude to the feeble minister of state, nor to the ecclesiastical coxcomb.
>
> Whilst the poor dramatist is, therefore, confined to a few particular provinces; the novel-writer has the whole world to range, in search of men and topics. Kings, warriors, statesmen, churchmen, are all subjects of his power. The mighty and the mean, the common-place and the extraordinary, the profane and the sacred, all are prostrate before his muse. Nothing is forbidden, nothing is withheld from the imitation of a novelist, except-other novels.[1]

Although this essay was written thirty years after Elizabeth Inchbald sketched the earliest version of her own first novel, her ideas offer some reliable clues to her perception of the form to which she turned after her retirement from the stage in 1789. However facetious in tone, moreover, the essay identifies clearly the many vices that plagued the popular novel of the later half of the eighteenth century and celebrates Inchbald's confidence in the primary attraction of A Simple Story, namely, its originality.

To appreciate more fully the truth of her assertion and to understand the significance of her comparison of the playwright's with the novelist's craft, we must first look at another manifesto on the novel, this one written by a friend of Mrs. Inchbald's, Thomas Holcroft, who used the preface to Alwyn: or the Gentleman Comedian to vent his spleen on the state of the novel in 1780. Recalling the tone of Goldsmith's famous essay of eight years before, Holcroft declares that "Novels have fallen into disrepute." He goes on to satirize the weaknesses of the plots of popular works of fiction:

> Lovesick girls and boys are supposed to be the only persons capable of being amused by [novels]: and, while poverty of style, a want of knowledge of the human heart, of men and manners; while a puny tale of love and misfortune, cross fathers, and unhappy children, unnatural rigour, and unaccountable reconciliation, without discrimination of character, without variety of incident, with but one set of phrases, one languid, inanimate, description, with scarce a single ray of imagination to comfort the disconsolate reader, are their great characteristics, Novels shall continue to want admirers...[2]

Holcroft's remedy for the decline of the novel is to dissociate it from Romance. After a lengthy tirade against "romances of voluminous magnitude, in which the passion of love was drawn in the most hyperbolical manner" he adds, "Plot they had none, and but one moral distributed through the endless pages of endless volumes..." He defines the difference between the novel and the romance:

> Modern writers use the word Romance to signify a fictitious history of detached and independent adventures and, under that idea, call the Telemaque of Fenelon and the Cyrus of Ramsay, Romances, Lesage's Gil Blas and Smollet(t)'s Roderick Random, though of a different species, come under the same denomination. A Novel is another kind of work. Unity of design is its character. In a Romance, if the incidents be well marked and related with spirit, the intention is answered; and adventures pass before the view for no other purpose than to amuse by their peculiarity, without, perhaps, affecting the main story, if there should be one. But in a Novel, a combination of incidents, entertaining in themselves, are made to form a whole; and an unnecessary circumstance becomes a blemish, by detaching from the simplicity which is requisite to exhibit that whole to advantage. Thus, as in dramatic works, those circumstances which do not tend either to the illustration or forwarding the main story, or which do not mark some character, or person in the drama, are to be esteemed unnecessary.[3]

Holcroft, like Inchbald, was an actor, a dramatist, and a novelist. It is not surprising, then, to find him espousing a theory of the novel which Inchbald would find valuable when she wrote A Simple Story.

To understand the critical theory advocated by Holcroft is a first step in assessing Inchbald's purposes in her novel, for the originality of the work is best recognized when A Simple Story is studied within the larger context of the state of the novel in the 1790's. Of particular importance here is the theory of "design" or unity which informed the critical thinking of the so-called "jacobin" novelists. Failure to appreciate these ideas has led many critics to misjudge Inchbald's work and that of her contemporaries and to toss aside the work as the result of "an unconscious power, of a half-formed art."[4] Further, it is necessary to understand the relationship between autobiography and the novel, which became extremely important, especially with Inchbald, in the fiction of the 1790's. Given Inchbald's position as a minor writer closely connected with the social history of her day, such emphasis is more than justified because it helps us to understand not only this one writer, but more broadly the literary times in which she lived. Thus, even if A Simple Story were worthless as fiction, we could still learn a good deal about the history of the novel from its popularity and its connections with the life of its author.

Fortunately, A Simple Story is well worth reading, both as fiction and as a document of literary history. Given Inchbald's many years of experience as a writer of successful theatrical pieces, it is extremely misguided to call her an "unconscious" artist. As she herself writes so often in her criticism, the dramatist is obliged to be intensely alert to the effects of her words on her audience; half-formed art results in immediate and public failure in the theater. It was a lesson she carried into her novel writing. The extensive revisions through which she put both of her novels, and the detailed criticism she solicited from her friends, further suggest that the degree to which she was a conscious

artist puts her distinctly above the level of many of the other popular writers of the day.[5] This careful attention to "design," then, arises in part from Inchbald's training in the theater; it further manifests itself when she begins to work more closely with Holcroft and Godwin. To study A Simple Story in the light of these contemporary theories of the novel is the first aim of this chpater; subsequently, I show the methods by which Mrs. Inchbald synthesized these theories with her own interests in narrative form and autobiographical writing to design a novel very much of its time but also better than our times have recognized.

In Holcroft's essay on the novel we find two clues for understanding Inchbald's technical interests in A Simple Story; "unity of design" and the relationship of the successfully structured novel to the drama. Whether she "learned" these concepts from Holcroft, or arrived at them independently is impossible to know at this distance. Most likely is the possibility that these ideas were "in the air" and were seized upon by both writers. What is more important is that these ideas were available, and that she had become a friend of both Holcroft and Godwin, to whom the ideas were formative. As a result, and as Janice Cauwells argues,[6] the theories frequently resulted from discussion and exchange of ideas, and of manuscripts, among the novelists. Inchbald, in fact, had already begun her outline for a novel some three years before Holcroft's preface appeared.[7] In the decade that followed the publication of Alwyn, she would revise and expand her tale and consult both Holcroft and Godwin, at the same time that she read and commented on their manuscripts. If, then, Holcroft sketched the "manifesto," as Gary Kelly calls it,[8] for the new novel of the 1790's, he was not the only innovator, nor the only source of the critical theory on the emerging genre, but with Holcroft's formulation of current views as a

convenient starting point, we can begin to place Inchbald's fiction in its own time.

"Unity of design" was, according to Kelly, "philosophically motivated" and "central to the technique of the major English Jacobin novelists."[8] The term "Jacobin" is one that has been applied, often rather loosely, to those thinkers and writers in England who supported the early efforts toward republicanism in France and who, by extension, favored reform on their own side of the Channel as well. In appropriating the term "Jacobin" from the political to the literary sphere, Kelly marks out a small but important group of writers in which he includes Elizabeth Inchbald. This Jacobin circle, whose novels illustrated their radical political thinking, included Godwin, Robert Bage, and Holcroft as well. In drawing attention to the relationships among these writers, Kelly encourages his readers to perceive in this fiction more significant connections than had previously been recognized. The common ground for these writers was not only an interest in political reform, but also a bias in favor of a wider range of radical notions, affecting religious dissent, feminism, anti-slavery activity, and, in Bage's case particularly, scientific and technological advance. Used to define a literary group, "Jacobin" is a very inexact label, but it highlights the fact that for these writers literary form is often a function of political beliefs, and it is only in recognizing this connection that we can fully appreciate the fiction. The degree of political engagement varies greatly from writer to writer, as does the quality of literary achievement. Still, the term is useful for identifying an important literary development of the 1790's, namely the increasing interest in the novel—particularly the non-epistolary novel—as a form deserving a new and closer scrutiny and respect. The Jacobin novelists are among the earliest to pay

careful attention to the structure of the genre, and to exploit two previously ignored directions for the novel; first, the use of dramatic structure to give tighter form to the fictional narrative, and second, the implantation of autobiographical material into the plot and characterization to invest the resulting story with new life. The value of Holcroft's essay is that it reminds us that for this group of writers the theory of "unity of design" and the strident anti-romance argument with which he bolsters it announce the close connection between political and literary developments in the late eighteenth century. If we are to understand the writers' purposes, we must understand their politics.

For Holcroft, the philosophical basis for "unity of design" is closely connected to his objections against Romance. For, as Gary Kelly explains, Romance was associated with the feudal society opposed by the French Revolution, and was thus an anti-jacobin form. Kelly elaborates:

> Holding certain political and moral views is of course no claim to special attention as a novelist. Nevertheless, the very nature of some of the views of the English Jacobin novelists made them consider the problem of technique as something more than the problem of planning and ornamentation. In particular, their belief in the 'doctrine of necessity,' expressed in the principle that 'the characters of men originate in their external circumstances,' led them to consider the integration of character and plot as essential to the nature of the true novel...They tried to show how their characters had been formed by circumstances, and how character and incident were linked together like the parts of a syllogism.[9]

With Mrs. Inchbald, "unity of design" is a principle that helps answer recent critical objections to the structure of A Simple Story, and further helps to illuminate the "feeling mind" as it operates in this novel. For while Kelly and others are certainly correct in emphasizing the links between Elizabeth Inchbald, Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin and Robert Bage, we must also establish the individual differences between her approach and theirs if we are fully to recognize her uniqueness. To begin, we must consider the plot and the structure of A Simple Story.[10]

Volumes I and II contain the story of Dorriforth and his ward Miss Milner. Volume I opens when the young woman joins Dorriforth's household upon her father's death, and we learn that her guardian is a Roman Catholic who has taken vows of celibacy following his training for the priesthood. Miss Milner is a Protestant, the child of a Catholic father and a Protestant mother. Volume II concludes with the marriage of the guardian and his ward following the dispensation of his vows. The second part of the novel, Volumes III and IV, begins with an account of the wife's history, summarizing seventeen years since the marriage. Much has changed; Dorriforth, now Lord Elmwood, had left England for three years in order to pursue business interests in the West Indies. During his absence, Lady Elmwood had fallen under the influence of a former suitor and, following their adulterous relationship, fled from her husband's house. In vengeance for his wife's crime, Dorriforth refuses to acknowledge Matilda, the only child of his marriage with the former Miss Milner. The action resumes when Matilda is a young woman and her mother is dying. Volumes III and IV narrate the rejection of Matilda by her father and his eventual reconciliation with his daughter.

Commenting on the structure of the novel in 1833, Boaden speculated on the "problem" of the seventeen-year gap that exists between the end of the second volume and the opening of the third. He justifies the significant time lapse by offering as a model Winter's Tale, where Shakespeare let sixteen years elapse between the beginning and end of the action. Subsequent critics have followed his lead. J.M.S. Tompkins notes that "The author designed her book on the model of Winter's Tale, a story of wrong and reconciliation in two generations, and it is penetrated with (Inchbald's) dramatic experience."

To the critic who reviewed the novel for the Monthly Review in April, 1791, the gap in time is explained not by a literary parallel, but by the meaning of the fiction itself. The reviewer defines the design of the book as giving "a picture of Lord Elmwood, in all these trying circumstances, as well in his conduct to the wife...as to the daughter." He comments further,

> It is this that gives unity of design to the whole fable, and makes it one unbroken narrative; not two stories woven together, which has been erroneously observed. When Lady Elmwood closes her days, the tale is not brought to a conclusion. We are interested for her daughter...We know the austerity of Lord Elmwood; and curiosity pants to be informed, whether he will remain inflexible to the last, or yield, in the end, to the force of nature, and the kind propensities of the heart. Hence we perceive unity of design, and in that sense, a simple story; simplex duntaxat (sic) et unum.[12]

The emphasis on "unity of design," and the supportive tone of the reviewer go a long way toward suggesting Holcroft as the anonymous critic, but whoever

the author of the article, it seems clear that the gap in time was perceived even by sympathetic readers as a flaw in the book's structure. While certainly Inchbald knew her Shakespeare, moreover, to compare the plot of A Simple Story with that of The Winter's Tale does little to explain her purposes in the novel, or to explain the troublesome seventeen year gap. To understand A Simple Story as a "dramatic novel" evincing the principle of "unity of design" is the first step not only in understanding the novel itself but also in seeing the connections between this work and Mrs. Inchbald's dramatic writing. A schematic appraisal of the particulars of each part of A Simple Story suggests that Inchbald, far from being an "unconscious" artist or one careless about the structure of her book, was in fact rigid in her planning. Godwin, many years later, would complain that using dramatic structure was in fact too confining. Commenting on part of Nature and Art which she had sent him, he wrote back,

> I approve. I perceive in this sketch the same sureness of aim and steadiness of hand, which first told me what you were capable of, in the 'Simple Story.' It seems to me that the drama puts shackles upon you, and that the compression it requires prevents your genuis from expanding itself.[13]

Not, then, to one specific play, but to the broader sphere of dramatic influence we must turn for an explanation of Inchbald's technique, for it is through elements from the theatre transplanted onto the structure of A Simple Story that Inchbald attempts to achieve "unity of design." Through the juxtaposition of various characters and events she generates serious themes that make this novel dramatic, interesting, and innovative. Particular parallels and antitheses

between the plots of the two stories, or the two halves of the continuous story, are worth describing in some detail as evidence of her attention to technique, and as explanation of her omission of the seventeen years.

First of all, as each story opens, we have a dying parent pleading with Dorriforth to act as guardian to a young woman; Mr. Milner in the first part, and Lady Elmwood in the second, plead on behalf of their respective daughters. Thus Lady Elmwood finds herself repeating the very gestures of her own dying father. Dorriforth consents in each case, although he attaches certain conditions in the second one. While the first custody is based on his friendship for Milner, the second, in contrast, is founded on a stronger tie, that of his responsibility to Matilda as a parent. Thus his reserve toward his daughter reflects the increasing rigidity of his will, for if the first guardianship might be based on social obligation, the second should derive from his natural love toward his daughter. His refusal to acknowledge her illustrates his determination to repress his feelings.

