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CONDUCT LITERATURE AND THE NOVEL: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE IDEAL WOMAN

By

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ABSTRACT

CONDUCT LITERATURE AND THE NOVEL: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE IDEAL WOMAN

By

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If one accepts the claim that literature represents ideologies that help construct lived experience, then we can see that literature helps create society and is not merely reflective of it. Contributing to women's literary history, this dissertation recovers that dynamic relationship at the intersection of conduct literature, the novel, and female education. Eighteenth-century conduct literature, because it is by definition prescriptive, is an excellent example of a source of ideology that portrays women as cultural objects. Conduct literature served to both perpetuate and challenge the ideology of the "feminine" in eighteenth-century culture.

Recently scholars have turned to conduct literature as a way to access a version of the lived experience of women. Yet much of this scholarship relies on overgeneralizations that depict conduct literature as monolithic. This false construction fails to recognize the diversity among texts, covering the social and political spectrum from revolutionary to reactionary.

In order to break down that monolith this dissertation approaches conduct literature as a study in women's education. The dissertation has two main sections. The

first two chapters deal primarily with conduct literature itself. Chapter one examines conduct literature as a century-long tradition; its focus on education serves to illuminate a genealogy of the discourse of independence. Chapter two identifies the overlooked disjunction between courtship novels and conduct literature, which demonstrates the subversiveness of some courtship novels and how they represent ideological battles over gender role definitions.

The second major section of the dissertation applies the nuanced reading of conduct literature in part one to test cases of eighteenth-century novels that are explicitly concerned with women's education. The reading of Charlotte Lennox's Female Quixote in chapter three links reading, imagination, and desire to demonstrate the subversion of conduct literature's "archenarrative" that defines what makes young women marriageable. Chapter four employs Jane Austen's Mansfield Park to demonstrate challenges to the ideology of marriage that conflates moral and financial interests. Finally, chapter five examines the importance of the revolutionary moment of the 1790s for (re)defining women's "sphere," demonstrating the attempt by Mary Hays in Memoirs of Emma Courtney to reform society as a whole rather than to reform women's place within it. In short through a fuller appreciation of conduct literature, each of these chapters attempts to problematize that ubiquitous--but not--monolithic eighteenth-century vision: the ideal woman.

To my parents
who helped me begin

To my husband
who helped me finish

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INTRODUCTION

> Of all the systems . . . which human nature in its moments of intoxication has produced; that which men have contrived with a view to forming the minds, and regulating the conduct of woman, is perhaps the most completely absurd.
>
> Mary Hays,
> Appeal to the Men of Great Britain

The combination of feminist scholarship that has recovered female authors of the eighteenth century who are outside the traditional canon and historicist scholarship which has broadened both how we interpret history and what kinds of evidence we view as relevant to its interpretation, has opened new avenues for literary study. Margaret Ezell, in Writing Women's Literary History, advocates uniting historicism and feminism: "Historicism--new historicism, cultural materialist historicism, feminist historicism--enables us to begin to glimpse a past separate from our perception of it" (9). Although Ezell acknowledges that feminist literary scholars cannot escape ideology, historicism can promote a "self-conscious study of the past" (13). That self-consciousness promotes an awareness not only of the past that is the object of study, but the past which has intervened between that period and the present. Ezell's historicism demands that we strive to be self-conscious of our own language, assumptions, and commitments

as we try to understand the language, assumptions, and commitments represented in women's literature.

If one accepts the claim that literature represents ideologies that help construct lived experience, then we can see that literature helps create society and is not merely reflective of it. As a cultural history this dissertation recovers that dynamic relationship at the intersection of conduct literature, the novel, and female education. Eighteenth-century conduct literature, because it is by definition prescriptive, is an excellent example of a source of ideology that portrays women as cultural objects. Mary Poovey describes both the historical significance of conduct literature today and its function in its own time:

> Conduct material is instructive . . . because, as products of the everyday discourse of eighteenth-century propriety, the essays are themselves expressions of the implicit values of their culture. Indeed, in many respects this conduct material provides the best access both to the way in which this culture defined female nature and to the ways in which a woman of this period would have experienced the social and psychological dimensions of ideology. For in reproducing the ideological configuration that protected bourgeois society, both the hierarchy of values and the rhetorical strategies contained in these works provided real women with the terms by which they conceptualized and interpreted their own behavior and desires. (16)

Although I will argue that conduct literature challenged the ideology of the dominant culture, and not merely reproduced it, Poovey is correct to identify the eighteenth-century strategy of naturalizing what today we (often) recognize as a social construct: femininity. Whether used by conservative or liberal, the claim that any particular

behavior or desire or social practice is "natural," inherent to who women are, was commonly employed both to perpetuate and challenge prevailing social structures.

There can be little doubt that conduct literature was a powerful transmitter of social ideology in the eighteenth century. Both recorded references to conduct literature by readers and the sheer volume of conduct literature published in the long eighteenth century attest to its cultural ubiquity. Hundreds of titles were published during the course of the century, many directed at audiences of particular social classes, professions, ages, and genders. Some were translated from other languages, notably French. And the most popular titles were republished in editions that spanned the entire century.

Although conduct literature, especially that directed toward women, has traditionally been far outside the literary canon, it has by no means been forgotten by literary scholars. Though the total scholarship on conduct literature is small in volume, it has appeared with remarkable regularity in the twentieth century. The first half of the century saw primarily archival work aimed at cataloguing titles and content or categorizing by purpose or audience.[1] The transitional piece of scholarship that leads into what Ezell calls feminist historicist work is

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[1]See Virgil Heltzel's Check List of Courtesy Books in the Newberry Library; John E. Mason's Gentlefolk in the Making; Maurice Quinlan's Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners, 1700-1830; and Joan Wildeblood and Peter Brinson's The Polite World: A Guide to English Manners and Deportment from the Thirteenth to the Nineteenth Century.

Joyce Hemlow's 1950 catalog of references to conduct literature in the works of Fanny Burney, for here is scholarship linking the traditional categories of the belletristic with the practical.

With the rise of feminist scholarship and interest in female readers and writers, there developed an increased awareness in conduct literature as a way to access a version of the lived experience of women. The mid-1980s saw a surge of interest, beginning with several anthologies of excerpts of women's writing which relied heavily on conduct literature.[2] This period also saw prominent and important scholarship on female authors begin to use conduct literature as an entree to a variety of social practices, primarily courtship and marriage. Mary Poovey's Proper Lady and the Woman Writer, Jane Spencer's Rise of the Woman Novelist, and Nancy Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction introduced conduct literature as an important but neglected literary historical resource.

Now, in the late 1990s, one important gauge of the ever increasing interest in conduct literature is that it is coming back into print. Currently there are three presses (Routledge/Thoemmes, William Pickering, and Woodstock) with series devoted either to conduct literature or women's education, topics which overlap. Whether reprints or new editions, these series make important texts, such as those

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[2]See Angeline Goreau's Whole Duty of a Woman; Bridgett Hill's Eighteenth-Century Woman; and Vivien Jones's Women in the Eighteenth Century.

by James Fordyce and John Gregory, available to a much broader audience than microfilm and the special collections of research libraries ever could. This availability promises to engender even more research.

Even so, it is Nancy Armstrong who deserves primary credit for promulgating conduct literature as a crucial component in both the rise of the domestic novel specifically and social formation generally. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Desire and Domestic Fiction (1987) and Ideology of Conduct (1987), the collection of essays she edited with Leonard Tennenhouse. Armstrong's influence on scholars of women and the novel has made the use of conduct literature a common, if not standard, practice.[3] Her methodology has also influenced the ways that we read and use conduct literature. Didactic works have moved from the margins to a central place in our understanding of how gender roles in the eighteenth century were formulated and disseminated, and how these gender roles and their representations participated in the rise of the middle class. Armstrong challenges readers not to fall into the error of believing that "gender transcends history"

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[3]The presence of conduct literature is ubiquitous in studies of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Hannah More. Recently, Jacques Carré's entire collection of essays is devoted to conduct literature, Katherine Green's The Courtship Novel relies heavily on it, and two collections of essays on eighteenth-century culture, Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century, edited by Roy Porter and Marie Roberts, and History, Gender, and Eighteenth-Century Literature, edited by Beth Tobin, include essays on conduct literature.

(Desire 8), reminding us instead to question how the world has become gendered.

In fact, the general direction of Armstrong's argument is what makes works such as the present one possible. But if Armstrong's strength lies in reconceptualizing long sweeps of literary and social history, the weakness of her argument lies in her representation of the particular. I agree, on the general level, with Armstrong's assertion that didactic literature defined "what made a woman desirable" and

> that narratives which seemed to be concerned solely with matters of courtship and marriage in fact seized the authority to say what was female, and that they did so in order to contest the reigning notion of kinship relations that attached most power and privilege to certain family lines. (Desire 5)

Yet even with this substantial claim for the importance of didactic literature (meaning both conduct literature and novels of education), Armstrong elsewhere and repeatedly undermines the potential usefulness of conduct literature through her failure to individuate texts: "[a]fter reading several dozen or more conduct books, one is struck with a sense of their emptiness--a lack of what we today consider 'real' information about the female subject and the object world that she is supposed to occupy" (Ideology 97). The sheer amount of conduct literature--hundreds of titles published over the course of more than a century--assures diversity among texts, covering the social and political spectrum from revolutionary to reactionary. Further, such totalizing statements as Armstrong's belie the

representation of personal emotions and experiences which are present in many of the treatises, ranging from sadness to bitterness, from defiance to stoicism. There is no denying the element of repetition to which Armstrong alludes. That repetition, however, has lulled readers into the belief that conduct literature presents a monolithic view of the ideal woman.

In revaluing the relationship between conduct literature and the novel, this dissertation breaks down that monolith and shows the diversity and complexity of eighteenth-century conduct literature. To gain a fresh perspective on conduct literature I have chosen to approach it as a study in women's education. This serves to broaden the examination of how conduct literature promulgates ideology beyond the economic (although, I must emphasize, it is always that), to examine gender individuation and the institution of marriage. Eighteenth-century women's education is a field that is woefully underexamined, not least because readers of the late twentieth century often fail to recognize the education of young women for wifehood as any kind of education at all.

This dissertation also serves as a critical reception history of eighteenth-century conduct literature for women and how its representations of ideal woman intersect with those in novels by and about women in the same period. The dissertation has two main sections. The first two chapters deal primarily with conduct literature itself. Chapter one examines conduct literature as a century-long tradition and

refutes the construction of conduct literature as a monolith. Its focus on education serves to illuminate a genealogy of the discourse of independence. Chapter two focuses on the overlooked disjunction between courtship novels and conduct literature. This disjunction demonstrates the subversiveness of some courtship novels and how they represent ideological battles over gender role definitions.

The second major section of the dissertation applies the nuanced readings of conduct literature in part one to test cases of eighteenth-century novels that are explicitly concerned with women's education. The reading of Charlotte Lennox's Female Quixote in chapter three links reading, imagination, and desire to demonstrate the subversion of conduct literature's "archenarrative" that defines what makes young women marriageable. Chapter four employs Jane Austen's Mansfield Park to demonstrate challenges to the ideology of marriage that conflates moral and financial interests. Here, Fanny is revelatory of the eighteenth-century debate regarding definitions of marriage, duty, and virtue. Finally, chapter five examines the importance of the revolutionary moment of the 1790s for (re)defining women's "sphere," demonstrating the attempt by Mary Hays in Memoirs of Emma Courtney to reform society as a whole rather than to reform women's place within it. In short, through a fuller appreciation of conduct literature, each of these chapters attempts to problematize that ubiquitous--but not monolithic--eighteenth-century vision:

the ideal woman.

Chapter 1

INDEPENDENCE OR OBEDIENCE: CONDUCT LITERATURE DISCOURSE ON FEMALE INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION

> In a comfortable situation, a cultivated mind is necessary to render a woman contented; and in a miserable one it is her only consolation.
>
> Mary Wollstonecraft
> Thoughts on the Education of Daughters

Conduct literature treats a variety of topics as essential to female education: the "pleasing arts" such as dancing, drawing, singing, playing musical instruments, and needlework, filial duty, conjugal duty, virtue, modesty, and acceptable social behavior and activities.[1] Each of these is usually dealt with in relation to two stages of female life: before marriage and after marriage. What remains unsaid in the phrase "the pleasing arts" is who is pleasing whom and for what purpose. The very title of Thomas Marriott's Female Conduct, Being an essay on the art of pleasing, to be practised by the fair sex, before, and after marriage (1759) is revelatory of social expectations. This

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[1]What is frequently missing from secular conduct literature is religious devotion, which is most often mentioned only in passing. Secular educational works in which religion holds a central place, such as Hester Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773), are unusual. Conduct literature appears to assume religious faith and duty, treating it as transparent and beyond debate except when called into service supporting other kinds of arguments.

version of women's education deals with how to become marriageable. In order to get husbands women must learn to please men. To do so, in spite of the eighteenth-century conduct ideal of the "natural," women are taught to be artful, that is, devote themselves to perfecting the accomplishments and personal appearance. Thus these concepts become elided; it is "natural" for women to be pleasing.

Most conduct literature for women throughout the eighteenth century, whether written by male or female, conservative or liberal, is consistent in addressing these feminine accomplishments. A topic that is less reliably approached is what I will call intellectual education, which, in contrast to the accomplishments listed above, encompasses such subjects as classical and modern languages, history, philosophy, geography, mathematics and sciences. The term intellectual education is preferable to the more common term with a similar meaning today--formal education--because the term "formal" implies a regularity that can be misleading. Female education was haphazard, and even at the end of the century many schools for young women, where today we would situate "formal" intellectual education, focused almost exclusively on the accomplishments. In terms of school attendance, home education, and adult autodidacticism, there is no predicting who might get an education in the accomplishments only and who might get even a partial intellectual education.

The recommendations by conduct authors regarding women's intellectual education are as varied as conduct literature itself. Some authors are suspicious of any intellectual learning by women, others wish to control it by dictating its shape (often numerous subjects, but with little depth into any particular field). Some authors advocate learning French but not classical languages (considered a male domain), while others believe French leads to ostentatious self-display and to reading debauched French romances. Proposals for schools ranged from secular convents or colleges to boarding schools to day schools. Always there is the undercurrent of ridicule of educated women captured in Carolyn Williams's phrase "half-learned ladies," which epitomizes the fear of disturbing the "natural order" of gender relationships. A common argument against the intellectual education of woman was that "it would be wickedly irresponsible to tamper with her feminine submissiveness by filling her head with notions of independence and liberty. It was her task to obey, not to think for herself" (Williams 25).