Miss Milner, at the beginning of Volume I, is a rich heiress; Inchbald emphasizes the young woman's undisciplined character and her impetuous temper, which have resulted from the fashionable and erratic education to which she has been exposed. Matilda, in the next generation, raised in adversity and guided by the surrogate parents Miss Woodley and the priest Sandford, is not only better-tempered, but "as a scholar," she "excelled most of her sex." (221) The design of the novel thus encourages the reader to contrast the education of the mother with that of the daughter, and reveals the author's concern with integrating character development, plot, and theme.

In the first part Inchbald likewise uses the action of small scenes to prepare us to interpret parallel scenes in the second part. Thus a turning point in the relationship between Dorriforth and Miss Milner takes place "as he met her accidentially on the staircase." (27). The quarrel that evolves from this encounter eventually results in each character's reassessing his or her feelings for the other and leads at last to their marriage. Mirroring this moment in the later story is an even more dramatic scene when Matilda, forbidden her father's presence though permitted to reside under his roof, is, like her mother, descending a staircase when she thinks he has gone out. Suddenly, she looks up and finds that "Lord Elmwood was immediately before her!" (223) She faints and her stern father "once pressed her to his bosom" before exiling her from his home. The effectiveness of the scene is enhanced by the fact that Inchbald does not tell the reader that in Dorriforth's mind the second encounter must recall the first; she leaves the reader to see the connection and to interpret Dorriforth's psychological reaction for himself. It is the kind of dramatic compression, and the omission of didactic narrative in favor of action and dialogue in such a scene that makes her novel unique for its time.

There are differences as well as parallels between the two staircase scenes. Miss Milner, upon meeting her guardian, feels a degree of guilt because she has aroused Dorriforth's anger by her indulgence in "balls, plays, incessant company" for "night after night, his sleep had been disturbed by fears for her safety while abroad." (27) Matilda, in contrast, is innocent, yet it is she who will later be kidnapped by a rakish rejected suitor and require rescue by her father. Thus again Inchbald uses the structure of the novel to draw parallels between the lives of the two women and through the mother and daughter to illustrate the

character of Dorriforth, and to expain his behavior. The novel argues that at least in part the hero's reaction to Matilda has been shaped by the emotions and "external circumstances," to use Godwin's phrase, of his relationship with his wife. He has been conditioned, to use a more modern term, not to allow himself to trust his love for his daughter, for fear that she will betray him as did Lady Elmwood. This "thinking" response to the situation conflicts with the "feeling" one that urges him to accept Matilda on her own terms.

A second relationship between Dorriforth and an innocent child reinforces the meaning of the primary one with Matilda. In the early volumes, we learn the story of young Rushbrook, a nephew whom Dorriforth has refused to acknowledge because of his mother's unapproved marriage. Dorriforth has banished the boy, but Miss Milner decides to attempt a reconciliation. She brings the child into Dorriforth's presence without revealing his identity. The child, aged three, unwittingly "threw himself about his uncle's neck." (36) Dorriforth is deeply touched by the gesture, but forces himself to deny the child when his ward announces that it is the nephew, Rushbrook. Later in the novel, after Dorriforth has rejected Matilda in vengeance for his wife's adultery, he declares Rushbrook his heir. It is then especially meaningful when Matilda, as she faints on the staircase upon seeing her father, instinctively puts her arms around his neck and recalls the innocence of the previous scene with the young Rushbrook. She, like the nephew, is nonetheless banished, at least for the moment.

The parallels continue. In Chapter XI, Dorriforth strikes the rakish Sir Frederick Lawnley for his rude behavior towards Miss Milner. A duel results, but both participants emerge unharmed. The encounter is marked by dialogue between Dorriforth and his mentor Sandford in which the younger man reveals

that his religious principles would have prevented him from firing even if Lawnley had provoked a response. In Volume III, we discover that it is no other than the same Lawnley, now Duke of Avon, who has been Lady Elmwood's partner in adultery. Dorriforth again faces his old opponent in a duel, but this time the results are strikingly different. He leaves the Duke "so maimed, and defaced with scars, as never again to endanger the honour of a husband." (198) Dorriforth is also very seriously wounded. This second duel emphasizes the great change in the hero's character; the brutality of the fight leaves the reader with no question that Dorriforth has been drastically altered by circumstances.

Turning to the serious love interests in the plot, we find Inchbald continuing her unity of design. Miss Milner, discovering herself to be in love with Dorriforth early in Volume I, takes Miss Woodley's advice and flees to Bath to hide her passion; Dorriforth at this point is still bound by his vows of celibacy and Milner's love is therefore taboo. So unhappy and confused is she by these circumstances that she becomes extremely ill. (It is worth noting here that Miss Milner has been raised a Protestant, and one implication of her upbringing is that she does not share Miss Woodley's moral outrage at the crime of falling in love with a priest. Given Milner's "improper education," she may even find the prohibition a spur to her passionate interest in her guardian.) Her illness certainly reveals the intensity of her dilemma, in any case, and Miss Woodley and Dorriforth are sufficiently alarmed that they rush to Bath to see her. The illness is cured by the news that Dorriforth is now Lord Elmwood, and no longer bound by the vows of the priesthood. (He has in fact been encouraged by the Vatican to marry so that the earldom he has inherited will remain in a Catholic family.) The heroine's illness is thus proven to be psychological in its origins. A similar type

of illness strikes in the second generation when Rushbrook is confronted with a love dilemma. Dorriforth has forbidden him to discuss Matilda under any circumstances. Rushbrook, as any reader of novels would expect, immediately seeks out the young heroine and falls madly in love. Dorriforth, Rushbrook discovers to his surprise, is eager to see his heir married, and commands the boy to name the object of his affections. Trapped by the conflicting orders of his uncle, Rushbrook takes to his bed and, after his recovery, finds that many of the obstacles to his love have been removed. Thus Miss Milner and Rushbrook are unwittingly trapped by Dorriforth into situations where any action they take will offend their guardian, and each escapes, at least temporarily, into the safety of the sickbed. These circumstances suggest both the power Dorriforth exercises over those entrusted to his care and the dangers of his strong determination.

Smaller scenes further reinforce the parallel structure. Just before Dorriforth marries his ward he is about to leave for the Continent in an attempt to forget her. Inchbald paints a touching scene of Milner watching the carriage draw up to the door, and rescues her heroine only at the very last moment, as the coachman enters to collect Dorriforth's baggage. At the moment of departure, Sandford intervenes and persuades the couple to be married; they agree, and the coach is sent away. Similarly, Matilda faces her father's expected departure from Elmwood House (243), and starts at the sound of the coach pulling up to the door. She assumes that this will be her last glimpse of her father and the poignant moment is a turning point in her story, just as the earlier aborted departure marked a change in Miss Milner's fortunes. In the second instance Dorriforth departs in earnest, and we are left to speculate that in each case precisely the opposite action might have led to a happier conclusion.

The two parts of the novel are linked throughout by such scenes. Thus upon completing the novel as a whole, the reader has been prepared to contrast the two stories and to see the significance of the relationship between the lives of the characters. The broadest thread that unifies the book is the education of the two women, and their respective relationships with Dorriforth, as I shall presently endeavor to demonstrate. A second important link is the marriages toward which each part leads. When, for example, Miss Milner and Dorriforth are hastily wedded by Sandford, the omens foretell disaster; Inchbald foreshadows the failure of their union early in the plot. When Miss Milner first meets her guardian, in fact, "he turned pale--something like a foreboding of disaster trembled at his heart..."(13) As Volume II ends, Sandford has hastily married the pair, but Miss Milner "felt an excruciating shock, when, looking on the ring Lord Elmwood had put upon her finger, in haste, when he married her, she perceived it was a--MOURNING RING." (193) When the second part of the novel ends, Inchbald expects the reader to be ready for another wedding, but here the "unity of design" effectively suggests other possibilities than simple romance. Thus the future of Matilda and Rushbrook is left ambiguous and the reader is encouraged to reconsider his premises about marriage, as I shall discuss further. What is important to recognize here is that the careful plotting of A Simple Story has several purposes. It fulfills the Jacobin principles of "unity of design" in order to dissociate this novel from conventional Romance. By the skillful structuring of the incidents, Inchbald has compressed her story into a far more effective vehicle for her ideas than it could otherwise have been. She encourages the reader to work harder at interpreting a novel than many previous writers had dared to do. By concentrating on technique, and by using her skill as

a dramatist, Inchbald creates a novel of more convincing characterization, greater psychological realism, and more subtle didacticism than had often been known before A Simple Story.

Again, her perception of the role of the novelist in contrast to that of the dramatist, and the resultingly different demands made on the audience, are worth emphasizing, for they support the argument that Inchbald was not an "unconscious" artist, but one careful to study the genre she was attempting. Writing almost two decades later in The British Theatre, Inchbald observed,

> To know the temper of the time with accuracy, is one of the first talents requisite to a dramatic author. The works of other authors may be reconsidered a week, a month, or a year after a first perusal, and regain their credit by an increase of judgment bestowed upon their reader; but the dramatist, once brought before the public, must please at first sight, or never be seen more.
>
> (Preface to John Bull)[14]

While she is writing, by 1808, to praise Colman's play, her comments reveal that she expects more patience from the novel-reader than from the theater-goer, and, one can assume that she invests more care in the structure and content of the novel so that it will reward the closer scrutiny its form encourages. This critical remark, along with her essay from The Artist cited earlier, lead us to the conclusion that for the Jacobins the novel was not only a convenient form but a deliberately chosen vehicle for their ideas. Though clearly there had been many great novels before the 1790's, few popular novelists can be said to have treated the genre so seriously as an artistic and as a political medium as did this circle

of writers. Even if the artistic results are not always first rate, the work is clearly important in helping us gain a more accurate perspective on the era.

In Mrs. Inchbald's case, the Jacobin tendencies are far less apparent than they are in Holcroft's, Godwin's or even Bage's fiction. While Gary Kelly makes a good case for her affinity with this radical circle, it is more useful not to stretch her role beyond its limits. Again, "the feeling mind" provides a more appropriate label for her work than "Jacobin," for it not only emphasizes the "useful moral" so dear to the Jacobins, but reminds us of the link between Inchbald's dramatic and her fictional works. Only by seeing this connection do we fully recognize how good her novels really are, and how integrally linked are all sides of her career. If she is a Jacobin novelist, she is not a Jacobin playwright, and thus she is better identified by a label that encompasses her wider talents and interests than one, like "Jacobin novelist," that isolates her.

Whatever label we apply to her, it is clear that Mrs. Inchbald was concerned to convey a "useful moral" in her first novel. When she composed remarks on her own play, Wives as They Were, for The British Theatre, her thoughts reverted to A Simple Story:

> The character of Miss Dorrillon is by far the most prominent and interesting one in the piece; and appears to have been formed of he same matter and spirit as 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.[15]

Clearly, Miss Dorillon, like Miss Milner, is the victim of an excess of feeling and a lack of discipline, and the fact that Inchbald herself stressed the connection strongly suggests how important the theme was to her. But unlike Miss Dorillon, Miss Milner can be studied at greater leisure by the novel reader, and the lessons from her faults can thus be given more serious analysis than the thoughtless behavior of the stage heroine. In order for the reader to benefit from the lesson behind Miss Milner's faults, Inchbald places her in a carefully planned novel which is designed to help the reader contemplate those faults and draw "useful morals" from them. Thus the Jacobin novelists can be credited not only with calling attention to the serious possibilities for artistic development inherent in the novel, but also for defining a newer, more conscious reader-author relationship than that demanded by so many earlier writers. Or, as Mrs. Inchbald put it in her essay on novel-writing for The Artist, "A novel assumes a freedom of speech to which all its readers must patiently listen; and by which, if they are wise, they will know how to profit."[16]

Looking at the scheme of A Simple Story more closely in the light of this background, it seems clear that the author wanted her readers to perceive the book as a single unified story, despite the seventeen-year gap between Volume II and Volume III, and that she expected the reader, further, patiently to analyze the story elements. She thus places additional threads of continuity to weave the halves more securely together. The secondary characters of Miss Woodley and Sandforth help to link the episodes, but most of all, of course, is the commanding figure of Dorriforth, Lord Elmwood, who stands like a Jacobin colossus astride the plot.

While much remains to be said about the imposing hero of A Simple Story, I wish first to consider modern critical opinion about the structure of the novel, since some readers have found the results of Inchbald's attempt at unity either artistically or philosophically unsuccessful. The most revealing of these criticisms appears in Katharine M. Rogers' "Inhibitions on Women Novelists: Elizabeth Inchbald and Charlotte Smith."[17] Professor Rogers finds the split in the structure to be evidence of a "failure of nerve" on Inchbald's part to portray the estrangement between Dorriforth and Milner as it inevitably would have developed after the marriage. "In the second part of the novel," Rogers continues, "Inchbald reverts completely to the conventional pattern, with consequent loss of originality and conviction."[18] There is no question that, especially from the point of view of feminist criticism, Matilda is far less appealing than her mother. Rogers adds in a note that "In the last sentences of her novel, Inchbald draws the moral: as improper education caused the mother's tragedy, proper eduation caused the daughter's happiness. This is true in the sense that Miss Milner's levity and lack of self-discipline resulted from the deficiencies of her fashionable girl's education. But, considering Inchbald's failure to elaborate and the uniform conventionality of the second part of the story, all she probably meant was that gratification and success spoil young women, deprivation and disparagement are good for them."[19]

To look at an eighteenth-century novel with the eyes of a twentieth-century reader, however, is not always the best way to understand the author's purposes and thus in part her success. To expect Mrs. Inchbald to conform to modern ideas on feminism is to misunderstand A Simple Story. Indeed, this early work does speak with a special voice to the situation of women, but it does so in

the vocabulary of the eighteenth-century. By speaking successfully for her day, Inchbald addresses our own times as well, but we must begin to recognize her eighteenth-century perspective. There is, for instance, one major difference between the two parts of the novel that such modern criticism has neglected, and it is one to which readers in the 1790's would have been extremely sensitive.

The first part of A Simple Story illustrates marital love, a love evolving, in the ideal Jacobin marriage, not so much from passion as from rational choice, wisdom, and sound judgment. The second part is about something else entirely: filial love. The purpose of the plot is not primarily to find a husband for Matilda; this matter remains only a subplot, and she remains unwed at the conclusion. The focus is on Matilda's determination to obey her father and her fervent wish to be united with him. However the modern reader feels about eighteenth-century notions of filial piety, it is clear that Inchbald's readers were expected to recognize the difference between the modes of love and to understand that different conventions from those required in a parent-child relationship applied in particular to women's behavior during courtship. Clarissa Harlowe, for instance, certainly exerts her will against both parents and suitor, but it is clear through most of the novel that her resistance to the will of Lovelace is far more acceptable in moral terms than her opposition to Harlowe authority. Thus Miss Milner, misguided as she is in her ideas of marital love, feels herself perfectly correct in confronting Dorriforth with trial after trial to test, as she claims, the depth of his affections, and she is satisfied only when she can sy, "I have been counterfeiting indifference to him; I now find all his indifference has been counterfeit too, and we not only love, but we love equally." (172) It is significant that this series of trials follows immediately upon the distinct change in her role

from ward to acknowledged lover; Miss Milner's folly in testing Dorriforth aligns her with the old tradition of Romance and thus leads to her downfall. She relies on false appearances, or counterfeiting, rather than on the open expression of her feelings, and the results convey Inchbald's theme, carried over and enlarged from the drama, that false appearances yield unhappy relationships.

Yet it is Miss Milner's quest for equality in her relationship with Dorriforth that endears her to feminist critics, who find Matilda, in contrast to her mother, too submissive. Miss Milner's flaw is not her intention of testing Dorriforth, in this view, but only her method. It is unfair, however, recognizing this distinction between the two types of love, not to view Matilda's submission with greater sympathy, since it derives from her sense of filial piety. It is only towards Dorriforth, after all, that she is so yielding. With Rushbrook, on the contrary, she can be firm and dignified when she feels that he is overstepping his bounds. Matilda's character has, in fact, been so neglected by critics, who focus almost exclusively on the first half of A Simple Story, that further examination of Dorriforth's child is necessary to reassign proper perspective on Inchbald's overall design in her first novel. In doing so we further recognize the need to see the novel as a whole, with intentional links and parallels between characters and their actions, and not as two separate stories.

When her temper is aroused, Matilda can look just like her father, and can act with as much firmness, stubbornness, and pride, as in an early encounter with the more impetuous Rushbrook:

> ...his elegant and youthful person, joined to the incident which had just occurred, convinced her it was Rushbrook; and she looked at him with

> an air of surprise, but still more, of dignity. (238)

It is, we learn, a dignity inherited from her father. In likening her to Dorriforth, Inchbald stresses the difference between Milner's material relationship with him and Matilda's filial one; she does so by calling our attention to Matilda's inheritance of the traits of her parents.

When Matilda first visits Elmwood House, she finds many objects to fascinate her in its "extensive gardens, groves, and other pleasure grounds," but

> There was one object...among all she saw, which attracted her attention above the rest, and she would stand for hours to look at it—This was a full length portrait of Lord Elmwood, esteemed a very capital picture, and a great likeness—to this picture she would sigh and weep; though when it was first pointed out to her, she shrunk back with fear, and it was some time before she dared venture to cast her eyes completely upon it. In the features of her father she was proud to discern the exact moulds in which her own appeared to have been modelled; yet Matilda's person, shape, and complection (sic) were so extremely like what her mother's once were, that at the first glance she appeared to have a still greater resemblance of her, than of her father—but her mind and manners were all Lord Elmwood's; softened by the delicacy of her sex, the extreme tenderness of her heart, and the melancholy of her situation. (220)

Later, after Rushbrook has attempted to gain regular audience with Matilda and her companion Miss Woodley,

> Matilda replied with all her father's haughtiness, 'Depend upon it sir, if you should ever enter my thoughts, it will only be as an object of envy.' (239)

The envy results from Rushbrook's being the designated heir and having the company of Lord Elmwood while Matilda must live in isolation and uncertainty. Her tone, however, emphasizes her close resemblance to Dorriforth.

Matilda is further described as having a "grandeur" in "her mien," again like her father. Rushbrook, in contrast, reflects many of the characteristics of the young Miss Milner, as he is "youthful, warm, generous, grateful," but with an "unthinking mind." (241) It is Rushbrook, like Milner, who acts impulsively and tells lies to protect himself from Dorriforth's temper. Like her, too, he is an "adopted" child, not a natural one, a ward recommended by the friendship of someone Dorriforth has loved. And, finally, it is Rushbrook, and not Matilda, who falls passionately in love by the end of the novel. Thus in the second generation of the story, Rushbrook parallels the young Miss Milner, while Matilda exhibits the "grandeur" and repressive personality of her father.

The structure in A Simple Story, then, is designed to help express the theme of the novel. One conclusion to be drawn from the crossover pattern fundamental to the structure is that Inchbald was arguing her theme that "a proper education" was a necessity for men and women. The ending of the story is curiously ambiguous and reinforces the notion that Rushbrook, with a temper and education like Miss Milner's risks sharing her fate unless Matilda, better raised, can help him. We find at the end a somewhat coy suggestion:

> Whether the heart of Matilda, such as it has been described, could sentence him to misery, the reader is left to surmise— (337)

And while the author leads us conditionally to anticipate that "their wedded life was a life of happiness," we are left with no certainties.

The ambiguous ending calls our attention to the real union that takes place, the reconciliation of Matilda with her father, the fulfillment of her filial love.

This emphasis further aligns Inchbald's story in its anti-romantic bias with Holcroft's preface. Professor Rogers is justified in feeling disappointment that Inchbald failed to develop the unhappy marriage but instead chose to cover "the painful topic in three pages, attributing the heroine's adultery not to estrangement produced by incompatibility, but to an accidental three-year separation."[20] But we should at least be willing to give Inchbald credit for what she did achieve: one of the first novels to go any distance beyond the wedding ceremony. In continuing her story, she violates a major dictum of the Romance tradition, namely, the happy ending. Neither the Dorriforth-Milner, nor the projected Matilda-Rushbrook marriage ends happily in the novel. Even though she does foreshorten the "painful topic", part of Inchbald's motive is to maintain the tension in her Jacobin plot, the contrast of Miss Milner's life and the results of her education with the lives of Rushbrook and Matilda.

As a Jacobin novelist, and as a woman posing "a useful moral" for her readers, Inchbald chose to bring her novel from cause to effect with compression and efficiency. In moving abruptly from Lady Elmwood to her daughter, past the seventeen years, Inchbald is struggling to fulfill the technical task she set for herself in the novel; she had defined as her purpose the moral instruction of her audience on a single theme, "a proper education," and to this theme she sticks. To have included a credible, detailed description of the intervening years would have been to digress from this plan, and would, moreover, have been a technical accomplishment more sophisticated than virtually any of Inchbald's contemporaries had achieved. Her structure in A Simple Story, then, however faulty, illustrates, like so much of her work, the sensible solutions she found to the literary problems she faced.

In turning again to Matilda, it seems fair to say that her heart is worth more respect than critics, especially feminist ones, have allowed. She, after all, will determine the outcome of the relationship with Rushbrook, just as, in the earliest part, Dorriforth commanded everyone's happiness or misery because of his strong will and social superiority. She, we are led to hope, will apply the more rational principles of her improved education to her life and the lives of those around her. Thus if she does marry Rushbrook, the marriage will succeed on the basis of Matilda's strength of character and her "proper education," that is, on rational principles rather than passionate impulses, not only in contrast to her mother's example, but more significantly in contrast to her father's. Thus in order to understand Matilda's situation we must turn to Dorriforth, and to come to terms with the hero of A Simple Story we must look closely at the origins of the novel.

The imposing figure of Dorriforth has its roots in Inchbald's fascination with her lifelong friend, John Philip Kemble. The development of Dorriforth is responsible for the direction of the story, and if there is any "unconscious" art in Inchbald's novel it arises from the autobiographical impulse that helped create Miss Milner. But it is with Dorriforth that the novel opens, and it is his presence in both parts that unifies the action. That readers often find the female characters equally interesting, if not more so, is one result of the autobiographical material, perhaps, but it is clear from the structure that Inchbald intended the hero to hold center stage. It is his psychological changes that Inchbald monitors to illustrate the Jacobin thesis that external circumstances influence character. That it was Kemble who inspired Dorriforth further explains a good deal about that other related aspect of novel writing required by Holcroft, namely, dramatic structure.

From her days on the stage Mrs. Inchbald had gained experience in creating characters to fit the skills and personalities of particular actors and actresses. Boaden asserts that in at least one case she wrote a lead role specifically for Kemble.[21] It is more than coincidence, then, that she met Mrs. Siddons' brother on January 18, 1777 and began the outline for her novel in February. Dorriforth is "about thirty" when the novel opens, though, while Kemble was only twenty when he joined Younger's company at Liverpool; Mrs. Inchbald, acting with the Liverpool company at this time along with her husband, was twenty-three. Whatever the romantic expectations realized in the fiction, in real life their relationship never went beyond warmth of feeling and innocent flirtation. In the outline for her autobiography preserved in Boaden's Memoirs Inchbald covers the point with a blunt phrase, "Kemble no lover—determine on London"[22] following Joseph Inchbald's death in 1779. Despite the failure of her apparent wishes, the young writer maintained her friendship with the great actor and clearly felt strongly enough about him to use him as the model for her hero. In one sense, the novel is strongly autobiographical at its very roots.

The importance of Kemble to the development of Dorriforth is not so much that we have a roman a clef, for the fictional character differs from the original in significant aspects, but rather that Mrs. Inchbald began with an autobiographical impulse and developed a new vein to be mined by the novel writers of her day. Gary Kelly notes the importance of the new direction to the Jacobin novelists:

> Through her novel A Simple Story she demonstrated to them the possibilities which the abused popular novel could offer to the writer of serious views, and

> through personal knowledge of the relation between her life and her fiction they saw new opportunities for using autobiography to give that form both originality and the authenticity of real life.[23]

No doubt Inchbald's literary enactment of her attraction for Kemble gave the novel its impetus, but the character who develops and changes as the story progresses, and as the novel undergoes revision for the next ten years or more, emerges from other sources. Still, a comparison of Dorriforth with the real Kemble suggests the degree to which the author used real sources for her portrait of the hero. From the novel we find,

> His figure was tall and elegant, but his face, except a pair of dark bright eyes, a set of white teeth, and a gracefull fall in his clerical curls of dark brown hair, had not one feature to excite admiration—he possessed notwithstanding such a gleam of sensibility diffused over each, that many people mistook his face for handsome, and all were more or less attracted by it...—on his countenance you beheld the feelings of his heart—saw all its inmost workings...and as his mind was enriched with every virtue that could make it valuable, so was his honest face adorned with every emblem of those virtues...(8-9)

Further, he is described as having "those interesting looks which revealed the anxiety of his heart" and "that graceful restraint of all gesticulation, for which he was remarkable even in his most anxious concerns..." (9) This last is surely the tribute of one who had seen Kemble on the stage so many times and admired, like her contemporaries, the "graceful restraint" that won him fame as an actor in the years following Garrick's more extroverted performances. One biographer

describes Kemble on stage as "studied, graceful, suffused with sensibility," while Sir Walter Scott compared him to Garrick, noting that while the older actor was "airy and light," Kemble "was tall and stately, his person on a scale suited for the stage and almost too large for a private apartment, with a countenance like the finest models of the antique and motions and manners corresponding to the splendid cast of his form and features. Mirth, when he exhibited it, never exceeded a species of gaiety chastened with gravity; his smile seemed always as if it were the rare inhabitant of that noble countenance.[24] (See illustration)

Just how much Kemble and Dorriforth were connected in the minds of Inchbald's friends is suggested in a diatribe on the great actor-manager by one of his stage contemporaries, the actress Mrs. Wells, later Mrs. Sumbel. In her memoirs, she complains,

> In the kingdom of Covent Garden [Kemble] rules the distressed man of genuis with a rod of iron; the pedantry, illiberality, and bigotry, of the order to which he belonged, at St. Omer, sways his narrow mind...[25]

What is curious here is that Kemble himself studied at Douai, but Dorriforth was "bred at St. Omer's." (3) Mrs. Wells further accuses her employer of daring "to monopolise every circumstance concerning the theatre, without once consulting [the actors'] feelings or opinions." Her anger at him stems, she finally tells us, from his having had her arrested for debt, an experience with which, one notes from her narrative, she had a good deal of familiarity.

However biased her report, it is interesting to see yet another of the sources for the tyranny of Dorriforth as it is represented in the latter part of A Simple Story. While the evidence of the Inchbald-Kemble friendship suggests that Mrs. Wells' view with regard to the great man differed greatly from Mrs. Inchbald's, his biographers agree that he was driven both by personal ambition and a desire to see his theories succeed on the stage. Clearly Inchbald, whatever her private feelings for her friend, was able to take the long view when it came to the needs of her fiction.