Focusing on the intellectual education of women in the eighteenth century should be of vital importance to feminist scholars of the period, for "pro-education arguments and proto-feminism are the firmest of partners in women's writing" (Myers, "Domesticating Minerva" 174). There is little question that women's education, at least in terms of literacy, improved dramatically during the course of the

long eighteenth century. "Dramatically" because women's education was so abysmal during the Restoration period. Writing primarily about wealthy and aristocratic women, Ruth Perry points out that "education for Englishwomen had been seriously in arrears for over a century, since schools and libraries in women's monastic orders had been disbanded during the Reformation" and these sites of female education were never replaced (103). By the last quarter of the seventeenth century "learned women were rare . . . . Even wealthy girls were not trained to read and write but to embroider," and "gender had become a more important determinant of educational status than social class" (Perry 104).

Among those authors who do advocate female intellectual education there are several recurring arguments marshalled in its support, but two are central. First, beginning at least as early as Bathsua Makin's Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen (1673) and (more familiarly) Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693), is the claim that educated women make better mothers, particularly as concerns health, morality, and what might be called common sense.[2] As mothers were often responsible for the earliest education of their children it was a necessity that they have enough education to teach their children during early childhood. Even in the late-

[2]See Myers's "Reform or Ruin" on how this argument was shaped and used over a century later in the 1790s, especially regarding Wollstonecraft and Hannah More.

seventeenth century it was a conduct literature commonplace that raising healthy, moral, sensible children (particularly boys) leads to a stronger nation because of improved personal and public morality, domestic economy, role models for the "lower orders," and future national leadership. Further, providing female intellectual education would supposedly improve marital relations: wives would become both friend and advisor to husbands and the morality of marriages would improve because husbands would be less likely to seek society outside their homes (code for adultery).

Second, among early authors of the period women's intellectual education was depicted as a religious duty. Since God created woman both as rational and educable, man is disobedient when he keeps woman ignorant. It is woman's duty to practice active (rational) rather than passive virtue (childlike obedience without understanding): "it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason" (Wollstonecraft, VROW 21). Although there are many references to arguments that women do not have souls or rationality, these often appear to be straw arguments designed to show the author's magnanimity (by making concessions) or enlightenment (in comparison with Middle Eastern or Asian practices).[3] What

[3]The latest publication I have found that maintains the absolute inferiority of woman is the anonymous Man Superior to Woman; or, A Vindication of Man's Sovereign Authority over the Woman (1739), written in response to the "Sophia" tracts.

does persist throughout the century, however, is the argument that women's rationality is essentially different in kind from men's, and therefore women do not need the same type of education as men.

But how to make sense of this multiplicity of female educational advocacy? In an article treating Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft, Vivien Jones identifies the calls for female intellectual education as a "discourse of independence" ("Seductions" 130). This is a particularly useful term because 'discourse' allows space not only for the polarities for and against the intellectual education of women, but also for authors who are less extreme on either end of the continuum, rather than simple classification as radical or reactionary. This is important, as Mitzi Myers points out, because we so easily pigeonhole authors: by, for example,

> failing to consider the positive redirections factored into the ostensible traditionalism of reformers like [Hannah] More. Conversely, overaccenting Wollstonecraft's iconoclasm obscures the degree to which her demands are typical of a wide spectrum of writers. ("Reform or Ruin" 201)

Myers rightly catalogs "radicals," "moderates," and "religionists," all of whom nevertheless "vigorously attacked the deficiencies of fashionable training and values. In their different ways they seek to endow woman's role with more competence, dignity, and consequence" ("Reform or Ruin" 201).

As is by now well-known, "the first meaning of '*ind*ependence' when applied to women in the period is

economic," or, more specifically, whether women had the economic means that "would give them the freedom to make an independent marital choice" (Jones, "Seductions" 130). However, what is often overlooked, but still of strong interest in the period, was women's emotional and intellectual independence. Although today some would argue that such independence is impossible under conditions of economic dependency, many eighteenth-century authors held it distinctly possible and desirable. Even within the likely economic security of marriage, conduct authors view education as one way for women to find fulfillment in what might be a less than satisfying domestic sphere, a way to find happiness within oneself rather than depending on the society of others (including husbands) or the questionable public entertainments.

When one tries to separate these different kinds of economic, emotional, and intellectual independence they seem to become even further intertwined. What is perhaps then most important is that we expand our understanding of "independence" to include not only marital choice or earning a living in the absence of marriage, but the independence of mind that can render one happy through emotional self-sufficiency.

Such advice recognizes, sometimes explicitly (as with the epigram to this chapter), that women must find their own happiness because they often will not find it in marriage. One resource for this self-reliance is women's intellectual

education. Jones makes a nice exploration of this topic with her comparison of Astell and Wollstonecraft, but this commonplace pairing does reinforce the way in which "the two Marys" despite (or perhaps because of) spanning a century, have become iconic representations of women's educational writing.

Thanks to the prevalence today of historically and contextually informed scholarship, there is general knowledge of other important writers in the field of women's education (Mitzi Myers, in particular, has consistently written on this topic). Still, the continued over-reliance on Astell and Wollstonecraft creates a scholarly oxymoron, as both are recognized as radical (albeit in different ways) and yet, by implication of their prominence, taken as representative.

While there has been some scholarship on Makin and Mary Hays,[4] the absence of work on Catherine Macaulay, to take just one example, is troublesome, particularly because she wrote prior to Wollstonecraft. It is well known that she is acknowledged by Wollstonecraft as a source of inspiration, and there are many easily identifiable echoes of Macaulay in

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[4]Perry's book on Astell is by now a landmark of feminist historical literary scholarship. Important for contextualizing Wollstonecraft's writing is Conger's Mary Wollstonecraft and the Language of Sensibility. Other works which address her educational writing include Kelly's Revolutionary Feminism and Myers's "Pedagogy as Self-Expression." On Makin see Smith, Sizemore, and Myers's "Domesticating Minerva." On Hays see Kelly's Women, Writing and Revolution and Rogers's "The Contributions of Mary Hays."

Wollstonecraft's Rights of Woman. That Rights of Woman nevertheless continues to occlude Thoughts on Education needs remedy.

The use of Astell and Wollstonecraft as the (radical) bookends of women's educational writing also begs two important questions: what happens to the subject of women's education during the intervening century; and, as isolated icons, are their views really as radical as we make them out to be, or, are they actually representative of eighteenth-century social practices and attitudes? What follows, then, is a genealogy of the discourse of independence for women as manifest in the debate regarding their intellectual education.

Choosing a starting point for a genealogy is necessarily arbitrary.[5] Putting aside the claim that Bathsua Makin's Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen is "unarguably . . . the first published feminist statement in English belles lettres" (Mulvihill 208), it is nevertheless a useful starting point. The Essay treats so many of the arguments surrounding women's intellectual education that recur during the eighteenth century that it is indeed emblematic.

Myers rightly points out that Makin, treading on socially unstable ground, produces an uneven text that

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[5]Smith catalogs a number of authors in addition to Astell and Makin publishing on women's education from 1650: Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, Elizabeth Elstob, Anna Van Schurman, and Hannah Woolley (79), to which I would add Daniel Defoe.

repeatedly advances the cause of women's education while retreating from some of its implications. Even so, as all educational discourse is bound up with power, that is ultimately Makin's subject as well, and Myers usefully interprets Makin's approach so as to avoid anachronistic late-feminist expectations, stressing not "control and dominance over, but . . . capacity, capability, competence, energy, influence" ("Domesticating Minerva" 176). This recognition of Makin's challenge to the patriarchal system from within is important because it has been too easy to overlook Makin's essay because of a few peculiarities.

First, as the title indicates, Makin is concerned only with the aristocracy and what she sees as a declining rate of education for this narrow segment of elite women. Her argument for improving these women's education is based on the idea that historically women have been better educated, and that the current state of education is disgraceful to English society. As evidence she provides "epic roll calls" that oddly place real women alongside mythic ones in an undifferentiated manner (Myers, "Domesticating Minerva" 176).

Second, depending on one's point of view Makin pragmatically or disappointingly tempers her claims for the results of improved female education by suggesting that men will maintain their dominion over women, since "To ask too much is the way to be denied all. God hath made the Man the Head, if you be educated and instructed, as I propose, I am

sure you will acknowledge, and be satisfied" (4). Although women's learning should equal men's (5), that does not mean she desires gender equality (29).[6] She is clear about women's duties: "I do not intend to hinder good Housewifery, neither have I called any from their necessary Labour to their Book. My design is upon such Persons whose leisure is a burthen" (31).

Finally, from today's perspective, perhaps the most damning choice Makin makes is to write the Essay using male personae, making (complimentary) reference to herself in the third person. Yet despite these vagaries, Makin's Essay remains a remarkable work. She uses inflammatory language to describe the nature of the spousal relationship, accusing men of keeping women "ignorant, on purpose to be made slaves" (5) and returns to the slave metaphor at least three more times (23, 34), along with challenges to the woman-as-chattel viewpoint: "Had God intended Women only as a finer sort of Cattle, he would not have made them reasonable" (23).

Unlike many of the writers who would publish in the interim between Makin and Wollstonecraft, Makin acknowledges that changing the education and behavior of women will require a change in the education and behavior of men, whom she twice calls "sots." Educating women "will either

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[6]We should remember that even Wollstonecraft resorts to reassurances about male dominance in the face of educated women, since men will never relinquish their physical superiority over women (VROW 8).

reclaim the Men; or make them ashamed to claim the Sovereignty over such as are more Wise and Vertuous than themselves" (4); the "greatest hurt" that can result to society from educating women would be requiring sons to study more diligently "that they may be Superior to Women in Parts as well as in Place" (5). The current state of education and marriage for both sexes of the aristocracy she characterizes as "Marmosets married to Buffoons, who bring forth and breed up a generation of Baboons, that have little more wit than Apes and Hobby-Horses" (32). It is difficult to argue with the use of anonymous male narrative personae if that is what allows Makin freedom to lambast cultural practices so thoroughly.

Makin sees education as the remedy for this sorry state. In the following rationale, Makin combines a number of arguments that will ultimately become codified in women's educational advocacy. Again, using a male persona she argues on behalf of women:

> God intended Woman as a help-meet to Man, in his constant conversation, and in the concerns of his Family and Estate, when he should most need, in sickness, weakness, absence, death, &c. Whilst we neglect to fit them for these things, we renounce God's Blessing, he hath appointed Women for, are ungrateful to him, cruel to them, and injurious to ourselves. (23)

Here woman's role is rightfully as a wife subordinate to her husband, but one who is a close companion and advisor regarding both running and supporting the family. Although the husband is "the head" the wife is a full partner, one who can run the family domain when needed, including

independently as a widow. Not only can wives play a useful role in addition to childbearing, it is God's intention that this be so.

While this is a fuller partnership than many would prescribe for women in the period, what is even more telling about the sweep of Makin's argument for female participation and independence is the educational program she outlines to prepare women to assume this role. Because of her promotion of the practical uses of education we might expect to see a purely practical program, which she defines as, "physic" and enough botany for nursing the family, enough math to keep household accounts, enough reading and writing to teach young children and to study the Bible.

But Makin never allows herself to be hemmed in by the mere household utility of education; she refuses, unlike so many subsequent writers, to bar any branch of learning from women: "I cannot tell where to begin to admit Women, nor from what part of Learning to exclude them, in regard of their Capacities. The whole Encyclopedia of Learning may be useful some way or other to them" (24): including science, religion, grammar, rhetoric, logic, medicine, Greek, Hebrew and other languages, mathematics, geography, history, music, painting, poetry, and law. Makin may not argue that aristocratic women should be equal to men in all spheres, but there are no holds barred in the sphere of education.

In Perry's comparison of Astell and Makin, Makin comes off second best, because Makin "did not believe the aim of

education was to teach women to think more rigorously" (14). Makin rationalized women's intellectual education as helpful to men, while "Astell, of course, emphatically denied that being helpmeets to husbands was the purpose and end of any women's creation" (Perry 14). It is true that Makin does write exactly that, and also expects women to marry and be economically dependent upon their husbands. Still, both Makin's rhetoric regarding male/female relationships and her program for female education belie this supposedly easy acceptance of women's subordination.

One issue that would preoccupy authors throughout the century was what would become of educated women. At the outset Makin acknowledges that people are fearful of learned women because they seem to upset the natural order. Williams argues cogently (and is corroborated by Hilda Smith) that intellectual education was a completely gendered concept: "In consequence, learning was perceived as a sexual characteristic . . . . The connection between learning and manliness needed no explanation. It had acquired the status of a conditioned reflex" (25). Makin addresses the fear head on that "If we bring up our Daughters to Learning, no persons will adventure to marry them," by claiming that, on the contrary, education is insurance against failure to marry (30).[7] Wollstonecraft

[7]Perry notes that around this time there were seventy-seven men for every one hundred women in London (105).

treads the same ground a century later in her attempt to co-opt the derogatory term "masculine women" (VROW 8, 11).

The end of Makin's Essay proposes educational methods and provides an advertisement for her school. Here also she is ahead of her time, for many subsequent authors advocated rote learning for both boys and girls. Makin's experientially and empirically based methods, on the other hand, preceed those found in John Locke's Thoughts on Education (1693). Both stress acquiring useful content rather than form: "greater care ought to be had to know things, than to get words" (Makin 34), acknowledging the tendency toward virtually meaningless memorization and recitation. In learning languages Makin, who knew at least six languages herself (Mulvihill 208), observes that "words are the marks of things" and should be learned by perception and need rather than rote (Makin 36).

Makin's is an ambitious program, one possibly not equalled for women until Erasmus Darwin's a century later. Regardless, the systems advocated by Makin and Astell were not destined to be the benchmarks by which women's education was measured.[8] The next work that would be highly influential regarding the education of women, both at the time of its publication and through many subsequent editions, was the Spectator.

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[8]Perry writes that "no other woman writer picked up where Astell left off . . . . By 1710, the feminist impulse that Astell had fanned into being . . . was dying back into embers again . . . . [W]omen's place in society ceased, for a while, to be a regular topic in the popular media" (330).

It is a commonplace to connect casually the Spectator to the tradition of female conduct literature because of its overt preoccupation with social behavior. In fact, with the exception of the Bible, it may be the work cited above all others in conduct literature for women as arbiter of polite society, and is a rarity in being included on virtually all approved reading lists for young women.

Although relatively few issues of the Spectator are directed specifically to women, let alone the topic of female education, it nevertheless set the terms of that discourse for at least the next fifty years. Calling the Spectator "powerfully instrumental in defining an ideological identity for the emergent middle class," Vivien Jones characterizes women's conduct literature generally as unconcerned with intellectual education, and this is how most of the Spectator's advice might be characterized as well: "how women might create themselves as objects of male desire, but in terms which will contain that desire within the publicly sanctioned form of marriage" (Women 14). If marriage is seen as the first priority for an aspiring middle class readership, then it makes sense that education in virtue and the pleasing arts would be the first concern in women's education, rather than the intellectual education touted by Makin, Astell, and others.

Coming twenty years after Makin and ten years after Astell, the Spectator fills a new literary, cultural, and class niche. While much of its advice is not new, what is

new is the Spectator's audience and purpose.[9] Terry Eagleton, describing the function and influence of both the Tatler and Spectator, claims these periodicals participated in the formation of a "bourgeois public sphere" in which the professional classes, the gentry, and the aristocracy could participate in a "free, equal interchange of reasonable discourse, thus welding themselves into a relatively cohesive body whose deliberations may assume the form of a powerful force" (9). Thus it is no longer class which empowers individuals to participate in the formation of public opinion, "but the degree to which they [individuals] are constituted as discoursing subjects by sharing in a consensus of universal reason" (9). He calls the Tatler and Spectator the "central institutions" in the "English bourgeois public sphere in early eighteenth century" (10). Their "major impulse is one of class consolidation, a codifying of the norms and regulating of the practices whereby the English bourgeoisie may negotiate an historic alliance with its social superiors" (Eagleton 10).

The Spectator's plan is laid out in the dedicatory epistle of the first number on March 1, 1711. Its aim is to "Cultivate and Polish Human Life, by promoting Virtue and Knowledge, and by recommending whatsoever may be either Useful or Ornamental to Society" (1). The goals for the

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[9]See, for instance, Halifax's The Lady's New Year's Gift (1688) and Allestree's The Ladies Calling (1673), which are still aimed at the aristocracy and are more traditional pieces of advice literature than Astell's or Makin's.

Spectator's women readers are made explicit a few issues later, and it is here not only that the intentions are explicitly outlined, but the tone and attitude towards female readers is implicitly delineated:

> As my Pleasures are almost wholly confined to those of the Sight, I take it for a peculiar Happiness that I have always had an easie and familiar Admittance to the fair Sex. If I never praised or flatter'd, I never belyed or contradicted them. As these compose half the World, and are by the just Complaisance and Gallantry of our Nation the more powerful Part of our People, I shall dedicate a considerable Share of these my Speculations to their Service, and shall lead the Young through all the becoming Duties of Virginity, Marriage, and Widowhood. When it is a Woman's Day, in my Works, I shall endeavor at a Stile and Air suitable to their Understanding. When I say this, I must be understood to mean that I shall not lower but exalt the Subjects I treat upon. Discourse for their Entertainment, is not to be debased but refined. . . . In a Word, I shall take it for the greatest Glory of my Work, if among reasonable Women this Paper may furnish Tea-Table Talk. (no. 4)

In the event, there were relatively few women's days, but Addison and Steele did hold to the plan of educating their readers to participate successfully in polite society. And, however much the Spectator might regret that "in our Daughters we take Care of their Persons and neglect their minds" (no. 66), it nonetheless was the primary source of identifying and codifying the nature of female education, society's ideals of femininity, and female stereotypes that focused on the social rather than the intellectual.

The stereotypes, compliments, defenses, and demands the Spectator placed on women were not new and had been seen in aristocratic conduct literature before. It may, however, be

the first venue for a broader audience and continued where more elite publications left off. The contradictory nature of the way it approached advice for women--often building up only to fence in more narrowly--would become a standard tactic in subsequent popular conduct literature. The Spectator revered female beauty while accusing women of spending too much time and care on appearance (no. 41). It saw the potential of the undeveloped female intellect (nos. 41, 37), but made clear that female temperament will keep women inferior to men (no. 144).

The greatest legacy that the Spectator makes to the discourse on female education is the clear identification of what girls were to be educated for: marriage. While Addison and Steele as Mr. Spectator may occasionally complain about the education that is the result of the desire of girls and parents alike to make young women marriageable (see especially no. 66), they nonetheless are the self-appointed definers of female marriageability. Michael Ketcham's analysis of the Spectator emphasizes its interest in appearance, calling its advice "social coercion through the pressures of fashion, money, or parental insistence" recognizing that, "education, particularly, is a medium of coercion" (56).

As much subsequent conduct literature would, the Spectator pays lip service to love: "The happy marriage is, where two Persons meet and voluntarily make a Choice of each other, without principally regarding or neglecting the

Circumstance of Fortune or Beauty" (no. 149). Nonetheless, women cannot be trusted to choose a husband wisely on their own: they will prefer a rake to a virgin (no. 154), or frivolous characters and simpleminded fops (no. 128), or superficial appearance (no. 58) to responsible and respectable men.

The female attribute that threads through all these discussions, whether laudatory or derogatory of women, is that of virtue. Virtue, and its sister, modesty, are made attractive themselves by being touted as attractive to the opposite sex (potential husbands); in fact, the "Honour" paid to women by men "is only upon Account of their conducting themselves with Virtue, Modesty, and Discretion" (no. 53). What goes unsaid in such definitions is that the nature of that conduct is passive. Not only are male authors prescribing the female ideal, it is an ideal which, by definition, (virtuous) women cannot challenge.

In short, through its easy assumption of authority for the aspiring professional classes and the light social satire of and simultaneous respect for women, the Spectator helped codify gender roles and relationships. It ostensibly supported female intellectual education in the abstract, but it paradoxically (perhaps inadvertently) codified a definition of female education as that of the accomplishments, making clear their function as husband bait. This woman-as-ornament perspective, although already in the air, took firm hold in subsequent didactic

publishing, helping to define the "character of woman" (a negative stereotype) as well as the feminine ideal (a model of perfection requiring self-effacement). In Ketcham's formulation, "what the spectator sees in the physical person is not a set of features, but a close connection between one's self-concept, physical appearance, and social presence" (60).

Around mid-century, the wide ranging topics of the Spectator began turning up in more formal and longer conduct literature directed solely at young women. But before moving on to them it is worth noting what could be termed an intermediary text that, while still directed at both genders, continues to expand its intended audience in terms of class and narrows the focus to marriage as the primary concern of female education. Samuel Richardson's letter-writing manual, sometimes known today as Familiar Letters on Important Occasions, originally had a typically loquacious Richardsonian title: Letters Written to and for particular friends, On the most important occasions, Directing not only the requisite style and forms to be observed in writing familiar letters; But how to think and act justly and prudently, In the common concerns of human life (1741). The long title signals Richardson's dual intent, not only to improve letter writing, but to influence social values and behavior. While that is not unusual, three things about this text are.

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First, of 173 sample letters in the manual almost half of them deal with courtship or marriage, making this "common concern" far and away the most significant of the book. The variety of subtopics regarding courtship and marriage is wide: clandestine courtships and marriage (which would not be outlawed until 1751), marriage for love versus money, parental approval and disapproval of suitors, choosing between rival suitors, suspected adultery of one's husband, and conducting courtship at the proper pace, to name but a few.

Second, an additional score of letters are designed for the use of women on other topics (for example, servants, guardianship of female orphans, widowhood). Combined with the letters on courtship and marriage, over half the manual is directly aimed at women. (The remainder, usually between men, address "male" behavior such as drinking, gambling, keeping a horse, choosing a profession or conducting trade.) Richardson's cultivation of female readers is well known, and I would argue that Familiar Letters signals a change in the way that texts which are intended for both genders are constructed. For example, while the Spectator did have occasional "women's days" Addison and Steele also made clear that they expected women to read and benefit from all the issues, regardless of the topic (see, for example, no. 66, following the series on wit). Richardson, on the other hand, works much harder for his female readers--appealing not only to their perceived interests, but also treating

women with seriousness and respect, something which was often absent in subsequent conduct literature.

Third, Richardson goes further than the Spectator regarding advice for different classes, addressing letters for the propertied alongside those for maidservants and apprentices (although advice for the titled is notably absent). Brian Downs cites a letter Richardson wrote about the plan for Familiar Letters, making clear his intention to influence how "low," "country" readers act as well as write (ix). In the preface Richardson writes that his purpose is to "inculcate the principles of virtue and benevolence; to describe properly and recommend strongly the social and relative duties . . . that the letters may serve for rules to think and act by" (xxvii). This openness regarding class would not be sustained throughout the century.

The Spectator and Familiar Letters, popular and influential works, helped lead the way to redefining the genre of female conduct literature and framed the nature of female education for decades. Their version of instruction became extremely popular, in spite of mutating into less female friendly versions. The advice of course lost its freshness, and, perhaps because of the entry of clergy into the authorship, became sterner and more serious, often threatening and accusatory. Some of these subsequent works educating young women on becoming marriageable were extremely popular, so much so that in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft still felt compelled to write vehement

refutations of works that were each approaching twenty to thirty years in print, but which viewed education as social rather than intellectual.[10] This social education for women remained the dominant form until the last decades of the eighteenth century. As such it is worth study, but is outside the scope of this chapter, and I address it in chapter two. So I will now leap ahead to pick up the thread of women's intellectual education in the conduct literature of the last quarter century.

There are three main moves that educational writing for women makes as the eighteenth century begins to wane: first, there is a renewed call for extensive intellectual education for women (most frequently symbolized today by Wollstonecraft's Rights of Woman [1792], although she was not the first in this wave of advocates); second, there is a backlash against women's intellectual education, particularly in the form of both overt and covert attacks on Wollstonecraft after Godwin revealed her personal history in the Memoirs (1798);[11] and third, there again arises a

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[10]Gregory's A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (1774), Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women (1765), and Rousseau's Emile (1762, in French).

[11]Janet Todd speculates that the reason there was not backlash against Macaulay's Letters on Education (1790) was that she had been dropped by polite society prior to its publication because of her "scandalous" marriage to a man thirty years her junior. This may also be why the Letters were not more influential at their publication, despite the popularity of and respect for Macaulay's previous publications.

sustained discourse regarding female schools.

As mentioned above, Hester Chapone, a member of Richardson's circle of learned women, wrote Letters on the Improvement of the Mind (1773). The text is an anomaly among later conduct literature for putting religion squarely and strongly at the center of female (and male) education.[12] But she is unusual for another reason as well, for she may be alone among the "religionists" (including prominently More and Jane West) for advocating a substantial and wide-ranging intellectual education. Because Chapone's primary concern is so clearly (and unusually) religious faith and duty, her work was perhaps deemed unassailable. Even Wollstonecraft, usually not timid with criticism, is unwilling to take on Chapone, even though Wollstonecraft does not "always coincide in opinion with her" (VROW 105). Without implying a cynical intent on Chapone's part, one may still note that the unexceptionable religion may have the effect of no exception being taken to what was at the time an unusual advocacy of female intellectual education.

Chapone goes into great detail describing what subjects should be taught at what age and in what depth, and with lists of recommended textbooks. This level of detail is also a departure from much of the popular conduct literature

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[12]See Sizemore on the fragmentation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religion-based courtesy literature into different subgenres, including what would become eighteenth-century conduct literature.

published in the 1750s and 60s. Chapone's Letters are designed as a practical rather than polemical work, making her take-it-for-granted advocacy of intellectual education all the more noteworthy.

Chapone's priorities are, in order, Christian virtues, domestic management, and the "graces and accomplishments" (174). Of the last the most important attribute is to be "well-read" (187). By this Chapone seems to mean (as do other authors of the period such as Wollstonecraft, Macaulay, and Hays) not only belles lettres but systematic reading across a wide variety of the humanities and sciences. Chapone assumes an autodidactic education, which may be why she goes into such detail with her educational program. She recommends typical conduct literature attainments: French, dancing, perhaps Italian, orthography, and "common arithmetic" (187); however, the recommendation of reading poetry to feed the lively female imagination is unorthodox (as we will see in subsequent chapters, many authors are interested in limiting female imagination).

Chapone believes young women's principal study (other than religion) should be world history (192), which in turn necessitates studying world geography. Natural philosophy (science) is limited to what is "naturally observable" (199), which may be an allusion to the pedagogical methods of Locke and Rousseau. Despite Chapone's piety, novels and romances are not banned, but they should be chosen with extreme care (204), while she unreservedly recommends "moral

essays" such as the Spectator, the Rambler, and similar periodicals. Chapone asserts that by no means should a young woman be "remarkable for her learning" (190), but anyone who followed her educational system would be remarkable indeed.

If Chapone's work can be viewed as transitional--simultaneously advocating status quo domestic relations and expansive intellectual education for women--perhaps the work that first embraces the revolutionary ideology of women's rights and education of the 1790s is Catherine Macaulay's Letters on Education. As Janet Todd points out in her headnote to Letters, Macaulay was the "sole female pamphleteer of the political crisis of the 1760s and 1770s" (n.p.) and sided with the Americans in the War of Independence. Thus her interests in civil rights were well established by the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution, which served as an occasion for much of the writing on women in the 1790s.

The similarities between Macaulay's Letters and Wollstonecraft's Rights of Woman are remarkable and deserve a full length study outside the scope of this genealogy. Macaulay's Letters is more learned and less polemical than Rights of Woman and is often more concerned with general civil rights (for people of all classes and races), than with women in particular. Macaulay draws heavily on her background as a published historian in her argument (reminiscent of Makin's) that the ancient education of women

was much better than the modern, and that England as a whole can only benefit from improved female education. As Wollstonecraft would later, Macaulay draws heavily on the educational methods of Locke and Rousseau, while repudiating, in particular, Rousseau's separation and subordination of women, views that reduce "the man of genius to the licentious pedant" (206).

True to her republican leanings, Macaulay advocates universal public education--not just for women of the upper classes but for all women and men--funded by an education tax graduated by "rank and fortune" (18). Further, boys and girls should be educated together and precisely the same way, with the exception of the more physical sports such as cricket and fencing (142). Macaulay is squarely against spending too much time on the female accomplishments, for "the industry of a long life is hardly sufficient for the attainment of wisdom" (64) and accomplishments appear designed primarily to "get rid of time" (62).