Kemble, on many counts, then, formed a model for the hero of A Simple Story. Having written parts for him, fallen in love with him, and acted alongside both Mrs. Siddons and Kemble himself, Mrs. Inchbald was readily able to incorporate his personality into that of Dorriforth and at the same time to sketch the plot with her dramatic skills at the ready. Contemporary critics were quick to see the originality of her technique. The Gentleman's Magazine for March, 1791 notes:

> Her principal character, the Roman Catholic lord, is perfectly new; and she has conducted him, through a series of surprizing and well-contrasted adventures, with an uniformity of character and truth of description that have rarely been surpassed. The novel, in reality, consists of two distinct histories; and the talisman by which they are united is this unity of character in its hero. We do not recollect an instance of an invention so happily calculated for the purpose of uniting events in their own nature unconnected and opposite. (255)

The critics' appreciation not only of the hero but of the unified structure of the novel is worth emphasizing. The very choice of Kemble as the model for Dorriforth led Mrs. Inchbald, then, toward originality in the technical development of A Simple Story and in the presentation of character.

Praise from another source proves even more convincingly just how original were the results of Inchbald's efforts in A Simple Story. Maria Edgeworth wrote her fellow novelist an extended letter praising the book, noting that she had, by 1810, read it some three or four times and that its "effect upon my feeings was as powerful as at the first reading." Her letter, though often cited by Inchbald's critics, is worth repeating, since it is among the most perceptive comments offered on the effects of the novel:

> I never read any novel--I except none—I never read any novel that affected me so strongly, or that so completely possessed me with the belief in the real existence of all the people it represents. I never once recollected the author whilst I was reading it; never said or thought, that's a fine sentiment—or, that is well expressed—or, that is well invented. I believed all to be real, and was affected as I should be by the real scenes if they passed before my eyes: it is truly and deeply pathetic...I am of opinion that it is by leaving more than most other writers to the imagination, that you succeed so eminently in affecting it...Writers of inferior genius waste their words in describing feeling; in making those who pretend to be agitated by passion describe the effects of that passion, and talk of the rending of their hearts, etc, A gross blunder! as gross as any Irish blunder; for the heart cannot feel, and describe its own feelings, at the same moment.[27]

To say that "the heart cannot feel, and describe its own feeings" at the same time is not only praise for Inchbald's new narrative voice; it is clearly an implied criticism of the epistolary novel, where the heroine so often is called upon to perform just such a feat. If "writing to the moment" was a method Richardson developed with consummate skill, his many followers frequently floundered in the attempt to have characters perform the actions of the plot and simultaneously record them in epistles. Like Edgeworth, Inchbald recognized the weaknesses of this popular form, the novel of letters, and the history of her rejection of an epistolary structure for A Simple Story further illustrates the novel's originality.

William Godwin read A Simple Story in "the original epistolary form,"[28] a fact to which only one study of Inchbald pays any regard, and even Kelly makes little of these epistolary origins other than to call attention to the Jacobin novelists' debts to Richardson. By the time of publication of the novel in 1791, only a few fragments of letters remain. But Inchbald's rejection of the novel in letters is surely evidence of her serious efforts to create a fresh new literary voice in her fiction. Further, the fact that she so thoroughly rewrote the story adds evidence to the case of her conscious power as an artist.

When Mrs. Inchbald removed the epistolary framework from her novel, she buttressed her tale, as I have already shown, with autobiographical material and dramatic effects. The carefully-wrought structure that contains so many parallel incidents and so many "stage directions" by which the characters reveal their emotions was the result of revision over many years. Of special interest is the fact that while her novel was in progress the author was also keeping her detailed account books, writing her autobiography, and sitting for portraits.

Thus it seems a reasonable assumption that the processes of self-analysis and introspection that underlie the manuscript materials influence the revision of the fiction. While critics have long recognized the presence of an autobiographical impulse behind A Simple Story, the manuscripts confirm and correct our ideas of the direction and degree of that impulse. While the original epistolary version of the novel no longer exists, we do have a record in her notes and memoranda of the author's reading in epistolary fiction as "bearing on her work."[29] These, together with the speculations about her life that I presented in the first chapter of this study, combine to yield a sharper picture than has been previously available of Inchbald's achievement in her first novel. The rejection of the epistolary technique is in fact a philosophical as well as a technical innovation, and I will argue that by recognizing the importance of Inchbald's revision of her novel we understand more fully not only the final published version of her work but also the relationship of that work to the biographical materials discussed earlier. The synthesis of these various expressions of her personal and artistic concerns yields, finally, a definition of "the feeling mind."

Turning to her list of readings, then, we find from Boaden and from her own papers that during the 1770's she read such works of popular fiction as Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné, Hugh Kelly's Memoirs of a Magdalen, Frances Brooke's Julia Mandeville, Courtney Melmoth's Liberal Opinions, Joseph Cradock's Village Memoirs, and Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield. In addition, she read the published letters of Jonathan Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lord Chesterfield.

These sources, rich and varied as they are, show striking similarities. Common themes abound: proper education for daughters, interest in the "fallen

woman," celebration of filial piety, the conflict between selfishness and social responsibility, the difference between sense and sensibility. In practice, these familiar abstractions find concrete expression in novels with plots about motherless daughters who like Miss Milner err in their choice of a suitor and suffer painful consequences. Goldsmith is the exception in not telling his story in letters, and Liberal Opinions sports a hero rather than a heroine. Yet the novels are different, and each author manages to make his or her point with a degree of originality or credibility that taught Inchbald a great deal. From the personal letters she learned much about authorial voice, wit, manners, tone and how to adapt each letter to a particular reader, all of which influenced her novel even in the non-epistolary form.

To discuss each source in detail is a task beyond the range of my study. Moreover, however interesting this list of works may be, it provides only a sample of the books Inchbald read at the earliest phase of composition. Over ten years of disciplined study as well as her distinguished stage work filled the years between the initial outline of A Simple Story and its eventual publication. Still, an analysis of a few of these early sources reveals at least some of Inchbald's initial intentions in abandoning the epistolary form for her novel, and creating a more original narrative style.

Henry Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné is an extremely sentimental tale of passion and duty in conflict. Julia, in love with Savillon, marries Montaubon out of gratitude and a sense of duty to her father. However, she agrees, following her marriage, to a brief, chaste meeting with Savillon. Her husband discovers the tryst, assumes the worst, and kills Julia. The novel, Marilyn Butler has pointed out in Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, "goes as far or further than

Werther in justifying not merely general instinct, but sexual passion, as a guide to conduct."[30] Such a philosophy is decidedly anti-jacobin, and Inchbald recognized its dangers both to the individual and to the fabric of society. Thus one purpose of A Simple Story is to attach the romantic values and the implied self-interest underlying characters like Julia and Montaubon by offering alternative models. In attacking the philosophy, though, Inchbald also attacked the form of the novel in letters. The epistolary technique can provide a fully-rounded view of incidents and emotions when handled by a master like Richardson while less successful adaptations reflect the form but not the spirit of the mode. This is partly true with Mackenzie's novel. As in his equally popular Man of Feeling, in Julia de Roubigné Mackenzie adopts the pose of discoverer and editor, inventing a fanciful story of finding a novel in a pile of baker's wrappings. Thus Mackenzie can "omit" letters that do not advance the plot, claiming that they are not legible. The novel is intensified in one sense as our attention is centered on Julia alone. Her confidante's letters are entirely left out.

Inchbald, an astute reader, no doubt noticed the omission of the confidante's letters, and sensed the conflict between the form and the content in Mackenzie's novel. For like many of the other novels on her list, this one is striking for the length of the letters (long) and the number of distinct correspondents (few). In other words, the sense of real letters is lost as letters lengthen into chapters, and one or two voices, at most, dominate the correspondence. Richardsonian letters after all are themselves almost characters: they get lost, inadvertently by-pass each other, get stolen, are forged, absorb tears. Quite the contrary is true in later novels imitating

Clarissa. Inchbald perceived an incongruity between form and content. Perhaps her own intense preoccupation with her memorandum books and her autobiography had alerted her to the dangers implicit in the epistolary form; the letters, rather than being modified by their seemingly public nature, in fact are more likely to become egotistical, emotional, or confessional. She responded strongly when she recognized the psychological thrust of the letter form, where self-indulgence was virtually mandated since first-person narrative encourages the writer to stress private feelings, and often to exaggerate. The letter allows the speaker to continue uninterrupted by advice, counsel or contradiction; letters, to the ear of a well-trained dramatist, are lengthy monologues, a device generally to be avoided in the theater. In rewriting her novel, then, Inchbald is calling up her stage experience, seeking to balance the monologues with the vitality of dialogue, stage business, and even ironic commentary. But she is also seeking a sensible moral tone in her fiction. Her third-person narrator undercuts the egotistical force of the epistle and can immediately comment on a character's behavior, thus preventing the reader from assuming, for instance, that a character like Miss Milner is meant as an exemplary figure. Mackenzie does not provide that balance, since he has no correspondent who offers a voice more rational than Julia's.

From Hugh Kelly's Memoirs of a Magdalen, a similar lesson emerged for Mrs. Inchbald. The heroine, Louisa Mildmay, is like Julia de Roubigne the recipient of an education that "has rather been ornamental than useful."[31] Her fashionable accomplishments are acknowledged, but at least in the Preface the author assures us that "These accomplishments...are but trifling when we come to enquire about a well informed mind, and a stability of principle." We should

look for "sterling sense and real virtue" rather than vain talents when we assess a character's worth. Nonetheless, Kelly paints a picture of his heroine that is clearly designed to make her lack of real virtue enticing. Like Julia and Miss Milner, Louisa Mildmay falls from virtue as a result of her vanity, of parental indulgence and weak discipline, and the lack of a proper education. If that is the moral of the tale, however, Kelly, taking advantage of the letter form, distracts his reader from such a dreary outcome by allowing the hero/seducer, Robert Harold, to write lengthy letters to a male friend; these letters make the loss of virtue an alluring prospect:

> ...we happened accidently to mention a suit of night cloaths which she had just received from London, and which, she said became her excessively; as I expressed a desire to see them on her, she retired immediately, and,...came down so irresistably ravishing, that I was no longer my own master.[32]

The temptation is, as the reader has anticipated, irresistible indeed, and we are treated to a generous description, as the letter continues, of the couple's violently passionate encounter on a convenient sofa.

If Kelly eventually has his characters repent and suffer before happily marrying, he had nevertheless found in the epistle a clever disguise for pseudo-pornography. He no doubt rationalized that readers would blame the character, and not the author, for the immoral behavior.

Reacting to these and other epistolary sources, then, Elizabeth Inchbald scrapped her epistolary novel. The form had taken on too many unpleasant associations for a woman concerned with sensible education and the moral

purposes of the Jacobins. What emerges as a result of her revision is a fresh new authorial presence. Inchbald is neither self-effacing nor does she inflict herself on the reader. She is neither preface-writer nor postmaster, but instead a wry, sensible moral norm, carefully evaluating and yet still sympathizing with her character's dilemmas.

Coming to A Simple Story aware of its heritage—its epistolary past--makes one more appreciative of its originality. In rejecting the letter form, Inchbald found herself breaking new ground. Her revised version of the novel took the fragmented voices and functions of disparate letter writers and neatly combined them into an authorial presence, a third-person narrator who quietly but forcefully comments, ridicules, praises, or blames, freely using her own experience as a guide. The authorial voice in A Simple Story is not Inchbald's self, but some version of herself, a self transformed by the aesthetic needs of the fiction and by her political and moral interests. The voice draws from autobiographical experience, and at the same time alters and evaluates freely. If third-person narrative was not particularly new in the novel, this kind of third person was. A special voice that combined confession, satire, and "the useful moral" was greeted as a refreshing change from the reams of letters with which readers (or at least writers) were growing bored. Tired of the self-indulgence of passionate letters by heroines who apparently had no other duties but quill dipping, readers greeted A Simple Story with interest. Critics were quick to note the "natural and probable incidents" that comprised the story and to see in the new style of narrative a "spirit and energy" that previous novels had lacked.[33]

The rejection of the epistolary form, then, is also a rejection of Romance, not only on the basis of the Jacobin principles inferred from Holcroft's manifesto, but more particularly from the values Inchbald herself avowed in her early plays. Hypocrisy, false appearances, and selfishness are virtually implicit in the very structure of the novel in letters, and in rejecting the form Inchbald repudiated the values. Having rejected the epistolary form, however, Inchbald then had to find an effective way to convey emotion without duplicating the very vices of the method she spurned. More difficult than in the drama, too, is the larger task she undertook, to demonstrate gradual changes in character as it is affected by external circumstances (to use Godwin's phrase). In the case of Dorriforth in particular, she must capture the pride and selfishness of his early life while sustaining our belief in his "feeling" qualities as well, as he first rejects and later accepts his daughter Matilda's love. Inchbald solves her dilemma by turning to dramatic techniques, derived from her experience in the theater, to achieve her ends. Having looked briefly at these devices in my earlier discussion of the design of A Simple Story, I will now turn to a more detailed analysis of Inchbald's use of dramatic techniques in her delineation of her anti-epistolary hero, Dorriforth.

Dorriforth begins the novel as a kind of exemplary hero, echoing the attractive sensibility of Sir Charles Grandison and exhibiting many of the traits of Richardson's model gentleman, including his objections to dueling. Richardson had difficulty, however, in establishing the credibility of a hero whose perfection readers had to assume was based on sheer strength of character; eighteenth-century as well as modern readers were not so ready to accept Grandison's virtue, though, as they were to relish Lovelace's vice. Grandison is, quite simply,

too good to be true, and his virtue, like Harriet Byron's, becomes cloying even for the most patient reader. Inchbald, working on a more human scale (it is significant how much shorter Jacobin novels are than many of their epistolary counterparts) is able to create in Dorriforth a hero who shares Grandison's role as a paragon of chastity, but she does so in a far more natural and convincing way; by making him a Roman Catholic priest, she supplies credible motivation for his celibacy. This seemingly simple stroke is a deft touch of craftsmanship on Inchbald's part, and owes its origin, at least in part, to her dramatic training, which taught her the need for such motive to explain action. Thus she creates in Dorriforth a psychologically realistic character, far more natural than Richardson's Grandsion.

By presenting her hero through a third-person narrative, again in contrast to Richardson, Inchbald gains even greater psychological credibility, because she must invent a particular language to describe his feelings, since she lacks the first person epistolary voice to bring immediacy to the characterization. In finding this language, she offers not only expression of emotion, but she also is inclined to offer motive. Clearly, Inchbald has given much thought to the craft of novel-writing in the years when she gradually revised her tale from an epistolary novel to a firmly anti-epistolary one.

The story line of the novel chronicles the gradual deterioration of Dorriforth's character as the circumstances around him become trying and painful, first as Miss Milner undermines his authority, and to some extent his dignity, later as he confronts the harsher fact of her adultery. The latter part of the book narrates his struggle to reconcile his pride and duty with his instinctive love for his daughter. What is relatively new in the development of the novel is

Inchbald's method of achieving this psychological change with some degree of realism, as I have explained. Her emphasis on Dorriforth's religion is new, also, in that it suggests a further link between Inchbald and her Jacobin friends. Ultimately religion, or religious training, fails to provide Dorriforth with the moral qualities he needs to behave effectively with his wife, his neighbors, and his daughter. When the constraints of his priestly vows, or the insulation of the clerical life, are removed, Dorriforth has little left to keep his temper in control. His Douai education has, in effect, been as narrow as the fashionable education of Miss Milner. One Jacobin conclusion we can draw from the end of the story is that "a proper education" is a code term for secular education, perhaps clearly in oppostion to the organized Church, as it will be satirized in Nature and Art. Education, in short, proper, secular education, proves a sounder basis for moral choice, according to the lesson of A Simple Story, than traditional religious upbringing.

Of major interest to contemporary readers was a Catholic hero; reviewers were able to find him "perfectly new"[34] because he was a Roman Catholic priest, but not one of the morose monkish figures painted in Gothic fiction like Sophia Lee's The Recess (1783-85) or the subsequent novels of Lewis and Radcliffe. What is new about Dorriforth's Catholicism is the very naturalness with which it is integrated with his personality, and the successful way in which his vows become a plot device, an obstacle to his marriage and later, by their dispensation, an invitation to his union with Miss Milner. The emphasis in Dorriforth's character is not on his religion but on his human nature, his character as a man of strong emotions and domineering will who faces emotional crisis by repressing his feelings and obliging those around him to abide by the

appearances he manifests. Thus the "false appearances" which are often handled rather superficially in the plays are transformed in the novel from social flaws to psychological traits. Where in the plays Inchbald had external methods for revealing vices, such as concealment in a closet discovered, in the novel she seeks more subtle means to internalize the character traits. In doing so, however, her dramatic training governed her technique; we find at one point in A Simple Story the revealing comment, "how unimportant, weak, how ineffectual are words in conversation—looks and manners alone express—" (17)

Dorriforth's exemplary character, then, is expressed in the story as much through visual or dramatic clues as through explanation. At the same time, Inchbald provides clues about his character through language designed to evoke his psychological state. Lacking the vocabulary available to post-Freudian writers, she must rely on words tainted, for twentieth-century readers, by their association with sentimentality; yet here the writer seems clearly to strive to freshen those words and to endow them with at least the suggestion of something more than trite emotionalism. If she fails at times to remove herself completely from the limits imposed by her age, this only makes her more useful as a source of information on the very process of transformation in taste which her age was experiencing.

I have already quoted the scene in which Dorriforth first meets his ward, but the language Inchbald employs now requires re-examination. Dorriforth sees Miss Milner with the "foreboding of disaster," and we find that he "trembled at his heart." This geiger-counter quality of Dorriforth's to respond with such sensitivity to the as yet hidden threat of his ward's presence is the sure sign of the new type of hero, modeled at least in part on Grandison. Other physical

evidence supports our recognition of Dorriforth's sensibility in the early part of the novel. When he discovers evidence of his ward's past benevolence, evidence that helps him overcome his previously negative impression of her, "his eyes moistened with joy." (11) This susceptibility, too, is a sure sign of his goodness. His Christian principle, which was exhibited in the first dueling scene to which I referred earlier, is evident in another encounter with Sir Frederick Lawnley when, despite reasonable provocation, Dorriforth "turned his head, to avoid an argument, he bowed acquiescence." (22) Further evidence of his exemplary nature as a young man is suggested by references to "all the careful plainness of oeconomy" in which he lived, surely high praise from the woman who herself was so careful an economist. He is, again like Grandison, given many Christ-like attributes.

As the conflict between his temper and that of his ward begins to mount, however, we find the beginnings of his changing character:

> Notwithstanding that dissimilarity of opinion, which in almost every respect, subsisted between Miss Milner and her guardian, there was generally the most punctilious observance of good manners from each towards the other—on the part of Dorriforth more especially; for his politeness would sometimes appear even like the result of a system he had marked out for himself, as the only means to keep his ward restrained within the same limitation. (23)

Thus he addresses her with "an unusual reserve upon his countenance, and more than the usual gentleness in his tone of voice." (23) The internal conflict, in this case, is reflected externally in the reserve his features and his voice express, but

Inchbald is at the same time striving toward a language to express his interior state as she implies his "system" of behavior. The punctilious manners likewise dramatize the variance between the pair's thoughts and actions.

The desired effect is achieved to some extent, for while Miss Milner is "perpetually on the verge of treating him with levity" (24) (a striking anticipation of Elizabeth Bennet's tone with Darcy) Dorriforth "would immediately recall her recollection by a reserve too awful, and a gentleness too sacred for her to violate." (24) Thus it is his "skillful management" which preserves what he considers the appropriate tone between them.

Part of Dorriforth's motive here in repressing his feelings derives from his embarrassment or awkwardness in his new role of "deputed father" (23), for we must remember that at thirty he has suddenly been transformed from a mild-mannered celibate living in a household with two spinsterish and unthreatening women to the foster parent of a skittish, beautiful young woman who does not share his Catholic background and thus unwittingly fails to demonstrate the proper respect for his religious principles and his vows. It is a situation to try the nerves of the staunchest Christian; and so it is not surprising that he finds himself required to exercise a firm, even formal, control over both his own feelings and the exuberant character of Miss Milner. A second motive is introduced by Inchbald with even greater subtlety as she reveals, ever so gradually, that Dorriforth is resisting the dangerous possibility that he is sexually attracted to his ward. Given his Catholic vows and his paternal status, he cannot even let this idea enter his consciousness, yet Inchbald is able to let us suspect its presence as she reveals his mind through his actions, as subsequent examples will show. Inchbald's strength as a novelist rests in her ability to convey these

two motives not through direct exposition, but with skillful artistry, through her anti-epistolary methods. She cannot fall back on the traditional device of letting Dorriforth acknowledge his conflicts in a letter to a confidante, for instance; she wishes to avoid the weaknesses she had recognized in this confessional technique. As a result, she must let his actions speak, and she must control our interpretations of his actions through the imposition of a well-controlled authorial voice.

Thus while Dorriforth is seldom responsible for a harsh word to his ward, she finds herself the victim of "his piercing, steadfast eye" which causes her to tremble "with shame or with resentment." (28) When he does have to reprimand her, the verbal censure is succinct, and punctuated by physical evidence of his temper:

> Before she could resolve, Dorriforth arose from his seat, and said with a degree of force and warmth she had never heard him speak with before,
> 'I command you to stay at home this evening.' And he walked immediately out of the apartment by the opposite door.(29)

As the depth of the struggle between the two characters quickens, we are presented with more evidence of Dorriforth's turning inward, and of Inchbald's increasing interest in his mental processes. At one point "his eye gave testimony of his absent thoughts; and although he took up a pamphlet and affected to read, it was plain to discern he scarcely knew he held it in his hand." (31) The dramatic action, then, can both imitate the emotions, or as in this case, reveal them by contradiction. When the crisis Dorriforth is experiencing finally erupts

in physical violence in the first half of the novel by the announcement of the challenge from Lawnley, again we find the hero more introspective than before. As the officer presenting Lawnley's message leaves, and

> Dorriforth was once more alone, he was going once more to reflect, but he durst not—since yesterday, reflection, for the first time of his life, was become painful to him; and even as he rode the short way to Lord Elmwood's immediately after, he found his own thoughts so insufferable, he was obliged to enter into conversation with his servant. Solitude, that he was formerly so charmed withal, at those moments had been worse than death. (65)

As he becomes more confused by Miss Milner's apparently inexplicable behavior after the duel (for she has been obliged to conceal her love for Dorriforth by pretending to care for Lawnley), he decides to strengthen the "system" he had previously imposed on himself. He

> now thought it proper to give some important marks of his condemnation of her pernicious caprice; and not merely in words, but by the general tenour of his behaviour. He consequently became much more reserved, and more austere than he had been... (90)
> (my italics)

Still, when Miss Milner departs for Bath at Miss Woodley's insistence to keep herself from the man she has fallen unforgivably in love with, he, unaware of her true motive, softens his temper and bids her farewell with "his eyes moistened from regard of the most laudable nature." (92) Both characters are guilty of presenting false appearances, and each will suffer from the other's folly as well as from his own.

Dorriforth's struggle in this last example suggests more than his inability to reconcile his notions of responsibility with his ward's capricious style of living. One of the merits of Inchbald's authorial voice is that when she plants a phrase like "the most laudable nature" the reader at once recognizes that while this is the omniscient narrator speaking, the phrase also represents Dorriforth's point of view. The narrator acts as a channel for the confession, and through the intervention of this third party the emotion is rendered more realistic. Thus she can lead us to the conclusion, as she leads Dorriforth himself, that the other side of his struggle regarding Miss Milner is his unconscious sexual attraction to the young woman. Again, the author expresses this increasing passion through dramatic devices to avoid the excessive sentimentality of the letter form.

While Miss Milner is in Bath, for instance, she falls ill as she struggles with her feelings about her guardian. Receiving word of her danger, Miss Woodley and Dorriforth fly to Bath. News of her recovery is prefaced, for the reader though not for the heroine, with news that the young Lord Elmwood has died and Dorriforth is to be relieved of his priestly vows in order to assume the title. Thus Miss Milner's emotions, and expectations, find cause to rise when Miss Woodley finally tells her the news, and

> When he entered—the sight of him seemed to be too much for her, and after the first glance she turned her head away.

He advances, and the reader must remember that they are now, for the first time in the novel, thanks to Miss Woodley's tactics, alone together, and, moreover, alone in Miss Milner's bedchamber. None of this need be told to us

directly, for it is all revealed through indirect means. As a result of the careful preparation with which this scene is laid, the next bit of dialogue is charged with meaning:

> 'It is impossible, my dear Miss Milner,' he gently whispered, 'to say, the joy I feel that your disorder has subsided.'
> But though it was impossible to say, it was possible to look what he felt, and his looks expressed his feelings.—In the zeal of those sensations, he laid hold of her hand, and held it between his—this he himself did not know—but she did.(98)

It is a wonderfully economical scene, where every feeling is conveyed through the stage directions incorporated in the very few lines. The last sentence, more perhaps than any other, illustrates Inchbald's effective methods for generating psychological realism with energy and economy. She is able to avoid the excessive romantic and sentimental outbursts many earlier novelists would have felt called upon to employ in such a scene. Yet for all its brevity and simplicity, we learn all we need to know about Dorriforth's blindness to his increasing love, and Milner's certainty of hers.

If this substitution of gesture for words opens new possibilities for the writer of novels, however, the story goes on to warn that such dependence on gesture as an alternative for explanation has its dangers for the characters. As the tempers of the two soon-to-be lovers continue to collide, Dorriforth, now Lord Elmwood, finds himself turning further inward, becoming increasingly introspective, and repressing his feelings even further as they become stronger. His past practice makes it now even more difficult for him to speak to Miss Milner about his feelings. The result is that Miss Milner, with her faulty

education in the serious issues in life, misunderstands him; she fails to recognize the true depth and sincerity of his passion for her and decides she must put his love to a trial, with disastrous results. It should come as no surprise, however, given the premises of Inchbald's art, that disaster will threaten when the conventions of Romance enter the novel.

Thus, to return for a moment to Professor Rogers' criticism of Inchbald's shift to a more conventional form in the second half of the novel, I suggest that at least in part this change was motivated by Jacobin, if not feminist, ideology. In adapting the conventional novel form to her own ends, Mrs. Inchbald intended to destroy the Romantic notions implicit in that very form.

The rejection of the epistle and the substitution of dramatic devices such as dialogue and meaningful gesture to achieve a degree of sophistication in the delineation of character make A Simple Story a novel of decidedly realistic tendencies. When Elizabeth Inchbald turned to the psychology of her female characters, the realism took on a distinctly domestic note. Here, as with Dorriforth, the compression achieved through dramatic effect demonstrates the originality of the novel. In one sense, the heroine of A Simple Story is a version of Inchbald herself, though it is a portrait compiled with the moralizing eye of a satirist, and the self-analytical tone of the diarist. In another light, Miss Milner is a descendant of Lady Harriet, the sprightly if unfortuante character from I'll Tell You What; she shares Lady Harriet's flirtatious nature, her quick wit, her "virtues abounding from disposition, education, feeling:—Vices obtruding from habit and example." Each is a victim of fashionable life. Thus, like Dorriforth, Miss Milner has roots both in Inchbald's autobiography and, very specifically, in her writing for the stage.

When she wrote the essay on the novel quoted above, Mrs. Inchbald celebrated the position of the novelist in her political metaphor of the playwright living "under a despotic government" while the novelist "lives in a land of liberty." While she certainly knew better than to waste the lessons learned from writing plays when she turned to writing novels—self-taught as she was in the arts of frugality—she nonetheless does seem consciously to loosen the fetters of dramatic despotism with its dependence on popular taste, the Lord Chamberlain's power, and even the physical requirements of the theater itself. The new liberty is exercised, however, not so much in the design of her novel, which remains, as I have shown, remarkably tight and dramatic; rather she removes the manacles from her characters and lets them develop with a psychological depth and attention to motivation that she could not present on the stage. While Lady Harriet, like the even more typed characters Twineall and the Major, is "given" in Act I and looks forward to minor reform but to little internal change, Miss Milner and even Matilda, like Dorriforth, are allowed to change within the pages of the story. It is a step forward both for Mrs. Inchbald and for the history of the novel.