Unlike the male conduct authors of mid-century who define female virtue, in part, as blind obedience, Macaulay is clear that there is no morality without rationality: "It is one thing . . . to educate a citizen, and another to educate a philosopher. The mere citizen will have learnt to obey the laws of his country" without understanding their basis in religious and rational principles, and therefore cannot be "truly moral" (198). Rationality is not masculine; it only seems so because historically the male

mind has been the standard (204). Macaulay wants all citizens to be rational, as opposed to rational men and obedient women.

This ungendering of intellect would necessarily lead to a change in domestic relations, and it is worth returning one more time to the carrot that is often dangled in front of women in conduct literature: that of education leading to wives becoming "friend and advisor" or a "helpmeet" to their husbands. Since this narrow domestic role may be precisely what twentieth-century feminism has wanted liberation from, it is important to recognize that in the eighteenth century, for upper class women, this could actually be an <u>improvement</u>. Macaulay uses Lord Chesterfield's infamous misogyny as an example of one version of spousal relations: women

> are only children of a larger growth . . . . [For] solid reasoning, and good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it . . . . A man of sense only trifles with them, as he does an engaging child; but he never consults them, nor trusts them in serious matters. (qtd. in Macaulay 209)

This attitude that wives should be seen and not heard, that they are useful primarily as breeders or for the transfer of property, can help us understand Makin's, Wollstonecraft's, or Macaulay's attraction to the female role of "friend and advisor" to a husband. Given the intellectual inconsequence advocated by Chesterfield, the role of "helpmeet"--a partner, however unequal--suddenly seems a much more significant and attractive one. Further, the role has a

strategic usefulness in being a moderate position in change advocacy, reformative rather than revolutionary.

As the decade moves on, however, there begins to be a reaction against female intellectual education. It is identifiable not simply as a continuation of the conduct literature ideal of propriety, obedience, and accomplishments of the 1750s and 60s, but as a call for maintenance of gender, class, and racial spheres.

Unlike the general trend in conduct literature at mid-century, which worked to articulate and codify social practices, conduct literature of the 1790s had a substantial body of literature on women's education with which new authors had to come to terms. In other words, conduct authors were now writing within an established tradition of conduct literature. Advice books had always made reference to a variety of particular texts, most commonly the Bible, novels and romances, and periodicals such as the Spectator and Rambler. But as the body of conduct literature grows, it becomes more common to make reference to other educational authors. Rousseau and Locke are perpetual presences, as are French authors such as François Fénelon and Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis.

Dissenting responses to Macaulay's Letters and Wollstonecraft's Rights of Woman were quick to appear, though in the genteel tradition of conduct literature these are not the sites of the vituperative attacks that appear elsewhere. Clara Reeve contrasts her own Plans of Education

(1792) to Macaulay's Letters, suggesting that both Macaulay's polemic and her "plan" are too complex (vii). And it seems likely that John Bennett's peculiar work, Strictures on Female Education (1795),[13] is structured as a response to Macaulay, as both works, although opposed, are based on the history of women's education. Bennett does make reference to Macaulay as a female prodigy (a suspect category), who is an exception that proves the rule of the limited nature of female talent, and who is exalted "to an unnatural and invidious eminence" (43).

Hannah More's reaction, in her Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, goes furthest, directly attacking Wollstonecraft as representative of a "cool, calculating, intellectual wickedness" (I.52). More's biting allusion to the "Epistle to a Lady" is meant to identify Wollstonecraft's desires as overreaching:

> The beauty vindicates her own rights, the wit, the rights of women; for the beauty fights for herself, the wit for a party; and while the more selfish though more moderate beauty 'would but be Queen for life,' the public spirited wit struggles to abrogate the Salique law of intellect, and to enthrone 'a whole sex of Queens.' (More 2.18)

The reference to Pope's satire on female wit intensifies More's caricature of Wollstonecraft, while reference to the French Salique law suggests that Wollstonecraft is challenging the 'natural order' of the intellectual

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[13]Unlike most conduct literature about women, this work is addressed to a male audience.

hierarchy. More plays on the common fear that educated women will desire supremacy rather than equality.

More important than Reeve's or More's reactions against other authors, however, are their own plans for female education. Much of Reeve's work consists of unoriginal borrowings from other authors (often unnamed). Thus what is most interesting in her work are her arguments regarding the aim of education, who should receive it, and what it is for, rather than any "plan" she puts forward.

Reeve argues, as will More less than a decade later, that manners and morals are the primary purpose of education and that the welfare and moral health of the state depend upon the behavior and example of the upper classes in this regard (29). She is similar to previous conduct authors in her focus on marriage, and perceives an alarming trend: "the decrease of marriages, the increase of divorces, the frequency of separations . . . leave any doubt remaining of this general declension of manners" (131). The cure for this malaise is a system of education that will "restore the national character of virtue, modesty, and discretion" (132).

But even Reeve's system of female education, focusing on "religion and virtue . . . elegant female accomplishments and the most useful social and domestic qualities" (137) rather than on the intellect, is explicitly <u>not</u> for everyone. Only the "quality" should be educated, the rest of the population should be educated only to follow their

example. Reeve goes into depth describing "gradations of rank and fortune" (64), dividing England's population into numerous "classes" of such fine distinctions as old and new nobility, old and new wealth, "inferior gentry," the "genteel professions" and the "lowest mechanics and artizans, and the whole peasantry of the land" (69). This overt preoccupation with class is virtually unheard of in conduct literature before this period. Both Reeve and More recognize the potential for class levelling through education, and part of the ideological program of each author is to use education (and the lack thereof) to maintain class distinctions.

After morality, the greatest problem Reeve sees with current education is that people are being educated above their stations: "children of farmers, artificers and mechanics, all come into the world as gentry.--They send them to the same schools with the first gentry in the country, and they fancy themselves equals" (60-1). The result of this overeducation is, among other things, disruption of the marriage market: young ladies are "disdaining to match with their equals, aspiring to their superiors" (61).

Reeve also opposes universal literacy, specifically naming "paupers" and "negroes" among those who should not be taught to read or write (86-7), not least because it will benefit the nation as a whole: "In a well regulated state, a right and true subordination is beautiful, where every

order is kept in its proper state, and none is allowed to encroach upon, or oppress another" (71). One might guess from this allusion to Pope's Essay on Man that Reeve's fears regarding encroachment that she is most concerned about the lower classes' oppression of the upper classes. Like Pope, she defends the status quo as both the will of God and beneficial to all, and his words are especially salient to Reeve's position on education:

> For Wit's false mirror held up Nature's light;
> Shew'd erring Pride, whatever is, is right;
> That Reason, Passion, answer one great aim;
> That true Self-love and Social are the same;
> That virtue only makes our Bliss below;
> And all our Knowledge is, ourselves to know.
> (Pope iv.393-8)

As stated above, Hannah More's beliefs regarding the responsibilities of the gentry are congruent with Reeve's, emphasizing that "women of the higher class" have the influence to "raise the depressed tone of public morals" (1.1, 4). Unlike Macaulay, Wollstonecraft, or even Reeve, each of whom expresses positive interest in the French Revolution, More is writing after the Reign of Terror, and her fear of change in the social order, whether regarding gender or class, is explicit (1.5, 23; 2.16-17).

These suspicions extend to the intellectual education of women, and More is clear to separate "mere" knowledge from usefulness (1.32-3; 2.4). Her focus on female domestic duty and public morality cause More, like many more liberal authors, to speak out against the female accomplishments. Still, her class allegiance is strong, and paradoxically she

still wants the accomplishments off limits to the middle classes because the pleasing arts are class markers that belong "exclusively to affluence" (1.76).

Female schools are, of course, precisely the sites for the kind of class leveling that More fears, for the ability to pay appears to be the only prerequisite for admission. Many conduct authors, including More, ran schools or worked as governesses, which makes the debate over schooling at home by a mother, by a governess, in "public" day schools, or in boarding schools both self-interested and ironic. Trying to appear unbiased, several conduct authors who also ran schools assert that home-schooling by mother is best; however as schools are sometimes necessary (due, of course, to inadequate mothers) they go on to offer elaborate plans for curricula. Reeve, in particular, uses this tactic, but More, Wollstonecraft, and Bennett each represent a variation on this theme.

We can look to Erasmus Darwin as representative of progressives for the cause of female intellectual education at the very end of the century. Darwin's Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools (1797) stands in direct contrast to a more traditional work like Burton's Lectures on Female Education and Manners (1793). The lectures are designed to be read to female boarders every Sunday evening and stress, first, female virtue and obedience to fathers and future husbands; second, domestic duty; and third, the accomplishments. Burton is explicit

that the nature of female intellect (a question he explicitly refuses to address) is irrelevant because "the respective employments of the Male and Female Sex being different, a different mode of education is consequently required" (1.107).

Burton views the possible aims for female education as two-fold: either domestic economy or social graces. He himself uses a servant/mistress metaphor for his view of the limits of the female sphere (1.109). Ultimately he recommends a blend of the two, suggesting women should only be educated insofar as it renders them useful and pleasing to men; he does not entertain development of intellect as serving any such purpose (let alone benefitting or pleasing women themselves). Rather, the aim of education for women is to render "obedient Daughters, faithful Wives, and prudent Mothers. . . . The accomplishments, therefore, which you should acquire, are those that will contribute to render you serviceable in domestic, and agreeable in social life" (1.111). To be fair, it must be said that Burton does allow limited female learning of astronomy, philosophy, and natural history (although not the "learned" languages), but apparently not as part of the school curriculum (2.158).

Darwin, on the other hand, suggests that rather than scaring off potential husbands, women learned in science should be interesting and appealing to men (40-1). Unlike many educational authors, Darwin spends relatively little space justifying women's intellectual education. He takes

its benefits virtually for granted, and instead lays out an elaborate plan for the curriculum of a female school. For the younger ages Darwin is similar to Locke and Rousseau in making recommendations for everything from clothes to food to exercise to sleeping quarters. For older students he offers extensive lists both of subjects and recommended texts.

Recognizing that his plan is too ambitious for most schools, Darwin also advocates his plan as a reading list for a lifetime of self-directed learning. For example, under the rubric of science he lists botany, chemistry, mineralogy, and "natural philosophy," the last of which includes astronomy, mechanics, hydrostatics, optics, electricity, and magnetism (42). Parents must also participate in furthering their daughters' educations during summer recess: touring the "arts and manufactories, which adorn this country," including cotton works, potteries, iron-foundries, and factories in Birmingham, Manchester, and Nottingham (43). Though the format and scope of their works are distinctly different, Darwin's interest is clearly similar to Macaulay's: that is, the education of a citizen rather than the education of a woman.

Like Makin's Essay, Darwin's Plan serves a triple purpose: an argument for female intellectual education, a specific system for that education, and an advertisement for a school (in Darwin's case, run by his two illegitimate daughters). The actual offerings of both schools, while

perhaps remarkable in comparison to their respective contemporaries, do not match the ideal model laid out by the authors. Although spanning a century, both works call for a female intellectual education that, despite the extraordinary education of individual women, still does not exist in any standardized way.

The debate regarding the "natural" intelligence and rationality of women is another issue that remains unsettled by the end of the century. The most that can be said is that the nature of the question changes from that of whether women's intellect equals that of men (which is basically conceded) to one of type. That is, the question becomes how are women's and men's intellects different, and how does (and should) that difference affect their roles in society.

On the other hand, what has changed is who wrote and read women's educational literature. No longer was it by and for the aristocracy. By mid-century participation in this discourse was moving beyond the gentry, and although middle-class participation was still contested in the 1790s, the objections are clearly a rearguard action.

As Wollstonecraft recognized, all education is ideological: it can be used to challenge or maintain social relationships. Education is not hermetic, but has a symbiotic relationship with the larger culture. Wollstonecraft does not believe education

> can work the wonders which some sanguine writers have attributed to it. Men and women must be

> educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. . . . It may be fairly inferred, that, till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education. (VROW 21)

Central to this observation is the question of what woman should be educated for: To catch a husband? To be a docile and obedient wife? To in turn educate her own children? For class solidarity and discrimination? To practice rational virtue? To pass time productively? To earn an independent income? To participate in intellectual discourse? In the eighteenth century the function--and therefore the nature--of woman's education is contested precisely because the function of woman is contested.

Chapter 2

IMAGINING A WIFE: COURTSHIP NOVELS AND CONDUCT LITERATURE

> If I was called upon to write the history of a woman's trials and sorrows, I would date it from the moment, when nature has pronounced her marriageable.
> Rev. John Bennett, Letters to a Young Lady (1789)

> Your whole life is often a life of suffering.... You must bear your sorrows in silence, unknown and unpitied. You must often put on a face of serenity and cheerfulness, when your hearts are torn with anguish, or sinking in despair.
> John Gregory, A Father's Legacy to His Daughters (1774)

> The state of matrimony is necessary to the support, order, and comfort of society. But it is a state that subjects the women to a great variety of solicitude and pain.
> James Fordyce, Sermons to Young Women (1766)

Trials and sorrows? Suffering, anguish, and despair? Subjection, solicitude and pain? Can these portrayals of married life for women taken from eighteenth-century conduct literature possibly describe the same institution that numerous courtship novels of the same period depict as supremely desired and desirable? Can marriage be the ultimate source of misery in one and the ultimate source of happiness in the other? I will account for this discrepancy in the two genres' portrayals of marriage by showing that, because of the eighteenth-century belief that fiction is both mimetic and didactic, it served the same function of

configuring social relationships as conduct literature. Thus, even though conduct literature and fiction are different genres, they were in direct competition for social influence. The discrepancies in their marriage paradigms are therefore revealed as ideological battles over gender role definition.

For this study I will use representative conduct literature spanning the long century: Allestree's The Ladies Calling (1673), Halifax's Lady's New Year's Gift, or Advice to a Daughter (1688), Essex's Young Ladies' Conduct (1722), Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women (1766), Bennett's Letters to a Young Lady (1789), and Gisborne's Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (1797).[1] I have deliberately chosen only male-authored conservative conduct literature for this chapter. This conservative ideology of marriage, using Fordyce's words in the epigram, seeks to maintain "the support, order, and comfort of society," consciously to put the welfare of others above personal happiness. This selection makes a nice contrast to courtship novels of the period, which have been shown by Katherine Sobba Green to constitute a "feminized genre"--primarily by and for women.

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[1]Of these six works only Essex's did not go into multiple editions. Bennett's went to four editions in fourteen years, but was even more popular in the United States, where there were ten editions through 1856. Both Gisborne's and Fordyce's works went to fourteen London editions, staying in print fifty and forty-eight years respectively. Allestree went to twelve editions in fifty-nine years (1727); after a hiatus of sixty years a new edition was published by Joseph Johnson in 1787. Halifax's work enjoyed the greatest longevity, staying in print for over a century, with a seventeenth edition printed in 1791.

Although female-authored conduct literature generally depicts marriage in no better light than the texts used here (see Astell, Pennington, and Lambert for example), I do believe the female authors' tone, strategies for coping, and attitudes toward their female readers are not surprisingly much more sympathetic than their male counterparts.

The titles selected for this study collectively (along with Gregory's A Father's Legacy to His Daughters, used in the epigram) reveal both the intended audience and the varieties of authority employed by these writers. Each of the works is addressed to unmarried young women of the gentry or aristocracy and details their duties in late adolescence, through courtship, and on into marriage. The number of titles mentioning the private relationship of fathers and daughters in what are public documents implies the assumption of paternal authority on the part of the writers and an expectation of filial duty in their readers. Through their titles these authors establish a paternalistic writer/reader relationship that enables them to demand the same type of absolute authority as the reader's real father. Simultaneously, the authors can also exploit the role by suggesting that they feel parental benevolence for the reader/daughter's welfare. Such a concern is purportedly what prompted them to compose the volume in the first place. Fordyce's use of the term 'sermons' in his title employs another variety of authority that all these author's revert to at some point: female duty based on Christian dogma.

This version of patriarchal relationship can be very similar to the filial one, and is also used by these authors to silence dissent by their readers.

Despite original publication dates spanning more than a century, the contents of these works are remarkably similar: women should expect emotional pain and unhappiness from marriage, but marriage is nonetheless an absolute duty. This open pessimism regarding women's roles is in marked contrast to the many novels of the period in which a marriage is synonymous with a happy ending. Conservative conduct literature tries to preserve patriarchal social structures by making women moral objects rather than moral agents. Courtship novels, on the other hand, are frequently concerned with female agency. They often depict departures from patriarchal control by placing value on female happiness, independence, and power.

The two paradigms of marriage can be illustrated in terms of genre differences--particularly by briefly considering the role and reception of fiction in the eighteenth century. Two recent scholars have turned to Johnson's Rambler 4 (March 31, 1750), "On Fiction," to characterize the uneasy place of the novel in eighteenth-century society. In his aptly titled essay, "The Fear of Fiction," Robert Uphaus reminds us that it is anachronistic of modern scholars to separate moral or didactic fiction from mimetic fiction, as both the ethical content and the

imitative form were treated as critical imperatives in eighteenth-century criticism (184).

According to Uphaus, in Rambler 4 "Johnson coherently summarizes the principal grounds for the eighteenth-century fear of fiction, a fear which grew out of the view that the novel, in its preoccupation with imitating ordinary experience, would break away from the classical assumption that 'the chief means of moral education is the telling of stories' " (186). In other words, Johnson's concern is not that fiction is mimetic or didactic--it is expected to be both--but that fiction might relinquish the positive didactic function by being indiscriminately mimetic. As Uphaus reads Johnson's defense of the novel, "the idea of virtue provides the moral center of mimetic fiction" (189). This assertion by Johnson is meant to counter attacks suggesting that morality and mimesis could not coexist. Further, Uphaus points out, there was concern that not only might the novel dangerously influence ethical behavior, it might even displace "such traditional avenues of moral education as conduct books, moral tracts, the sermon, and perhaps scripture itself" (183).

In a consonant reading of Johnson, Joel Weinsheimer, in his essay "Fiction and the Force of Example," states that eighteenth-century critics recognized the novel as both potentially dangerous and powerful: "For good or ill, novels have consequences and produce effects; they are not only imitative but potentially formative of the reader's

experience, and that 'efficacy' explains why they must be taken seriously" (1). Weinsheimer reads Johnson as suggesting that when art is most effective, there is a doubling of mimesis: "art is imitation that generates imitations, for imitation is not only the essence of art but its end" (12).

Weinsheimer points out that fiction not only generates imitation, but stimulates imagination as well. Using Arabella from the Female Quixote and Don Quixote as models familiar to the eighteenth-century reading public of readers affected by their reading, Weinsheimer describes the cognitive process of reading which would have been feared by eighteenth-century opponents of the novel: "reading not only recapitulates our experiences but formulates our hope and gives us something to desire" (6). The example of Arabella shows how perceptions are governed by desires which in turn are governed by reading (Weinsheimer 5). This formula of influence appears in conduct literature in both guises: as a condemnation of novels and the young women who read them, and as a prohibition against imagination.

Thus these two genres were competing not just in the marketplace (for readers), but in social space (for influence in social configuration). Both genres were perceived as mimetic and didactic; both had social efficacy. Both genres treated similar subject matter: the marriage of young women and the definition of their roles as wives. Given these significant similarities, the divergence of the

two genres in their depiction of marriage and wifehood becomes extremely important for understanding both genres, their functions in eighteenth-century society, and the struggle for dominance of different gender roles (particularly within marriage) which they depict.

The very act of writing conduct literature, a genre which is overtly prescriptive of social behavior, implies belief in that genre's social efficacy. Therefore, conservative conduct authors are put on the defensive regarding fiction and the variety of alternative social models it represented. These conduct authors respond remarkably uniformly with what Uphaus terms "fear of fiction." Because these authors do not approve of the paradigms for social relationships and gender behavior represented in fiction, they respond by demonizing it. A frequent goal is to ban fiction altogether, while preserving conduct literature as the ascendant genre for prescribing female behavior.

A survey of the conduct literature in this study shows that the authors' fear of fiction is tied explicitly to its imaginative qualities. Fiction can stimulate the reader's imagination by portraying a wide variety of social roles and relationships--wider than a reader might otherwise encounter. This stimulus to the imagination can thus easily result in a stimulus to a desire for recreating in the reader's own life the types of roles and relationships found in her reading--the efficacy of fiction Weinsheimer

describes. Because it is a highly particularized genre, fiction showcases the personality, needs, and desires of the individual. These are things which conduct authors cannot abide. In fact, this is the underlying point where the two genres diverge fundamentally, as conduct literature subsumes the individual to social duty and actively tries to control imagination. Imagination is dangerous because, not bounded by reality, it is less bounded by society, duty or even likelihood. Imagination gives one the power to imagine, and thus desire, an alternative self and an alternative world.

The conduct authors' fear is the ability of female imagination to stimulate dissatisfaction with the status quo, to challenge male authority, to increase the importance of the female individual, to author and authorize both the desire and even demand for female happiness. In this way, "fear of fiction" can be read as the fear of reconfiguration of gender roles.

In conduct literature women's imagination is attacked on two fronts, both of which are connected to the alleged idleness of middle and upper class women. One attack discredits the free play of imagination generally--something akin to idle daydreaming; the other prohibits almost all novel reading (Clarissa is a frequent exception) as a dangerous stimulus to the imagination. The expanding leisure of the female gentry, as well as the growth of circulating libraries, provided the opportunity for reading, fantasizing, and daydreaming. These are corrupt activities

"frequently occasioned by vacancy of thought, and want of occupation which expose the mind to every snare" (Fordyce I.105). These conduct authors sanction only "productive" imagination--that which is the result of some approved female accomplishment such as needlework, drawing, or painting. This selectivity is evidence for Weinsheimer's assertion that it is not the arousal of imagination that is feared, but the nature of that imagination (7).

As with many other prescriptions found in conduct literature, control is at the root of the issue. In this case the attempt is to control women's minds and thus their desires, and not simply their outward behavior, or, more precisely, to control behavior by controlling imagination. Acknowledging the prevalence of boredom for female gentry, Bennett suggests, "The very first thing I should recommend after religious duties as absolutely essential to your private comfort, is <u>self-government</u> in the fullest sense of the word," the most important aspect of which is "discipline of the imagination" (1.158, 159). Essex agrees, devoting an entire chapter to industry and the abhorrence of idleness, since superfluous labor is better than inactivity for preventing women's thoughts and imagination from wandering. It is Fordyce as sermonizer who wishes to put the fear of God into his readers, promulgating a "sobriety of mind" (1.62-3) to which imagination is antithetical:

> Is it enough for a young woman to be free from infamy, from crimes? Between the state of virgin purity and actual prostitution are there no intermediate degrees? Is it nothing to have the

> soul deflowered, the fancy polluted, the passions flung into a ferment? Say, is it nothing to forfeit inward freedom and self-possession? (1.48)

By painting the two extremes, Fordyce manages to denounce everything short of total control as sinful. The terms he uses regarding the imagination--deflowered, polluted, ferment--are tied to the physicality of desire rather than the abstractions of mind or cognition; they are meant to show decay and generate an abhorrence of imagination and anything which stimulates it.

The warnings against imaginative literature are no less severe than those against imagination generally. Writing before the novel was well established, Allestree believes the danger of reading romances is that readers will believe the fictional world is real and attainable. He refers to the novel as "a courtesan dressed like a queen" (1.215), suggesting that readers of novels are consorting with whores--if not actually prostituting themselves outright. Bennett is afraid that both novels and poetry can inspire unrealistic desire; even poetry "heightens [a woman's] natural sensibility to an extravagant degree and frequently inspires such a romantick turn of mind, as is utterly inconsistent with all the solid duties and proprieties of life" (1.208). Bennett's allusion to "natural sensibility" is to the belief that women were more susceptible to the stimulus of imagination and desire, a belief that was used as reason to keep novels out of the hands of women. Essex suggests that unrealistic expectations due to reading are

responsible for "one half of the Ails of women" (xxvi). Left unspoken is that whatever ails women will in turn ail men. By banning novel reading these authors attempt to shut off a source for models of alternative constructions of femininity and simultaneously demand that women accept social relationships.

Marriage is the premier gendered social relationship with which conduct authors are concerned. Defining the nature of the spousal relationship and the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives is a method of ordering a very large segment of society. Fordyce succinctly asserts the importance of marriage in his Sermons: "The state of matrimony is necessary to the support, order, and comfort of society." In Fordyce and all the conduct authors treated here, the appeal for the maintenance of marriage is closely associated with religious and moral duty and cloaked in the language of necessity.

Susan Staves, in her extensive work on the economics and law of marriage, Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833, provides us with a persuasive reason for abstracting the idea of social order from religious duty. Arguing that all laws are ideological, Staves shows that eighteenth-century marriage laws are part of the patriarchal system set up explicitly for maintaining the economic status quo--and that both marriage and women are central features of this ideological apparatus:

> A principal feature of these deeper patriarchal structures was that women functioned to transmit

> wealth from one generation of men to the next generation of men. Patriarchy...is a form of social organization in which fathers appear as political and legal actors, acting publicly for themselves and as representatives of the women and children subordinated to them and dependent upon them in families. In the property regimes of patriarchy, descent and inheritance are reckoned in the male line; women function as procreators and as transmitters of inheritance from male to male. (Staves 4)

Staves asserts that during the course of the long eighteenth century there was an "increasing subordination of marriage to the accumulation of wealth" (Staves citing Habakkuk, 96). What this suggests is that what modern readers consider the "traditional" reasons for marriage--morality, children (as objects of love, rather than as heirs), religion, and love--were not the prime motives for marriage during this period. Still, even in this period these were often the ostensible reasons for marriage, with conduct literature most concerned with the first three and fiction with the last.

This economic emphasis may seem extreme until one considers the social functions of marriage as described by Gayle Rubin in her essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." Approaching marriage, gender, and social roles from an anthropological perspective, Rubin cites a multitude of cultural uses for marriage, including acquisition and consolidation of wealth. For my purposes, the most important aspect of Rubin's argument is recognition of the underlying and unarticulated functions of marriage and the domestication of women. Using, with some reservation, Levi-Strauss's term "exchange

of women," Rubin defines the social order that marriage helps define and perpetuate:

> the social relations of a kinship system specify that men have certain rights in their female kin, and that women do not have the same rights either to themselves or to their male kin. In this sense, the exchange of women is a profound perception of a system in which women do not have full rights to themselves. The exchange of women becomes an obfuscation if it is seen as a cultural necessity. . . . (177, my emphasis)

Conduct literature does indeed portray marriage as a cultural necessity. Patriarchal control of both the marriage contract and spousal relationship is necessary for maintaining social order--but, significantly, it is legitimized as necessary for Christian morality rather than economic gain. Perhaps even more interestingly, conduct literature often portrays certain female conduct within marriage as a cultural necessity. Male conduct authors' desire for control in the extreme may be explained by Rubin's formulation that, "Kinship is organization, and organization gives power. If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the women being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it" (174). In Rubin's model men are the exchange partners, even though the marriage is between man and woman. Even if one accounts for the decline of arranged marriages during the long eighteenth century, there is still a profoundly unequal relationship between the prospective bride and groom. As has been often noted, initiating marriage negotiations (the male prerogative) is

not at all the same thing as the opportunity of refusal (the female prerogative):

> This remains true even when the girl's feelings are taken into consideration, as, moreover, is usually the case. In acquiescing to the proposed union, she precipitates or allows the exchange to take place, she cannot alter its nature. . . . (Rubin citing Levi-Strauss, 174-5)

Here, the hidden (or not so hidden, as when Staves considers the legal perspective) reasons for promulgating marriage are economic, not moral or religious. The conflation of economic order and religious duty conveniently adds force to conservative paradigms of marriage.

> That conduct-book authors of the period recognized propriety as a commodity is implied by their assumption that a woman might be given a pattern by which to "make" herself. But . . . making the self by prescription became inseparable from the appropriation and use of that self by the prescribers. (Kirkpatrick 201)

Conduct authors have found a way to promote gaining, preserving, and maintaining capital without using that language at all. Further, in adopting the cry of Christian duty they have made it extremely difficult to resist.

Eighteenth-century acknowledgment of the economic function of marriage can be found in a "digest" on the legal status of women published anonymously in 1777 under the title The Laws Respecting Women. Here, individual concerns and the interests of society are at least coequal: "Marriage is an institution calculated to promote the private happiness of individuals, and the most essential interests of society" (23). But when these essential interests are enumerated the economic motives become

explicit: "marriage seems to have been at first instituted as necessary to the very being of human society: for without the distinction of families there can be no encouragement to industry, nor any foundation for the care of acquiring riches" (23).