And while she is not nearly so successful at this new technique as Jane Austen would be, it is worth noting how the author of A Simple Story prepared the ground for that remarkable and delicate evolution of character that springs forth in Pride and Prejudice and Emma only a few years later.

What Inchbald struggles toward, particularly with regard to the portrayal of her female characters, is a language of psychology. In one sense, especially in her portrayal of Dorriforth, Inchbald attempts to convey emotion and motive through action and gesture rather than the much-abused technical repertoire of the popular novel, as I have noted. Thus A Simple Story illustrates her practice of avoiding the cliche-ridden language for expressing passion which she ridicules

in her article as she warns authors to

> Examine..the various times you have made your heroine blush, and your hero turn pale—the number of times he has pressed her hand to his "trembling lips," and she his letters to her "beating heart"—the several times he has been "speechless" and she "all emotion," the one "struck to the soul;" the other "struck dumb."
>
> The lavish use of "tears," both in "showers" and "floods," should next be scrupulously avoided; though many a gentle reader will weep on being told that others are weeping, and require no greater cause to excite their compassion.[35]

While abusing the repetition of these terms in novel after popular novel, she also seems to recognize the authors' motive in using them, namely, to express feeling. Yet like many readers she finds that they become by their very excess not the expression of feeling but merely a substitute for real emotions and a shorthand for lazy novelists. Nonetheless she recognized that she could not entirely substitute dramatic gestures for the worn cliches, and she like her contemporaries, fell back from time to time on the familiar vocabulary of internal tumult—of trembling and speechless behavior. Still, when she must use such terms she does so with a severity, compression, and restraint unique for her time. She clearly strives to cut the emotional and sentimental outbursts to a minimum, and, most important, while she stringently limits the old language of emotion, she attempts to heighten the psychological reality of the words she does use by carefully presenting them in a dramatic context. Thus while she borrows the language of the popular novel to convey her characters' feelings, she transforms that vocabulary by the manner in which she uses it. In this way she is able to restore some of the intensity of expression she had lost in rejecting the

epistolary technique. At the same time, she goes a long way in preparing the ground for the type of character development that later writers like Austen would make their own.

Inchbald's portrayal of Lady Elmwood and Matilda may also be related in another way to the author's theater experience, again partly accounting for the seventeen-year gap in the plot. Lady Elmwood is, at her roots, a Restoration heroine whose character is based on the witty female rake of the stage of Cibber, Wycherley and Congreve. She is of the generation of stage figures celebrated for their bawdy humor, their high style of living, and their wealth and fashion, the very kind of characters for whom Inchbald condemned Centlivre and Behn. Lady Elmwood is a modified version of such heroines, as she is less wealthy, though still an heiress; she would be perfectly at home in the court of King Charles II. Matilda, in contrast, is in the tradition of the modern woman of sentiment, not wit. She belongs to the plays of Kotzebue, or the novels of Mackenzie. While such a scheme oversimplifies both heroines as well as the novel itself, the contrast pinpoints the transitional nature of art in Inchbald's day. The first part of A Simple Story may be seen as reaching back to the pre-Augustan stage, while the second part looks forward to the Romantic future.

Thus the novel, in its search for "unity of design," links not only the two generations of Dorriforth's family, but symbolically spans the generations from the early to the later years of the eighteenth century, searching for an artistic identity just as Matilda searches for a personal one. In this sense the seventeen years between the stories is indeed a generation gap.

By extension, the novel is itself a metaphor for Inchbald's very career as an artist, and this fact may in part account for the sincerity and the success of the work. Just like her heroines, the author begins as a figure from the traditional stage and gradually transforms her tastes, as her portraits so clearly illustrate,

into those of the nineteenth century. If it seems odd that the creator of Lady Harriet and Miss Milner could also present characters like Amelia in Lovers' Vows, we should see this not so much as a fault as evidence of her sensitivity to popular taste and thus her usefulness to us as a mirror of her times.

In another sense the two parts of A Simple Story reveal Inchbald's nature as a writer in an age of transition. The early part of the novel, with its heroine a female rake, belongs to the conventions of I'll Tell You What, while the later part is more closely aligned with Such Things Are. Miss Milner avoids any self-examination in favor of fashionable ideas and such popular pursuits as masquerades. She is aligned in this tradition, as it carries into the novel, not with Clarissa Harlowe but with Anna Howe; not with Fanny Price but with Mary Crawford. Matilda, in contrast, is better suited to the feeling world of Such Things Are with its emphasis on humanitarianism. She is literary cousin to Clarissa, an older sister to Austen's Fanny. So closely is Matilda part of the newer world represented in Such Things Are, in fact, that there is a curious similarity of imagery between the play and the second part of A Simple Story. The prison setting of the play is quite literal as Haswell stalks the dungeons in search of injustice; Matilda's prison is real, in that she is confined to her rooms as her father walks the house, but more important, this confinement is metaphorical, echoing the state of Matilda's mind as she feels manacled by her past and restricted from seeing her father. The transformation of the prison from literal setting to psychological atmosphere is a long step toward the Gothic fiction of the 1790's. Here Inchbald anticipates not only the dungeons of Ann Radcliffe but the mental strife of Caleb Williams.

What the projection of themes and ideas from the plays into the novel suggests is that for Inchbald, as for so many writers of the late eighteenth century, the Augustan and Romantic strains were not two disparate and

sequential sensibilities, but rather closely related and often simultaneous expressions of taste, especially in the popular literature of the age.

If the transformation of the prison from external to internal state suggests the adaptation of humanitarian concerns into broader human interests, so the theme of false appearances, so prevalent in Inchbald's early comedies, offers yet another example of her Janus-like position. The attack on hypocrisy and self-interested behavior is a favorite theme of Augustan poetry and satire, and closely allied to the representation of its antidote, benevolence. The social satire of Pope's portraits of Timon or Chloe, however, focuses on how the characters are seen by others, and this is a natural emphasis of the drama as well. In the novel, on the other hand, the theme of false appearances looks ahead to the irony of writers like Austen, where in "good" characters like Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, and Darcy any note of falsity in their behavior is used as a key opening a process that leads to new self-awareness while in "bad" characters genuine hypocrisy causes genuine evil, as with Wickham or the Crawfords.

Inchbald's ability to combine eighteenth-century wit, control, and reason with nineteenth-century interest in psychology, especially in the excessive forms of sentimentalism and gothicism, illustrates the balance and counterbalance of "the feeling mind." Not political argument but emotional persuasion, not preaching but gently shaping the reader's inclination toward more radical solutions to social problems, is the definitive aim of Inchbald's fiction.

Nowhere is this more evident, finally, than in the writer's use of the theme of "a proper education," the theme which is the manifestation of "the feeling mind" as well as figuring in the last ringing sentence of the novel. It is, after all, in Matilda that the feeling mind is represented to best advantage, while her mother may be an example of its antithesis, the unthinking and too-feeling mind.

The delineation of Matilda is a portrait of the results, or at least the potential, of a woman with the proper education. She is devoted to her parents, careful and reserved toward an eager suitor, and loyal to her friends Miss Woodley and Sandford. But she is more. Unlike her mother, she is able to think in symbols, and, in the texture of the novel, this fact gives the reader the impression that she is more sensitive to the world around her. This tendency to identify personal symbols results from her different upbringing, we must assume, and her superior scholarship, since these are the traits that most distinguish her from her mother. One instance of Matilda's symbolic thinking occurs when, after Dorriforth has left the house, she decides to visit his rooms. She undertakes her pilgrimage not so much out of inquisitive instinct as from sentimental regard; she looks for symbols of the father she cannot have in person. Thus,

> In the breakfast and dining rooms she leaned over those seats with a kind of filial piety, on which she was told he had been accustomed to sit. And in the library she took up with filial delight,the pen with which he had been writing; and looked with the most curious attention into those books that were laid upon his reading desk.—But a hat, lying on one of the tables, gave her a sensation beyond any other she experienced on this occasion—in that trifling article of his dress, she thought she saw himself, and held it in her hand with pious reverence. (245-6)

The scene reinforces our perception of Matilda as particularly filial in her devotion, and also calls attention to her sensitivity to symbols. An earlier scene brings home with even greater effect the young woman's receptivity to her surroundings and her almost poetic responses to the domestic interiors which comprise her sphere:

> She was now in her seventeenth year—of the same age, within a year and a few months, of her mother when she became a ward of Dorriforth.—She was just three years old when her father went abroad, and remembered something of bidding him farewell; but more of taking cherries from his hand as he pulled them from the tree to give to her.(221)

What these "trifling articles" reveal about Matilda is the triumph of finer instincts in her character.

False appearances so important to earlier heroines have no meaning for her. The hat and the few cherries are indeed trifles, but to Matilda they have value because they have "feeling" value. She has learned one of the basic lessons of the age of pre-romanticism: things have value as they relate to and define the self, as they become personal symbols; in and of themselves, "things," the hat and cherries or Tintern Abbey, are of little interest. Matilda is not interested in things for their own sake, but only as they hold meaning for her. Such a woman would never marry for any but romantic reasons, perhaps, but the marriage would be founded on sensitivity to personal needs and thus be successful. In another sense, Matilda's mind is introspective, and thus her impulse may be said to arise from self-knowledge, again marking her difference from her mother. Matilda is not susceptible to the fashionable vice that caused her parent's downfall because the trifles she collects, are, so to speak, spiritual rather than temporal.

The touches of the hat and the cherries are, moreover, close ties between the author and her subject. Such details are very similar to those that fill the pages of Inchbald's own memorandum books. The woman who for her entire mature life recorded details of barley sugar, green silk and domestic anxiety had, finally, raised her habit of recording observations into a richer artistic achievement. The very impulse toward introspection which is so central to

Inchbald's nature as expressed in her diaries and portraits is here responsible for informing her best art. Thus the details of the hat and the cherries may stem from the autobiographical impulse that is so central to her work.[36]

The discipline of diary keeping is a kind of virtue that we cannot imagine Miss Milner would exercise; we can imagine her, were she unrestrained by the authorial voice of her narrator, as an enthusiastic epistolary lady. Matilda, with her more cloistered life, seems a more likely diarist. And while the modern reader is apt to feel much more sympathy for the sprightly and egotistical mother than for her daughter, the lesson of the novel counsels us otherwise. Matilda, after all, gets what she wants and deserves by the end: a reunion with her father. Partly because she learns from her mother's faults and partly because she is brought up in a household less confused than the mixed Protestant-Catholic environment that clearly had had some ill effects on her mother, Matilda succeeds where her parents had failed. While we are nowhere told that Matilda keeps a journal, we do know that she, unlike the young Miss Milner, derives pleasure from solitary pursuits like reading. Matilda's education can be seen as resulting from her isolated situation and also from her ability to observe and analyze details around her. She, like Inchbald herself, keeps track of time, measured in the number of years when she is deprived of her father's friendship and thus, extrapolating a bit, we may imagine her a disciplined keeper of diaries.

Unlike her mother, then, Matilda shows evidence of being aware of and, as much as possible in control of, her own life. She is not an easy victim for seduction; it is clear that we are meant to contrast her firmness toward Rushbrook with Milner's relative ease of manners with Lawnley. A proper education is partly responsible for this modest independence. In part, too, it must be noted, Matilda's better future is secured by her isolation from

temptation; she has few opportunities, aside from the interest of Rushbrook, for exploring vice. What the philosophy of a proper education suggests, though, is that this isolation can, and perhaps should, be self-imposed. Had Matilda been brought up in fashionable surroundings and still been properly educated, she would have avoided temptation through choice; such is the message the novel wishes to convey. But it is finally her independence more than her morality which makes her appealing.

Looking at her nature from a different angle, we can also see independence as closely connected to that other crucial factor in Inchbald's value system, money. A cynical, or perhaps merely realistic, reader might note that Rushbrook steals more than her father's affection; he stands to inherit most of his wealth. Matilda has been disinherited not only from her father's affections, but from his title and his fortune. To return to his favor is to regain her financial independence. While Inchbald, rather surprisingly, plays only indirect attention to money in her story, the message is still there. Money, like chastity and like formal education, is a device for achieving and maintaining independence. In an age when women were vulnerable to such a wide range of threats if they were poor and unskilled, a healthy respect for financial security buttresses the romantic notions of Matilda's character. It comes as no surprise at all that, in Nature and Art, the connections between poverty and chastity are examined in greater depth; by her second novel Inchbald had had the encouragement she needed to carry her ideas to their radical conclusions. In Matilda a certain decorum about money disguises how deeply the theme of dependence--financial and spiritual--informs A Simple Story.

In technique, then, A Simple Story fulfilled Mrs. Inchbald's dictum from her essay in The Artist in achieving a significant degree of originality. In its rejection of the novel in letters, in its designation of Dorriforth, a Roman

Catholic, as its hero, in its striking compression of story line and the resulting increase in pacing and suspense, it is an original work. In its striving for a vocabulary of emotional expression rooted in credible psychological motives A Simple Story opened new territory for novelists to explore. And in the presentation of a distinctly feminine point of view through the domestic realism of the settings and "stage business" Inchbald proved herself a skilled cartographer for the new world of the novel by and about women.

Finally, however, we must put aside its role in literary history and its interest as a document in the history of feminist sensibility and confront A Simple Story as a work of the imagination. And in this realm, almost two centuries after the book first appeared, we must agree with the early critics who recognized a work of genuine and lasting value. Oddly, it is not in the character of Dorriforth that the final power of the novel rests, despite his obvious centrality to the novel's thematic and political purposes. Rather, we turn to the women, and especially to Miss Milner, to find the real center of A Simple Story. For it is this heroine whom readers have found the best expression of Inchbald's talents, however much the structure and imagery of the book argues against her. Like Richardson's Lovelace, in a way, she slips from the confinement of the moral scheme of A Simple Story and takes on an energy all her own. While never so inclined to sin as the seductive Lovelace, Miss Milner understands the attractiveness of vice and pleasure, though she is too well brought up to yield totally to her inclinations. However limited her education, it has taught her that the world is a different place for women, especially fallen women, than for rakish men. Furthermore, the young heroine is not of a genuinely diabolical nature, but only modestly inclined to frivolity, flirtation, and occasional exuberance. She is, in the words of an earlier woman poet, "education's, more than Nature's fool."[37] The trouble is, Inchbald's novel argues, that real danger

can threaten a woman who has weakened her standards by such venial misdeeds; the inevitable fall of Lady Elmwood illustrates the age-old formula.

But it is not for this moral struggle that we take an interest in Miss Milner, although her conflicts enhance her character. She gains our sympathy and excites our interest primarily because of her remarkably solid, real presence in the story. Unlike dozens of heroines who precede her, Miss Milner, despite her missing Christian name, is credible, fleshly, an everyday sort of young woman; if we were told that she managed the laundry or the baking for Dorriforth's household, we would not be at all surprised. The achievement of the novel is that to such a heroine Inchbald attached the emotional complexity that led to her marriage and her eventual downfall in such a way as to make the two compatible. It is a remarkable step in the history of the novel, even if one that again marks the very transitional state in which Inchbald found herself as an artist. Yet so carefully has Inchbald knitted the old eighteenth-century heroine together with the new nineteenth-century prototype that she produces a virtually seamless web.

Elizabeth Inchbald's life, filled as it was with the domestic and mundane cares she recorded with such regularity in her account books, did not, as one might expect, subtract from her fiction; in the case of A Simple Story, on the contrary, the foundation of everyday reality from which her art emerged provided her with a refreshingly substantial and convincing heroine. Still, it is not surprising that many readers have closed the novel and felt unsatisfied with their final impression. As I have argued, A Simple Story is carefully constructed and patterned, presenting a series of actions and reactions with a certain through-the-looking-glass quality in the lives of Miss Milner and Matilda. In this sense, it shares the Augustan love for thesis and antithesis, for heroic couplets, for a world where garden and city each contribute to the delicate balance that

sustains and informs art and society. To have brought this attention to structure from the drama to the novel is one of Inchbald's most important accomplishments, bringing as she did a concern for "unity of design" to a form that only a few years before had celebrated such rambling histories as The Recess among its better examples. Any lingering dissatisfaction a reader feels with the novel emerges, ironically, from a second strength in A Simple Story, namely, the success of the character of Miss Milner. So appealing is the heroine that her personality simply steps outside the perimeters Inchbald so carefully laid; she takes on a life larger than that required by the purposes of the plot and thus she threatens to topple the entire work. In this sense, perhaps Inchbald may be called an "unconscious" artist if by the term we mean that while the pattern or design of A Simple Story grew from deliberate and almost painstaking planning, the life and character of Miss Milner drew its inspiration from less rational sources: from the bent toward autobiographical analysis, toward confession and portraiture and introversion, that were so long a part of Inchbald's nature. In this sense the heroine is another self-portrait, but a critical one in which the artist recognizes her beauty but foresees its inherent danger. For this reason the figure of the young woman was drawn with more color than the rest of the work, or, perhaps, with a different kind of brush. She is brighter, sharper, and more memorable than her surroundings.

Yet we would be foolish to wish her well-defined, and A Simple Story does, finally, work as a novel despite the bias she gives it. If we give more sympathy to Miss Milner it is perhaps because, like the author herself, we see our own weaknesses mirrored in the young woman's behavior. She is, we might say, all too human for a novel ostensibly interested in a Jacobin philosophy of virtue beyond the human scale. Miss Milner in all her unthinking gaiety pushes past the structure of the eighteenth-century novel and finds herself, completely at home, on the threshold of the new century.

Endnotes to Chapter 3

[1]Elizabeth Inchbald, Untitled essay in The Artist, rpt. in William McKee, "Elizabeth Inchbald: Novelist," Diss. Catholic University of America, 1935, pp. 160ff.

[2]Thomas Holcroft, Preface to Alwyn, quoted in George L. Barnett, Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968).. p.

[3]Holcroft, p.

[4]McKee, p. 75.

[5]Inchbald began A Simple Story in 1777, and revised it extensively before the novel was finally published in 1791. Janice Cauwells (see below note 6), in her edition of Nature and Art, discusses the close connections between Inchbald, Holcroft, and Godwin, showing how they read and revised each others' manuscripts extensively. Both novels thus evolved slowly, and the process suggests the degree to which the author treated her work as conscious art.

[6]See Janice Cauwells, "A Critical Edition of Nature and Art (1796) by Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821), Diss. University of Virginia, 1976, Introduction.

[7]Boaden says she began it in 1777 as an epistolary novel, an important point. I discuss this at length later in this chapter.

[8]Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1815. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 12.

[9]Kelly, pp. 15-16.

[10]All references are to the latest edition, ed. J.M.S. Tompkins, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Citations will be made by page number in the text hereafter. This edition has been chosen because of its general availability. Since my study does not concern itself directly with issues of a textual nature, I use Tompkins' text throughout.

[11]Boaden, , and J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (1932, rpt. Lincoln University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 339.

[12]Monthly Review, April 1791, p. 436. The Latin quotation appears to be misprinted; "dumtaxat" would translate "not less than simple and unified," or "exactly simple and One." A review in the Gentleman's Magazine (March 1791) criticizes the novel for being two separate stories poorly joined together. I am indebted to Mark Speyer for his assistance in translating the quotation. The source is unidentified.

[13]Boaden, II, 354.

[14]British Theatre, Vol. III.

[15]British Theatre, Vol. XIV.

[16]McKee, p. 160.

[17]Eighteenth-Century Studies, II (1977-78), 63-78.

[18]Rogers, 71.

[19]Rogers, 72.

[20]Rogers, 71.

[21]This role was for her play The Massacre which was never produced. See Boaden, II, Appendix for the only edition of the text. Given Kemble's statue in the theater of his day there was no question that many writers used him as a model for male leading roles.

[22]Boaden, II, pp. 258-260, "My Septembers."

[23]Kelly, p. 13.

[24]Linda Kelly, The Kemble Era (New York: Random House, 1980), pp. 34-5.

[25]Mrs. Sumbel, Memoirs (London, 1811), I, 115.

[26]Sumbel, 116-17.

[27]Boaden, II, 152-54.

[28]G. Kelly, p. 17.

[29]Boaden, II,

[30]Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 28.

[31]Hugh Kelly, Memoirs of a Magdalen, or, the History of Louisa Mildmay (London, Dublin, 1767), preface, n.p.

[32]H. Kelly, pp. 42-43.

[33]See Monthly Review, April 1791.

[34]See Gentleman's Magazine, quoted above.

[35]McKee, P. 154.

[36]Gary Kelly notes throughout his chapter on Inchbald in The English Jacobin Novel that the role of autobiography is a major key to her originality, and that later writers learned from her how to use it in their works, and to their own ends.

[37]Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, quoted in Cotton, p. 153.

CONCLUSION

> It would have been a pleasure, certainly, but an alarming pleasure, to have known Mrs. Inchbald.
>
> Lytton Strachey

Writing in 1908, Lytton Strachey noted,

> A Simple Story is one of those books which, for some reason or other, have failed to come down to us, as they deserved, along the current of time, but have drifted into the literary backwater where only the professional critic or the curious discoverer can find them out. 'The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy'; and nowhere more blindly than in the republic of letters. If we were to inquire how it has happened that the true value of Mrs. Inchbald's achievement has passed out of general recognition, perhaps the answer to our question would be found to lie in the extreme difficulty with which the mass of readers detect and appreciate mere quality in literature. Their judgment is swayed by a hundred side-considerations which have nothing to do with art, but happen easily to impress the imagination, or to fit in with the fashion of the hour.[1]

Strachey's introduction to A Simple Story raises questions we continue to ask today. Many of his conclusions are too extreme; he dismisses Inchbald's plays as "so bad that it is difficult to believe that they brought her a fortune." Despite his objections to many of her works, however, Strachey recognized the strengths of A Simple Story and was forthright in his praise:

> ...she has the power of doing what, after all, only a very few indeed of her fellow-craftsmen have ever been able to do—she can bring into her pages the living pressure of a human passage, she can invest, if not with realism, with something greater than realism—with the sense of reality itself—the pains, the triumphs, and the agitations of the human heart.[2]

He calls the novel "her delicate, sympathetic, and artificial book."

The fundamental questions raised by Strachey seventy-five years ago remain unanswered. What determines literary longevity? Why does the career of one author become enshrined with seemingly irrevocable firmness in the temples of literary fame while those of other writers vanish like smoke from votive candles? Surely the quality of their work, as Strachey proposes, is an inadequate answer, for many good novels remain long out of print. In concluding this study of the early career of one of these neglected authors, it seems necessary to address that question, and in proposing an answer to suggest alternatives to the scheme of literary assessment that canonizes some while

condemning too many others to obscurity. A glimpse at Inchbald's career after the success of A Simple Story is a necessary step in summing up her career as a whole, and in speculating on the decline of her reputation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In literary terms, that career reached its zenith in 1791 with the publication of A Simple Story. It is her best work because it is very much her own, the product of her deepest autobiograhical impulses and her most conscious artistic creativity and craftsmanship. Her work after 1791 constitutes a separate phase of her career. With her retirement from the stage in 1789 and the publication of her novel two years later, Mrs. Inchbald achieved her major goals: financial independence and public acclaim as a writer. Her long apprenticeship of travelling through provincial towns and struggling with poverty, rude managers and hesitant publishers, was behind her. It is no surprise that her memorandum books for these later years reflect a more leisurely pace, the portraits a more relaxed and confident manner. Still, her later career contains threads that are part of the warp of her early success and that merit brief attention here.

Inchbald's early anxiety about financial matters never left her, even when she was an established writer. Her will, a copy of which is in the Folger library, attests to the financial security she achieved; over five thousand pounds in bequests to friends and family illustrate both the great reward she reaped from her writing and the frugality with which she lived. A glance at her literary income in light of what was earned by several of her contemporaries helps us more accurately to draw conclusions about the success of Mrs. Inchbald's career, and the status she achieved as a writer.

A Simple Story appeared in 1791; the author received at first a flat fee of two hundred pounds from her publisher. Ten years later, he paid her an

additional six hundred pounds for the extended copyright to both that novel and her second one, Nature and Art. Finally, in 1810, she was again able to sell the copyrights to another publisher, Longmans, although we have no record of the amount. If one includes here another one hundred and fifty pounds for the first sale of Nature and Art (1796), it becomes clear that a popular novelist could do extremely well; the two novels alone account for over one thousand pounds. As her personal reputation increased, additional sources of income materialized. One publisher offered her a thousand pounds for her memoirs, according to Boaden. The fact that she refused suggests that she could not afford to exercise discretion, a luxury denied to many of her contemporaries.

Fanny Burney, for instance, sold her first novel, Evelina (1778) for thirty pounds. Her second, Cecilia, gained her a more substantial two hundred and fifty pounds because of the great success of her first venture. Still, Burney came from an established family and never had to depend on her writing for income. If she had been writing to earn a living, the price of her novels would scarcely have been adequate. Charlotte Smith published Emmeline in 1788, capitalizing on the success of a previous publication, Elegiac Sonnets. Success followed success, as a first edition of the novel sold 1,500 copies, and a second 600. But we must look at the conditions under which Mrs. Smith worked to assess the real value of this income to her. If Fanny Burney could write because her father encouraged her, Charlotte Smith was obliged to complete her volume of sonnets because her husband refused to support her or their children. She wrote while sharing accommodations in debtors' prison with her spouse. She wrote, in a sense, because leisure was forced upon her. After almost nine months in prison, she completed her poems, and, upon selling them, was able to leave her husband after twenty years of a very unhappy marriage. She wrote to support not only herself but the nine of her surviving twelve children. Over the next ten years,

she averaged one four-volume novel a year, netting about fifty pounds a volume, or two hundred pounds a year. Ann Radcliffe provides a third sample of the financial conditions of female authors during Inchbald's era. Perhaps the best known of the novelists of the late eighteenth-century because of the broad appeal of the Gothic elements in her stories, Mrs. Radcliffe is an example of the highest reaches of popular literary success. The Mysteries of Udolpho earned her five hundred pounds, and for The Italian she was paid six hundred pounds. Despite the increasing inflation that plagued the last decades of the century, this was an extraordinary amount of money. Yet it is worth once again considering the conditions of authorship in Radcliffe's case. Her husband was an Oxford graduate who eventually became an editor. He could understand and encourage literary activities, as well as offer his wife initial financial security.

Each of these women represents popular success roughly equivalent to that of the author of A Simple Story. The significant differences rest in Mrs. Inchbald's independent, professional status; she remained a writer with no additional income outside that she gained from her theater work. Unlike Ann Radcliffe and Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Inchbald had no family to offer her support, and unlike Charlotte Smith she was able to write her novels as much from choice as from necessity in her later years, and was relieved of the drudgery which made Mrs. Smith's life so miserable. Inchbald also made a good deal more money than any of the others she wrote for the stage as well as for the novel-reading public.

These comparisons suggest, then, that Elizabeth Inchbald achieved a remarkable status for a woman writer in the late eighteenth century: the role of a full-time, professional writer earning her living exclusively by her pen, and becoming successful enough to assure financial independence. Few other writers, especially women writers, could match this record. Jane Austen, we might remember, sold Northanger Abbey in 1798 for a mere ten pounds.