Considering the economic motives for marriage points to another interesting, and telling, gap between representations of marriage in conduct literature and fiction. Novels discuss the economics of marriage much more freely than conduct literature. Intuitively, one might expect the case to be reversed, with novels about romance oblivious to the financial facts of life, and hard-nosed conduct literature demanding brutal practicality. But the opposite is the case. It is in novels that one reads about heroines and suitors having so many pounds per year, entailments, or inheritances. It is in novels that the heroine's 'friends' are openly interested in the prospective couple's economic security, whether represented by the man's status as eldest or younger brother, profession, or standard of living. Conduct literature eschews these considerations. Could it be that the underlying issue is that of choice? Courtship novels make explicit what the choices are and how options are considered; that is, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, they teach women how to make these choices responsibly.

The variety of fiction most frequently concerned with marriage is the courtship novel. This subgenre of the novel has been called variously the conduct novel, didactic novel, courtesy novel, and novel of manners. I will use Katherine Sobba Green's term "courtship novel" because it emphasizes the teleological goal of most of these narratives, making a nice parallel to that conduct literature for women which emphasizes becoming a desirable object for marriage and being a dutiful wife. In her study of courtship novels spanning the years 1740 to 1820, Green defines the subgenre as one which typically

> began with the heroine's coming out and ended with her wedding. It detailed a young woman's entrance into society, the problems arising from that situation, her courtship, and finally her choice (almost always fortunate) among suitors. Thematically, it probed, from a woman's point of view, the emotional difficulties of moving toward affective individuation and companionate marriage despite the regressive effects of female role definition. (2)

Green argues that these novels collectively mark an ideological shift, both in cultural practice and in representation in novels, from arranged to "companionate marriages," although the focus on the "disposal of the female body" persisted as these novels' primary concern (3). This shift is signalled by the increased participation by the daughter in what often had been a patriarchal decision: whom she would marry.

Green is correct to problematize the possibility of female individuation given women's repressive social roles. But she (like many other scholars) commits a logical error

in equating negotiation of the marriage contract with the marriage itself. The term 'companionate marriage' is used by Lawrence Stone in his still highly influential work, Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (1977, 1979). Although never adequately defined, the term appears to signify the move among families of the gentry and aristocracy from patriarchally arranged marriages based largely on economic gain to marriages based more on mutual attraction of the young couple (though, as Stone points out, familial pressure on the young people continued and self-selection in terms of class remained common).

The term is a useful one thus delineated. Problems arise in Stone and elsewhere, however, with the subsequent simplistic equation of spousal friendship with love or, more precisely, marriage based on mutual attraction with spousal equality. Other scholars of the family--for example, Trumbach, who uses the term "egalitarian family" to much the same effect as Stone's companionate marriage, or MacFarlane, Gillis, and Roussell who take up Stone's term uncritically--apparently do not recognize the paradox of asserting admittedly varying degrees of equality while also recognizing hierarchical spousal relationships as the norm. Kathryn Shevelow, on the other hand, explicitly examines the inherent inequality of maintaining separate spheres for men and women (12-14).

I do not wish to argue that the nature of the spousal relationship was static during this period. But I do

believe these scholars, aside from Shevelow, conflate the category of courtship with that of marriage, thus assuming sentimentally and anachronistically that the changes leading to marriage automatically signal a concomitant improvement in the spousal relationship after marriage. Staves attributes this mistake to some historians' acceptance of an

> illusion that there can be a clear separation between, on the one hand, a public and economic sphere, and, on the other, a private domestic sphere of true feeling and personal authenticity. In this aspect of their work, they have accepted the very ideological formulation created by eighteenth-century advocates of domesticity. (223)

Reading conduct literature for women, even that published in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, in no way suggests spouses were close to being equal, despite their separate spheres. Further, in an important critique of scholarship on the family, Susan Moller Okin argues that alterations in the institution of marriage, such as the decline of arranged marriages so important for arguing the improved status of women, was actually detrimental to women. What Okin calls the "sentimental family," rather than simply increasing the status of woman's role in the home served also to confine her to the home, providing "a new rationale for the subordination of women" (65). Rather than balancing the spousal relationship, the new domestic ideology served "as a reinforcement for the patriarchal relations between men and women" (74). Okin's argument that the "sentimental family" was at bottom a new justification for subjugating

women severely undermines scholars who see the advancement of women in the decline of the economic function of marriage.

Green lists forty-seven novels devoted to chronicling female courtship from 1740 to 1824 (163-4). By no means did all of these novels have the traditional "happy ending" of the heroine's making a fortunate marriage to the man of her choice with familial or social approval. Nevertheless, the number which do (works by Austen, Burney, and Lennox are among the most familiar) are sufficient to make clear that marriage was usually expected and desired by the heroines and, by extension, the readers who made these novels popular. However much the patriarchal decision-making process might be challenged in these texts, the institution of marriage itself rarely was. Heroines might have reservations about marrying particular suitors (even preferring single life over marriage to the "wrong" man), but these reservations do not extend to questioning the "right" suitor, married life, or motherhood.

In fact, many of these novels portray remarkably little marriage in any depth. The significant number of heroines who are orphans, are removed from their parents, or who have at least one dead or absent parent (which conveniently gives virtuous heroines unprecedented autonomy) makes impossible the depiction of the heroine's nearest spousal relationship--that of her parents. Representations of marriage, therefore, are often pushed to the secondary characters,

which, with some exceptions of course (the Harrels and Delviles in Cecilia, or the Crofts in Persuasion), are not treated extensively. Thus while marriage is the primary goal for the heroines of courtship novels, the spousal relationship is under-represented and the institution under-examined.

Reading conduct literature against courtship novels, however, can reconstruct a dialogue available to readers of the time but which has been lost to scholars just as conduct literature has largely been lost to today's readers. When we recover the misogynistic model of marriage in conduct literature the iconoclasm of the novels with which they were competing for social influence becomes clearer. Modern readers are accustomed to recognizing in novels the significant social change represented by depicting marriage based on personal preference rather than patriarchal choice. Reading conduct literature teaches us to go further, to recognize that depictions of mutual love and respect--the ideal presented in courtship novels--are in themselves iconoclastic.

Conduct literature can be read as participating in a dialogue concerning the ideology of social reproduction and social change through standardizing marriage practices and gender roles. Kathryn Shevelow's analysis of the ideological function of women's periodicals in the eighteenth century can be extended easily to conduct

literature. In fact, women's periodicals are often considered one form of conduct literature, and frequently share with conduct literature direct address to a female audience and a prescriptive, even judgmental, stance regarding female behavior. Shevelow suggests periodicals were concerned with

> addressing and figuring their women readers, and in so doing constructed a normative definition of femininity. So that reading the periodical not only brought readers into engagement with 'images of women' but also implicated them in a process of reading which itself was gendered and ideological, exerting normative force. (15-16)

Like periodicals, conduct literature routinely puts forth "images of women"--usually ideal--which were explicitly designed as models for imitation. These models of perfection were nonetheless promoted as achievable goals for female behavior. They defined the behavior that is both desired and desirable. The conduct literature examined in this chapter delineates a conservative paradigm of marriage against which courtship novels should be understood.

Many conduct manuals begin with the demonization of spinsterhood. It has become a commonplace that because of extremely narrow employment opportunities for female gentry, spinsters were a drain on the families upon which they were dependent. Further, spinsters did not contribute to society by being productive (running a household) or reproductive (having children and thus perpetuating both the family and social class). Therefore, it benefitted society generally to put heavy pressure on individuals to marry and to make

failure to do so repugnant. But Staves points out that heavy emphasis on the economic effects of spinsters on society may be a misunderstanding of how eighteenth-century society perceived the problem (203). Studies show the celibacy rate (defined as never married by age fifty) for daughters of peers during the eighteenth century range from twenty to twenty-seven percent (Staves 217). Historians have suggested that this high rate is due to women possessing independent wealth and making a choice not to marry. Staves takes the opposite tack, suggesting that many women, as was often the case for younger sons, simply could not afford to get married.

Economics notwithstanding, reading much conduct literature suggests an additional reason for this heavy pressure: there was general acknowledgment that with wifehood came every possibility of unhappiness; therefore if left to their own devices women might choose to remain single. With the burdens that marriage put on women common knowledge, matrimony had to be presented to women as an absolute religious and social duty. Halifax's statement to his daughter that "the Institution of Marriage is too sacred to admit of a Liberty of Objection to it" (31) is meant to forestall any objection that individual claims (even those of his own daughter) are stronger than society's. Alluding to the fact that marriage laws are easier on husbands than wives, he concedes

> that the Supposition of your being the weaker Sex, having without all doubt a good Foundation, maketh

> it reasonable to subject it to the Masculine Dominion; that no Rule can be so perfect, as not to admit no Exceptions; but the law presumeth there would be so few found in this case, who would have a sufficient Right to such a Privilege, that it is safer some Injustice should be conniv'd at in a very few Instances, than to break into an Establishment, upon which the Order of Human Society doth so much depend. (31-2)

Halifax's subordination of the female individual to religious and social duty is not surprising in 1688. However, we find this definition of a wife as a legal entity (or nonentity) almost a century later: "By marriage the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended; or at least it is incorporated and consolidated into that of her husband" (Laws 65). Thus the ideology of law and the ideology of religion are synchronized, and the force of the message doubled.

Bennett suggests spinsterhood is "dangerous" and "lonely" and spinsters are "the object of ridicule" and "often reproached"; after all, "What are the highest blessings, unsweetened by society?" (2.162). One can have everything one needs, but without husband and children there is no happiness. His recital of the social criticism single women can expect is designed to assure that women will desire marriage--even though, as he later paradoxically acknowledges, they cannot expect to find much happiness in it. Fordyce resorts to threats by suggesting that women who are independent forfeit their rights of protection by society: "an intrepid female seems to renounce our aid, and in some respects to invade our province. We turn away and

leave her to herself" (2.113). Thus, in addition to the economic pressures placed on women, these social pressures (ultimately rooted in economics) are designed to make women feel they really have no choice about whether or not to marry.

Another common tactic employed to make marriage desirable is to portray married women as more socially attractive than single women. Married women supposedly have more substantial interests (the welfare of husband and children) than single women. They have loved more, and they have lost unnecessary reserve because the society of men increases their intellect (Bennett 2.164-5). This argument appears disingenuous when considered in light of the large number of novelists of the period who demonstrate a marked preference for representing the single over the married state for their heroines. Such a contradiction probably would not be lost on readers of the period.

The issue of whether young women should have the liberty to choose their own husbands is one of the few areas which evolves over time in this sampling of conduct literature. The two seventeenth-century works acknowledge the "unfortunate reality" that "young women are seldom permitted to make their own choice" of a husband (Halifax 25). However, all of the eighteenth-century authors admit, at the very least, that parents should not "force" daughters to marry against their wills (Gisborne 241). Nevertheless,

most of these authors maintain the right--and rightness--of parental influence.

One of the reasons that these authors defend the parental right of "influence" is the fear that women's standards for husbands will be too high. The authors demand chastity and monogamy in women, but they are not shy in telling women they cannot expect the same from their suitors or husbands. Further, they do not want women agitating for modification of male behavior. While acknowledging that marrying for money is a form of "legal prostitution," Bennett informs women they need not be "too fastidious" in their choice of husband (2.164), as a woman's home will provide her with more happiness than her husband will. Women must be content with economic support, because given the current state of immorality in men, if a woman wants to marry she will have to compromise: "She must be content with a fortune merely, without expecting many good or great qualities annexed" (Bennett 2.180). Fordyce and Gisborne, as usual, go furthest in curtailing women's self-determination. Gisborne suggests parental desires are more important than those of the daughter (24) and Fordyce argues for choice only on the part of men (2.56).

There is a consensus among these authors in at least allowing daughters the right of refusal, but while the authors say they advocate female choice this is really as far as their benevolence goes. In suggesting that women make foolish choices based on superficial considerations,

and that parental considerations are more important than those of the individuals immediately involved, they limit women's abilities and authority. Conduct authors' acknowledgment of choice may be a surrender to the changing social practices of the period, but they are unwilling simply to relinquish all control.

Once the subject in conduct literature moves from courtship to wifehood there is little attempt by these authors to paint marriage as attractive for women. This openness suggests that knowledge of the burdens of married life was common enough that there was no point in trying to hide or deny it. A modern conception of happiness--emotional pleasure or fulfillment derived from one's responsibilities, leisure or relationships--is not to be thought of according to these authors. Nonetheless, they do treat the subject. Their references to happiness consist either in a denial of its desirability or an affirmation that its source is in sacrificing individual desires to those of society.

Bennett is typical when in his introduction he suggests that women's life rewards are in heaven, not on earth. Women must be moderate and realistic in their expectations for finding happiness in marriage, as female married life is almost universally lonely, in large part because of absent husbands (1.xiv, 1.7). Additionally, the double standard of moral behavior for women and men is portrayed as an

opportunity for developing Christian virtues such as patience, tolerance, and forgiveness:

> Ladies are often put upon these toils in the usual course of life; I mean that marriage, wherein your Virtue obliges you to give the greatest Proofs of Fortitude and Constancy. What can be a greater trial of a woman of virtue and sense, than to be forced to the bed of a man who is either a fool, or a Sot, or perhaps both; and one whom, if it was not for the Ties and Duty of a Wife, she would morally hate. . . . This takes extreme fortitude to deal well with. (Essex 67)

Not only must wives guard their own virtue and reputation, they must overlook in their husbands the very behavior for which they themselves would be vilified.

The authors who take an ostensibly sympathetic stance toward the plight of women employ a rhetorical move that recurs frequently in conservative conduct literature. Shevelow observes correctly that Halifax "adopted a tone of paternal concern to express a cynical acceptance of women's subordination to men and the sexual double standard" (17). Ruth Perry calls The Ladies New Year's Gift the "seventeenth century locus classicus of patriarchy," which lays out "the most controlling set of injunctions that a protective or jealous father could think up" (160). Halifax and others acknowledge that marriage places a great burden of tolerance on women. These authors do not conceive of marriage as partnership, as modern scholars often imply. Rather, as Kathryn Kirkpatrick suggests, "the new domestic woman was to be constructed precisely for her usefulness to the propertied male" (205). She argues conduct books did not simply provide religious or moral precepts (as they

explicitly claim), but simultaneously combat the very desire of women to be subjects (210). An example of this rhetorical strategy is Halifax's argument against the possibility of divorce, even in the face of adultery:

> You are therefore to make the best of what is settled by Law and Custom, and not vainly imagine, that it will be changed for your sake. But that you may not be discouraged, as if you lay under the weight of an incurable Grievance, you are to know that by a wise and dexterous Conduct, it will be in your power to relieve your self from anything that looketh like a disadvantage in it. (32)

Halifax's use of the term "looketh" undermines the possibility that any real grievance exists at all and that the problem lies only in the woman's perception and handling of it. By citing law and custom Halifax refers to almost immutable authority, taking refuge in a position which needs no further defense or explication because those institutions are accepted as more significant than individual desire. Further, suggesting that a husband's infidelity or drinking are curable by the wife through "wise and dexterous conduct" (pretending that the infidelity does not exist, and ignoring it if unmistakably confronted by it) Halifax lays responsibility for a husband's behavior on the wife, thereby making her solely responsible both for her own happiness as well as her husband's virtue.

Depicting women as extremely powerful within marriage--capable of controlling the behavior of their legal, religious, and social superiors--is a common ideological tactic among male conduct authors. The strategy is to

appeal to women through flattery (what looks on the surface like empowerment), while simultaneously preempting any female call for increased agency. Once this power (and these authors do use that term) is putatively granted to women, the authors can then blame them for any number of marital, parental, and even broader social problems. This rhetorical strategy makes women appear to be moral agents, but as Okin shows, this domestication of women objectifies and silences women. The tactic makes women appear both solely responsible and all powerful in producing morality and contentment in the home.

Examples of this rhetorical strategy abound. Conduct authors' catalogue of the specific burdens on women in marriage begins with the very act of marriage itself. Acknowledgment of women's objection to the term "obey" in marriage vows appears at least as early as 1673 in Richard Allestree's The Ladies Calling (33). Essex suggests that women are still paying for original sin; obedience in the wedding vows stems from woman's lost equality with man in the Garden of Eden. He calls this inequality "almost" a "natural law" (107). Making a similar argument, Gisborne tries to lighten woman's lot by also suggesting that, in addition to subordinating women, scripture also simultaneously protects women from tyrannical husbands (231, see also 229).

These scripturally-based arguments are particularly insidious because they are structured so that a "modest"

woman cannot rebut them. Conservative conduct authors are overt in using male authority for reading and interpreting scripture <u>for</u> women. They structure their claim to authority so as to make it unassailable on two counts: first, women are not sufficiently educated to interpret the Bible for themselves; and second, women cannot be modest (read virtuous) if they challenge (male) Biblical interpretation. Though frequently unsuccessful, the desired effect of these arguments is to silence women regarding social practices rooted in scripture. Female obedience to male interpretations (and applications) of scripture is thus transformed into an undeniable Christian duty.

After establishing first that it is a woman's duty to marry, and second that she must be an obedient and subordinate party within the marriage, these authors are then free to enter into a candid description of what women can expect in marriage. There is among these authors a general agreement as seen by the epigrams to this chapter, that woman's sorrows do indeed begin with marriageability.

Male infidelity is the most commonly cited source of unhappiness for wives, but the litany of sins that husbands often engage in includes alcohol abuse, jealousy, avarice, vanity, ill-temper, narrow-mindedness, incompetence and mental weakness, gambling, and general neglect of their wives. These are in addition to a common acknowledgment that, despite depictions to the contrary in courtship novels, wives in no way can expect love, respect, or esteem.

So far from that being the case, wives may not even expect much daily contact with their husbands because of gentry social practices which frequently separated spouses, both within the same house (separate bedrooms, for example) and by frequent separations between town and country.

Although each author who discusses the expectation of male infidelity pays lip service to condemning it, its ubiquity is nonetheless taken for granted by them. The subject is treated as a fact of nature. Fordyce sums up the social expectations placed on wives whose husbands are unfaithful in a statement worth quoting at length:

> I am astonished at the folly of many women, who are still reproaching their husbands for leaving them alone, for preferring this or that company to theirs, for treating them with this and the other make of disregard or indifference; when, to speak the truth, they have themselves in a great measure to blame. Not that I would justify the men in any thing wrong on their part. But had you behaved to them with a more respectful observance, and a more equal tenderness; studying their humours, overlooking their mistakes, submitting to their opinions in matters indifferent, passing by little instances of unevenness, caprice, or passion, giving soft answers to hasty words, complaining as seldom as possible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties, and prevent (sic) their wishes, to enliven the hour of dulness, and call up the ideas of felicity: had you pursued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increased their esteem, so far so to have secured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual satisfaction; and your house might at this day have been the abode of domestic bliss. There may, it is true, be some husbands whom no goodness can impress. We owned it before; but still we have ground to believe, that of men who would have turned out better, had they met with discreet and obliging women, multitudes have been lost by the inattention and neglect, as well as not a few by the impertinence and perverseness of their wives. (Fordyce 2.133)

As with the Halifax example cited above, this passage points to the social and religious double standard: thou shalt not commit adultery, but if the adulterer is male it will be ignored. Fordyce candidly denies women not only the comfort of society's disapprobation about their husbands' behavior, but suggests the husbands' behavior is the fault of the wives. No matter what wives do, if they had done more their husbands would not commit adultery. There is never a point, according to Fordyce's formulation, when a woman can find comfort in the belief that she has done her best to reasonably fulfill her duty.

Recovering the context of conduct literature's model of wife as submissive object clarifies the alternative paradigm of marriage depicted in courtship novels in which women act as independent agents with at least the potential for a satisfying marriage. Recognizing the misogynistic nature of marriage as defined by conduct literature prompts us to move beyond mere discussions of the decline in arranged marriages that occurred historically and was portrayed in literature. Rather, by understanding that we must not define the spousal relationship by the methods of courtship, we must see that novels which truly depict mutual love, respect, and esteem of the engaged couple present an alternative, and revolutionary, paradigm of marriage.

So far from the heroine merely "dwindling into a wife," novels that end with promising engagements clearly imply

that these characters will have a different kind of marriage than that which conduct authors extol. The imagined marriage of these heroines, based on mutual love and esteem, is in direct conflict with the paradigm of marriage represented in conduct literature. Once we recognize the differences in the portrayals of marriage in the two genres it becomes easier to identify how these novels were being subversive while still being "modest" and acceptable. We understand why certain segments of society feared the novel. For these conduct authors, the fear of fiction is the fear of change embedded in courtship novels.

Chapter 3

FROM FICTION TO FACT: AUTHORING A SELF IN THE FEMALE QUIXOTE

> Prove, therefore, that the Books which I have hitherto read as copies of Life, and Models of Conduct, are empty Fictions, and from this Hour I deliver them to moths and mold.
>
> Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote

This quotation articulates two of the myriad of eighteenth-century attitudes toward fiction: first, although fiction presents itself as truth, it is actually lies; and second, fiction, because of its truthful appearance, is a model of conduct for its readers. Much opposition to the novel, including that found in conservative conduct literature, is founded on the premise of protecting young and innocent female readers. Conduct authors' prohibition against fiction binds together an attempt to control female desire (by stigmatizing female imagination) with one of the perceived sources of that desire--reading. One conduct author warns that

> A Volume would not be sufficient to expose the dangers of these books. They lead young people into an enchanted country, and open their view to an imaginary world, full of inviolable friendships, attachments, exstacies, accomplishments, prodigies, and such visionary joys as never will be realized in the coarseness of common life. (Bennett 2.64)

Bennett's fear is that fiction will model female desire. In the guise of protecting women from unrealizable desires he attempts to control the nature of women's relationships, interests, activities, and happiness. As I have shown in the previous chapter, this pretense of protecting women by circumscribing their desires is played out repeatedly in conservative conduct literature.

The embattled novel suffered similar attacks from other quarters, although with different motives than those of the conservative male authors previously examined. Two female conduct authors who prohibit reading novels, Sarah Pennington in An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters (1761) and Anne-Thérèse Marchioness de Lambert in Advice of a Mother to her Daughter (1727), do so with the aim of protecting young women from developing a desire for love in marriage. But while the male authors who make the same prohibition tell women not to desire marital love because its unattainability will doom them to unhappiness, female authors tell women not to desire marital love because love itself dooms women to unhappiness. This advice, while still marked by significant self-denial, is notable for the autonomy which it advocates for women.

The advice of both these authors appears to be based on their own dismal marriages. Pennington, estranged from her husband and in a legal battle with him over finances and custody or access to her children, used her text as the only way available to communicate with her daughters (Jones

viii). At first glance Pennington's advice may sound conformist to the status quo, but as Vivien Jones points out, "Pennington's strategic manipulation of the power of print manifests a less self-effacing version of 'prudence'" than she advocates on the surface (xxi). Although a member of the French aristocracy, Lambert gives advice similar to Pennington's (the two works were published together in one edition late in the eighteenth century).

Lambert, too, was in a legal battle with her late husband's family (including her own son) for financial support (Jones xi). Lambert holds what could be characterized as an enlightenment view of human relations. She argues rationality will be a more reliable source of happiness than the "passion" of love (167-71), and that love "is the most cruel situation a rational person can be in" (168). Central to Lambert's Advice is the belief that women must be independent both emotionally and economically. Jones argues correctly that, for Lambert, independence "describes a state of mind. It suggests intellectual and spiritual freedom, rather than the financial security so often referred to when the term was used of a woman in this period" (Jones xi). This stance is remarkable considering she was engaged in just such financial issues when she wrote the Advice. For Lambert, self-denial is a method for developing independence, to maintain selfhood.

The autobiographical background to both these works illustrates Pennington's and Lambert's belief that love in

marriage, while possible, is neither probable nor even desirable. Thus each author's prohibition of works which romanticize marriage becomes easy to understand. According to Pennington, the "pernicious consequences"

> of novels is that female readers are drawn on, through a tiresome length of foolish adventures, from which neither knowledge, pleasure, or profit, seldom can accrue, to the common catastrophe of a wedding. . . . [Novels] are apt to give a romantic turn to the mind, which is often productive of great errors in judgment, and of fatal mistakes in conduct. (Pennington 87-8, emphasis added)

Lambert's advice is much the same: she shuns romances because "one should not increase the charms and delusions of love" (156). The bitterness both authors exhibit toward love and marriage is palpable, and the connections between reading, imagination, and desire are clear:

> Do not converse with your Imagination; it will paint Love to you with all its charms; it is all seduction and illusion, when she makes the representation: there is always a great drawback when you quit her to come to the reality. (Lambert 169)

Despite the similar warnings against fiction, imagination, and love, the differences between the arguments of the male and female conduct authors lie in whom they are trying to serve with their proscriptions. The male conservative writers, as evinced by their explicit denial (and demand for women's self-denial) of female happiness, maintain the patriarchal socioeconomic system, to which Pennington and Lambert both made legal challenges. The female authors, on the other hand, while advocating self-denial, also advocate a redefinition of female happiness--a

version not found in courtship novels. Although Pennington and Lambert demonstrate little hope for change in the nature of wifehood, it is important to note that they are not defeated in their attempts to empower women. Perhaps hopeless of altering male behavior, they instead offer women a way to cope with it. Thus we see the differing underlying aims of surface similarities: empowerment of women through self-denial versus subjugation of women through self-denial.

Just as eighteenth-century male views of the novel are not monolithic, however, neither are female views. So culturally ingrained was the belief in the social influence of the novel that even some book reviews became quasi-conduct literature. Defenders of fiction such as Clara Reeve and Anna Barbauld acknowledge as rational the fear that the novel is--or could be--a significant component of female desire for marital love.

Reeve, in the Progress of Romance (1785), and Barbauld in the British Novelists (1810), take a more moderate view of fiction than earlier conduct authors such as Pennington and Lambert. Each presents a compendium of acceptable titles for young women to read, but even the works which they approve often have cautionary statements attached. In the vein of Dr. Johnson, these authors warn against the inexperienced reader's ability first to discern fact from fiction and second to control desire.

In making her selections of approved fiction Reeve favors a "dull morality" to a "brilliant immorality" (2.77)

because the lessons young people extract from books gives them an authority they do not have a right to: they will "believe themselves wiser than their parents and guardians, whom they treat with contempt and ridicule" (2.79). Reeve's acknowledgment of the influence of fiction goes to the heart of the fear of challenges to the patriarchal control of women.

Writing considerably later, Barbauld is nonetheless still in the position of having to defend fiction that is entertaining without being didactic. But her stance is equivocal as she does prefer mimetic fiction because of the acknowledged effects texts have on their readers. Among these effects is the acquisition of unrealistic expectations regarding marriage, specifically that young women may choose their own partners and make love matches: "Love is a passion particularly exaggerated in novels. . . . [A] false idea is given of the importance of the passion," because in reality love "acts a very subordinate part on the great theatre of the world" (1.50). Where love is really felt by a young woman "she will see it continually overcome by duty, by prudence. . . . Least of all will a course of novels prepare a young lady for the neglect and tedium of life which she is perhaps doomed to encounter" (1.50-1).

Katharine Rogers sees Barbauld as an acute analyst of both the positive and negative effects of fiction on women: "The heroine of a novel, however distressed, is the constant center of attention, as few people in real life can be,

especially if they are female. Consciously or not, Barbauld comments on a society that reduced women's lives to monotony and unimportance" (35). Barbauld understands that, to paraphrase Rogers, it is not that women read novels because their heads are empty; they read novels because their lives are empty (35).

By arraying these various critics of the novel--male and female, conservative and moderate, proponents and opponents of fiction, conduct authors and literary critics--we see that, despite their different conclusions regarding whether women should read novels, they do share significant cultural assumptions. First, reading helps construct desire and ultimately the self. Second, what is depicted in novels is not, as much scholarship (frequently based on Stone's Family, Sex, and Marriage) has suggested, merely reflective of the evolving status quo regarding courtship and marriage. And third, the intersection of one and two, of individual desire and the representation of an alternative world, can affect real social relationships.

The belief that through reading women will desire love and happiness in marriage implies that such desires challenge the status quo and are in fact unrealistic. The ubiquity of the arguments regarding the nature of marriage, particularly as it pertains to spousal love, also suggests flux. This is true despite the numerous courtship novels of the period which end with a love relationship between the betrothed, and which are used by scholars today as evidence

that marriage based on love was becoming commonplace and uncontested. Jane Spencer is one of the few scholars who sees beyond the happy ending: "Didactic novels and nonfictional conduct books tended to agree on every point but one: romantic love, disparaged by moralists, was essential to most novelists" (Spencer 186). While I strongly disagree that conduct authors and novelists agree on most aspects of appropriate female behavior, Spencer is correct in her observation of the disparity in eighteenth-century viewpoints regarding marital love. This disparity goes right to the heart of the need to account for conduct literature in our recovery of the contexts of eighteenth-century novels.