Clearly, financial success is not the measure of literary quality, but to ignore the importance of money to writers like Mrs. Inchbald is to lose sight of the changing nature of publishing, of popular taste, and of the lives of authors at the end of the eighteenth century. The growing size of the reading public, especially for novels, and the decline in patronage over the previous forty years are all part of literary history as it is reflected in Inchbald's career. Financial independence, moreover, did not put an end to her career, as it might have done if money had been her sole motive for writing. In fact, after 1791, when Inchbald was released from the immediate need to work for money, she found that success gave her the freedom to write more openly about her political ideas and to share, to a greater degree, the literary companionship of fellow writers like Godwin and Holcroft, Amelia Opie, "Perdita" Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, and many others. Thus she experienced in her second novel, Nature and Art, with social satire of a far more vehement type than she dared in Such Things Are, for instance. A decade later she had the opportunity in The British Theatre to formulate her critical opinions in a disciplined way as she wrote over one hundred prefaces on English plays. Through these years she continued to write plays as well, the best known being her adaptation of Kotzebue's Lovers' Vows. A survey of these later years suggests how "the feeling mind" matured and altered as this versatile writer concluded her career.

Foremost among her "feeling" interests in her later works was education for women. The questions raised about the dangers of fashionable education she raised in I'll Tell You What and A Simple Story were further explored in Nature and Art and Wives as They Were, and Maids as They Are, was well as in her critical prefaces. "Whatever reasons may be urged against the more elevated instruction of the [female] sex at present," Inchbald wrote in 1808,

> ...one good consequence at least accrues from it—they are better qualified than here to fore to chuse their lovers and husbands. It was the age of female ignorance that the Lotharios and the yet viler Lovelaces, flourished.
>
> (Preface to The Fair Penitent, Vol.12)

In blaming women's failures on their lack of education rather than on their inherent weakness, Mrs. Inchbald is making a more radical statement than we might at first suspect. There seems to be a note of irony in her tone as she argues that at least education will make better marriages possible, although at the same time she is serious in seeing this as one important result. She is, of course, criticizing her society and its inherent institutions, and emphasizing the need for social reform to remedy the problem of improper education. In Nature and Art her inclination to use literature for political and social ends reaches its apex;the "useful moral" comes in fact to dominate the literary purpose of her second novel.

Nature and Art, then, is not so effective as A Simple Story in purely literary terms. The stronger element of satire, the extremes of tone and emotion, recall more closely the fragmentary novels of Mary Wollstonecraft than the delicacy and craft of A Simple Story. If Janet Cauwells is right, we may feel the heavier hands of Godwin and Holcroft in the mixture of propaganda, satire, and Jacobinism that dominate this novel. Generally the work has its best moments when Inchbald's attention is drawn to the fate of her heroine, Agnes Primrose, because here the author is able to draw on the same strengths that made her first novel so successful: her perceptions about women's roles in eighteenth-century society, and her own personal experience.

Nature and Art, as the title announces, is a novel of comparison and contrast, of carefully mapped dichotomies charted in the careers of two brothers, and later of their respective sons. The sons are separated early in life; one is raised by his wealthy father, a bishop, while the other spends his early life

in the wilderness as the result of a shipwreck. The young noble savage is sent to live with his clerical uncle upon the death of his father. The behavior of the two boys allows the author to comment with a certain amount of acerbity on the corruptions of modern civilization. Central to the boys' adventures is their meeting with two girls in a country village. One brother meets Agnes Primrose, whom he seduces and later abandons, unaware that he has left her pregnant. The other brother, the "uncivilized" Henry, falls in love with Rachel, whom eventually he happily marries. Henry helps to rescue Agnes from her plight, but soon the forces of society against Agnes prove too strong. The early experience shadows her and finally ruins her life. Ironies of circumstance weigh heavily as William becomes a judge, and Agnes is brought into his court charged with crimes that Inchbald makes clear are the result solely of the circumstances of her fatal seduction, not of her natural temper or inclination. In his arrogance, William condemns her to death, only to discover too late who she is. Henry, raised in ignorance of the vices of civilization, is humanitarian, tolerant and virtuous, and represents the Jacobin optimistic view that a better future is possible if the abuses of social institutions can be reformed. Through William, Inchbald pillories both the established Church and the judicial system. The Bishop, William's father,is without charity; William, as a justice, is without mercy. Henry, in contrast, raised in a kind of natural religion, exhibits genuine love and indicts William's brand of justice for its cruelty.

Like many novels of purpose, Nature and Art suffers from the intensity of its political bias; art is sacrificed to propaganda. Still, it is a logical development of the ideas and instincts Inchbald explored in her earlier fiction and drama, and a natural response to the increasingly difficult political climate of the last few years of the century. The turn of events in France, the increasing inflation at home, Holcroft's arrest for treason on ill-founded charges

in 1794, and perhaps even the publication of Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman, all suggest why the fiction of the English Jacobins became strident in its advocacy of social change.

The prefaces in The British Theatre, written a decade and more after Nature and Art, suggest that Mrs. Inchbald's focus had shifted away from the political arena even though she continued, as I have shown, her interest in education for women. These later essays deplore immorality and encourage plays that are exemplary, especially with regard to women. Thus the literature of her contemporaries,she finds, is generally superior to that of the Restoration wits because the modern authors are far more inclined to avoid bawdy scenes and to advocate more humanistic values. Her earlier work suggests, as I have argued, that this moral vision stems not so much from prudery on Mrs. Inchbald's part as from political intent; only if the stage is reformed will women be able to work in the theater without loss of reputation. Thus the prefaces she writes in The British Theatre condemn Susannah Centlivre and Aphra Behn particularly, as I showed in Chapter 2, because as women they should have recognized the dangers of such immoral practices as using bawdy language or writing suggestive scenes. If, by the standards of our time, Inchbald's definition of bawdy is rather tame, her conservative attitude is perhaps more palatable if we see its politcal as well as its moral overtones.

The prefaces likewise call attention to the stagecraft of the plays she reviews, and offer the sensible criticism of an experienced writer, if not a great deal that is new. She argues that "If holy books teach, that the wicked too often prosper, why are plays to be withheld from inculcating the self-same doctrine?" in defense of her own controversial Lovers' Vows, a comment suggesting that, after all, she was rather flexible in her definitions of morality. In reviewing Congreve's The Mourning Bride, she says, "Love is a fervid passion to feel, but an

insipid one to see." She condemns the play as "a tragedy which engages the attention, pleases the ear, and charms the eye, but never touches the heart," (VI) an opinion with which most modern readers would agree. She further shows her skill at constructing stage-worthy plays and her experience as a novelist when she looks at the younger Colman's The Iron Chest, an attempt to dramatize Godwin's Caleb Williams:

> The finer details in "Caleb Williams"allow of no representation in action: the dramatist was here compelled merely to give the features of the murderer's face; whilst the novelist portrayed every shade of his countenance, every fibre that played in forgetful smiles, or was convulsed by the pangs of remembrance.
>
> The two arts of dramatic and of novel writing are thus beheld at such variance--that the reader of the novel shall enter, with Faulkland, into all his nice, his romantic notions of honour and posthumous fame; though the auditor, or reader, of "The Iron Chest," shall feel no concern, unless to despise it, about Sir Edward Mortimer's equal enthusiasm in the glory of reputation...(Vol. VI)

These few examples suggest that while the prefaces are not literary criticism of the caliber of Johnson's or Coleridge's, they do offer insight into the changing popular tastes of the era, and the ways in which Inchbald's ideas mirror and even anticipate those changes. Overall, the prefaces focus too closely on the play under consideration, and fail to offer the broader criticism of literary ideas that would allow Mrs. Inchbald to be ranked as a professional critic; nevertheless, like her career as a whole, her work as commentator on the drama provides a perspective on the popular literary culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries not available elsewhere. (Clearly they contain a wealth of useful material for the theater historian; strangely, few have consulted either the British Theatre or Inchbald's other essays when studying the Kemble era.)

Throughout the various essays and miscellaneous pieces Inchbald wrote after 1800, "the feeling mind" continued to inform her literary and extra-literary purposes. As she got older, Mrs. Inchbald began to live an increasingly reclusive life, reading with greater interest the evangelical magazines which were beginning to dominate the attention of the middle classes. Boaden says that she returned to the active practice of Catholicism during these years as well. The wave of Romanticism failed to engulf her, although she died in the same year as Keats. Again, the moderation of her views, and her interest in the practical goals of education and social reform left her little inclination for the less sensible excesses of gothic imagery, the supernatural, and the indulgence in the Self that the newer writers advocated. The feeling mind was one inclined to an interest in human psychology, but not in the degree of individualism and even confessional writing favored by the Romantic poets.

In this way Elizabeth Inchbald remained, finally, deeply rooted in the eighteenth century background. It seems fair to say, however, that she was fully aware of the new literary currents circulating after 1800, but that she found them unsuited to her taste, or her talent. While her later work does show an increased leaning toward the sentimental, melodramatic style made fashionable by Kotzebue, it seems clear that she employed this mode for the same purposes to which she put earlier styles—for the useful social end. She declined to be interested in plays or novels that used romantic purposes for self-indulgent ends. She continued in the Jacobin tradition of adapting popular styles to practical, immediate ends, and when she could no longer effect social change or provide a moral justification for her art, she seems to have made a decision to retire from public life, and stop writing. The "feeling mind" at which she once aimed her work had become the definitive quality of her own writing, but no longer a suitable epithet for her audience after 1810.

Strachey's attention a century later was virtually the last notice Elizabeth Inchbald received from a major critic. While the intervening years have brought her occasional glances from scholars, Mrs. Inchbald's name remains unrecognized by the general reading public. She had not the rich and famous friends Fanny Burney claimed; she did not immortalize her reputation by generating scandal like Mary Wollstonecraft; she lacked a literary family like Mary Shelley. All these facts might partially explain her omission from the canons of the great tradition.

But women fall on the wrong side of the actuarial tables of literary life, and while feminist criticism over the last decade or two has sought reasons and remedies for such imbalance, it seems clear that many years will pass before the best novels by Elizabeth Inchbald, Charlotte Smith, Sarah Fielding, Amelia Opie, or Eliza Haywood will be read with the frequency with which we now consume even the worst works of Dickens, Smollett, Henry Fielding or Sir Walter Scott. While on the one hand a reader might argue that life is too short for any but the first rank of plays and novels and poems, the other side of the argument is becoming more persuasive. Have we not already travelled for too long on the motorways of English literature, and too long neglected the footpaths, lanes, and cliff walks? We have virtually industrialized a few great authors, speaking in fact of scholarly "factories" that manufacture their texts. While clearly we need the motorways and factories of the modern age, we risk losing our sense of place and of history if we neglect for too long the pre-industrial pleasures of lesser known names and works.

And yet one is tempted to argue that Elizabeth Inchbald and her kind are better left for the discriminating and selective voyager. In a world where Andy Warhol prophesies a future in which everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes, perhaps we ought to recognize the value of a modest reputation. Mrs. Inchbald

has not become a household word, partly, perhaps, through accidents of history or prejudice against women writers. Maybe there is a lesson to be learned from her lack of notoriety; her very strengths make her unappealing to the modern reading public. For Mrs. Inchbald remains, after, all, very much a woman of her times, deeply rooted in the daily life of her turbulent and curious era. She cared little for her own fame, but cared deeply about the conditions of her friends and her society. She eschewed writing that glorified the individual at the cost of the common good. It is hardly surprising, then, that the post-romantic generations have consigned her to dark library corners. Ironically, one can look ahead from her works, especially A Simple Story, and see that nineteenth century writers did gradually adopt and embrace many of Inchbald's literary techniques and human values. In Jane Austen, we find the familiar counterbalances of wit and virtue Inchbald defined in her heroines; in Mrs. Gaskell's novels we find the domestic settings of A Simple Story elaborated and made concrete; in the green silk purse that Thackery puts in the hands of Becky Sharp we catch glimpses of Miss Milner's seductive needlework. Perhaps it is not too much to suggest that Elizabeth Inchbald's literary shrine is far more hallowed, if less recognized, than Lytton Strachey knew, standing as it does concealed within these and other very great works that came after hers.

Or, to use Strachey's image, if her own works have allowed to drift "into the literary backwater," they have nonetheless left ripples, perhaps even modest waves in the course of their journey. To study Elizabeth Inchbald and "the feeling mind" is to undertake a voyage of discovery into both the source of those ripples, and the territories upon whose boundaries they break. And, like the ancient voyagers who cast off despite maps engraved with imposingly limited horizons encircled by awesome monsters of the deep, bold readers of neglected texts may find themselves enchanted, once they stray off the conventional

routes, at the existence of many brave new worlds. For too long the cautious cartographers of the Great Tradition have held us to safe terrain, reducing the curious discoverer to a mere tourist. Surely the time has come for more readers to venture beyond the pages of the conventional guide books to the literary world into the realms of the lesser explored regions of minor novels and forgotten plays. With Elizabeth Inchbald, I propose, such readers will find their journey well worth the perils.

John Philip Kemble called his friend "the tenth Muse," because, he said, her presence was never unaccompanied by that of her nine sisters. For the woman who claimed that her only Muse was Necessity, perhaps Kemble's praise remains the best epitaph.

Endnotes to Conclusion

[1]Strachey's preface on A Simple Story is reprinted in his Literary Essays (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 127-138. The essay originally appeared as an introduction to a re-issue of the novel in 1908. After considering her novel, Strachey examines her life, and comments that "It would have been a pleasure, certainly, but an alarming pleasure to have known Mrs. Inchbald" (137).

[2]Strachey, 130.

[3]Avrom Fleishman, A Reading of Mansfield Park: An Essay in Critical Synthesis (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 28 ff.

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