Any number of courtship novels could be used to explore changing eighteenth-century cultural ideas and practices regarding female desire, love, and marriage. But when reading novels is implicated as one of the sources of desire for change, one novel in particular stands out: Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote (1752). This novel can recover and centralize the debate surrounding four deeply intertwined topics--female reading, imagination, desire, and marriage. The novel enables today's readers to appreciate how the representation of these four topics in fiction participated in larger cultural debates.

Lennox explicitly engages with the debate regarding the influence of fiction on its (female) readers. The Female

Quixote's Arabella is a heroine of marriageable age, largely independent of parental guidance, whose education is heavily indebted to reading romances. Due to her reading, Arabella misinterprets people and events and appears slightly ridiculous because of her mistakes. She is subsequently "re-educated" to comprehend the difference between fact and fiction, and is thus able to make a socially approved and economically advantageous marriage for love.[1] The parodies of society's fears regarding female reading are unmistakable, as are the ideals of marriage depicted at the conclusion. As there was opposition in popular conduct literature to both female reading and the ideal of marriage for love, this novel can be seen as advocating social change in the lives of women.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that Lennox, despite creating a heroine who is humiliated through her reading, defends women's reading and advocates marital love. She does so by constructing plots which appropriate what I refer to as the "archenarratives" of conduct authors and literary critics who seek to maintain control over female behavior and desire by proscribing fiction. Lennox subverts these archenarratives by implicating additional social practices other than reading in the errors of her heroine, and by

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[1]The novel is indebted to the popular traditions of Don Quixote; see Susan Staves, "Don Quixote in Eighteenth-Century England," and Elaine Kauvar "Jane Austen and The Female Quixote." On Lennox's debt to Cervantes and French romances, particularly Madeleine de Scudery, see David Marshall. Deborah Ross also points to Female Quixotism (1808) by Tabitha Tenney.

rewarding Arabella with the very thing which conduct literature disdains: spousal love. In this way, the Female Quixote has a dual social efficacy. It argues against prohibitions of female fiction reading, and models an alternative construction of marriage, one which improves the lives of women but is nevertheless nonthreatening to the economy of patriarchy.

In an attempt to circumscribe female conduct and desire, conduct authors often create archenarratives regarding the consequences of female novel reading. The recurring picture painted by conduct authors of women who read fiction, in broad terms, is that they are in danger of becoming fallen women. As opposed to the female ideal found in conduct literature (women who are modest, virtuous, submissive, and undifferentiated) fiction readers risk becoming worldly, imaginative, desiring, and knowledgeable individuals. The dire result of this transformation, according to conduct literature, is that female novel readers become unmarriageable. In other words, the archenarrative of conduct literature threatens female readers with spinsterhood. However, when the economic subtext of conduct literature arguments is considered, the claim that female readers are undesirable and unmarriageable is readily revealed as an effort to prevent women readers from becoming ungovernable or uncontrollable (that is, demanding change in male behavior or the nature of marriage in order to improve female lives).

The Female Quixote contains numerous examples of Arabella's desire for a heroic life worthy of the French romances which serve as her authority on life. One scene in particular, however, explicitly illustrates the degree of her desire, because it depicts not only her transgressions against authority, but what happens when she has two irreconcilable desires.

Early in the novel Arabella's father reveals that it has been his hope since her childhood that she should marry her cousin, Charles Glanville. Her father's declaration of his wishes reverses the subject/object relationship which one would expect to echo the conventional marriage ceremony; rather than giving his daughter (the object) to a husband (the subject), he speaks of "giving" Glanville to Arabella as a husband (27). But even this representation of an arranged marriage is repugnant to Arabella. Her objection is not that she specifically desires to choose her husband for herself or that she is already in love with someone else. She objects on the principle that she must challenge authority, that, on the model of romantic heroines, she must exercise self-determination. The narrator explains Arabella's thinking:

> The Impropriety of receiving a Lover of a Father's recommendation appeared in its strongest Light. What Lady in Romance ever married the Man that was chose for her? In those Cases the Remonstrances of a Parent are called Persecutions; obstinate Resistance, Constancy and Courage; and an Aptitude to dislike the Person proposed to them, a novel Freedom of Mind which disdains to love or hate by the Caprice of others. (27)

Within this passage Lennox sets forth both the stereotype of female reading she will ultimately challenge and the source of the many subsequent adventures Arabella will have. Conduct authors' fears of insubordinate daughters are made manifest: Arabella disregards her father's wishes simply because they belong to her father, not because of any prior attachment or defect in Glanville.

Further, the basis of Arabella's objection is solely in romance reading, not experience or other education. Her reading sanctions her "constancy and courage" in her "resistance" to the will of her father under the belief that she is exercising a "noble freedom of mind." Further, she has so little respect for parental authority that she calls her father's desires "caprice." Of course, what Arabella fails to recognize amidst her self-approbation is that in her knee-jerk rejection of her father's wishes she is no more exhibiting a freedom of mind than if she had simply accepted her father's matchmaking at the outset.

Lennox emphasizes the weakness of Arabella's position when she is physically attracted to Glanville at first sight (28), and subsequently finds much to like in him in spite of herself. It is only through her determination to have adventures and Glanville's alternating inability and unwillingness to satisfy her romantic desires that she is able to maintain a distance romantically from a suitor whom she believes wishes "to take away her Liberty, either by obliging her to marry him, or by making her a prisoner"

(35). A female character privileging freedom above marriage would strike a deep chord in eighteenth-century readers--one which would resonate with those who feared fiction as models for female behavior.

This scene is paradigmatic of the errors in conduct Arabella makes based on her reading. While her exuberance and innocence, along with the sardonic humor of the narrator, render Arabella's actions generally inoffensive, her behavior is nevertheless "wrong" according to the mores of conduct literature. In addition to challenging parental authority, Arabella's reading has prompted a belief that her desires should be fulfilled, that she need consult no one in pursuing them, and that she alone should judge her own best interests.

Through Arabella's voicing of her desires Lennox embraces the predictions of conduct authors and proceeds to take Arabella to the brink of unmarriageability: Arabella's imagination is uncontrolled and thus her behavior is uncontrollable. The inability of other characters to understand Arabella's behavior ultimately begs the question of her sanity. Sir Charles, Arabella's uncle and nominal guardian, indulges Arabella's "follies" for a time because of his economic interest in uniting his son's (Charles Glanville's) fortune to Arabella's. He eventually loses patience in spite of this inducement and

> concluded she was absolutely mad, and held a short Debate with himself, Whether he ought not to bring a Commission of Lunacy against her, rather than marry her to his Son, whom he was persuaded could

> never be happy with a Wife so unaccountably absurd. (339)

This is a dangerous threat, both in mixing the law and reading, and in treating an "ungovernable" woman as "mad." His decision in her favor is made easier by the knowledge that his son will inherit part of Arabella's estate even if Charles does not marry her. This passage serves not only to illustrate belief in the potentially deranging effects of reading, but also the machinations of the patriarchal financial interests in marriage.

Glanville, a more obedient son than Arabella is a daughter, dissuades his father from making the commission of lunacy by swearing not to marry until "the Whims [Arabella's] Romances had put into her Head, were eraz'd by a better Knowledge of life and Manners" (339-40). But Arabella persists to such a degree that even Glanville comes to question her sanity. This is the point at which she most closely approaches unmarriageability, for even Glanville, who knows precisely the root of her behavior, and who admires her mind and virtue otherwise, begins to question whether romances have had an irreparably deranging effect on her.

One complication regarding the effects of reading in the Female Quixote is the differentiation of genres: romance and novel. In Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820, Catherine Gallagher uses the figure of "nobody"--alternately representing elusive women, female authors, and female

characters--to examine how both female authorship and fiction writing gained prestige during the long eighteenth century. Gallagher's reading of the Female Quixote is unique because she asserts that there was not any real fear on the part of eighteenth-century critics that readers might believe fictional characters were factual. Rather, "eighteenth-century readers identified with characters because of the characters' fictiveness and not in spite of it" (Gallagher xvii). According to this formulation, for example, a fictional heroine would be more appealing to the reader than the subject of a biography:

> This proprietary barrier of the other's body is what fiction freely dispenses with; by representing feelings that belong to no other body, fiction actually facilitates the process of sympathy. It bypasses the stage at which the sentiments perceived in other bodies are mere matters of fact and gives us the illusion of immediately appropriable sentiments, free sentiments belong to nobody and therefore identifiable with ourselves. (Gallagher 171)

Ironically this makes a convenient argument for why fictional characters can become dangerous in the view of conservatives; that is, they can "become a species of utopian common property, potential objects of universal identification" (Gallagher 172). However, there really is no evidence that fictional characters are more appealing than biographical subjects. More importantly, a reader's knowledge that a character is fictional does not preclude a desire that the fictional become real. Finally, as I have shown, while the question of literary influence was not settled, there is enough eighteenth-century debate on the

subject to show a very real concern about the possibilities. Gallagher has not sufficiently controverted that evidence.

The import of the question regarding the influence of reading rests ultimately on whether, how, and what kind of self a reader may author. Gallagher asserts that Arabella is resisting fiction rather than reality, as most scholars claim. Arabella, who at first views fiction as lies, is therefore resistant to the idea that there can be any value in made-up stories (FQ 376-7). Gallagher asserts that "Arabella must learn to sympathize with nobody"--that is, both understand and appreciate the value of fiction as fiction--"in order to become a modern young woman ready for matrimony."[2] In other words, the self Arabella must create in order to be marriageable is undifferentiated and indistinct.

But it is here that Gallagher's argument gets tangled. She makes an excellent case that Arabella resists fiction, but there is no reason that fiction must be the binary opposite of reality, truth versus lies. What makes more sense is that Arabella must learn two things: first, she must learn to differentiate between fact and fiction (fiction may contain fact, but not necessarily); second, she must learn to distinguish between the novel and romance.

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[2]Gallagher's argument for the unequivocal propriety of Arabella should be read against David Marshall's reading of the novel as riddled with prostitutes, fallen women, cross-dressers, and women otherwise disguised. Arabella encounters these women, and herself participates in some of the activities, and Marshall is the only scholar to date to deal with these issues and how they affect genre.

Gallagher claims that to be a good reader (that is, to become marriageable) Arabella must "identify with nobody." Gallagher specifically states in her introduction that the figure of nobody does not represent "ignored, silenced, erased, or anonymous women" (xiii). However, in stating that Arabella must "identify with nobody," that is exactly what she implies, because Gallagher sees little in female heroines to empower readers. Another way to look at the problem is that in appropriating fictional characters as models for behavior, readers make the characters somebody. This is the reverse of Gallagher's formulation, in which readers make themselves nobody.

From one perspective, of course, Arabella completely identifies with nobody--she patterns her life entirely after fictional characters. The problem is that she does not know they are nobodies. But from another perspective Arabella begins as nobody because her life does not correspond with romance. When she takes active steps to have romantic experiences she is attempting to become somebody--she is authoring a self. Gallagher acknowledges that Arabella resists the idea of authorship because she values fact more than fiction (179). But this point could easily be extended to the rest of Arabella's life: it is much more appealing to be a heroine than be forced to create oneself as heroine (that is, author a fiction). In this sense Arabella may not be simply resisting fiction but her own fictiveness as well. She wants to be somebody, not nobody.

The question of what kinds of heroines readers appropriate as models of conduct--whether they are virtuous, have suitors, have adventures, are independent of male authority, marry for love--leads us back to the question of genre, because eighteenth-century critics and conduct authors argued that heightened realism was a determiner in the influence of fiction. Even today, scholars of the Female Quixote are concerned primarily with genre, specifically regarding its transitions between romance and realism (see, for example, Langbauer, Green, Thomson, Lynch, Ross, and Craft). While there is no shortage of references to conduct literature in this scholarship, there is no acknowledgment that conduct literature positions itself as an alternative reality. Thus, I believe there are two ways to appreciate the cultural significance of the Female Quixote (neither of which precludes the other). One is literarily, which positions the novel at the disjuncture between the novel and romance (in which case its realism is sufficient). The other is socially, which posits the novel as a challenge to conduct literature and as an alternative model for female behavior (in which case its realism is insufficient for conservative critics, but would be precisely the point for reformers).

Today's conventional reception of the Female Quixote, which claims genre as the central issue of the novel, oversimplifies matters. It does not account for the eighteenth-century view of the Female Quixote that the

"dilemma" of romantic Quixotism was at least forty years out of date by the time of publication (Reeve 2.6-7), an eighteenth-century acknowledgment that has troubled scholars concerned with genre. The complexity of the Female Quixote needs to be recognized. The "aim" is to ridicule male patriarchy's fear of the consequences of female reading, not simply genre. As evidenced by conduct literature, fear of female reading generally was alive and well. Henry Fielding, in his review of the Female Quixote, is not sidetracked by issues of genre because he attributes the formal issues surrounding genre to the nature of Lennox's imitation of Don Quixote:

> Tho the Humour of Romance, which is principally ridiculed in this Work, be not at present greatly in fashion in this Kingdom, our Author hath taken such Care throughout her Work, to expose all those Vices and Follies in her Sex which are chiefly predominant in our Days, that it will afford very useful Lessons to all those young ladies who will peruse it with the proper attention. (Covent Garden Journal 24, March 24, 1752)

Fielding clearly believes this a didactic work, apparently finding little objectionable in Arabella's behavior.

Turning back to the novel at the point where Glanville doubts Arabella's sanity, we have seen that Arabella is a closely drawn illustration of the claims of conduct literature. But for her to be a perfect representation of conduct literature's archenarrative, the novel would have to end at the point of one of her grave errors, for example when Sir Charles contemplates putting her in a madhouse, or

one of the several occasions when she endangers her own or others' lives. Such an ending would be a clear lesson of reading rendering the reader undesirable and unmarriageable, not to mention dangerous. Crucially, however, the Female Quixote does not end with the exposure of its heroine's errant imagination and immodest desires. This departure from the archenarrative of female reading serves to challenge the conservative fear of female reading.

The strategies of Lennox's challenge appear in two segments. First, the author appropriates conduct literature's archenarrative of the dangers of female reading: the heroine reads fiction; the heroine predictably alters her judgment and conduct according to her reading (she becomes independent and unmanageable); the heroine becomes undesirable as a prospective wife. Once the appropriation of this pattern is complete, the second segment of the challenge then implicates the heroine's accepted social practices. This strategy of transferring the responsibility for unacceptable behavior maintains the virtue, educability, and desirability of the heroine throughout the novel. The heroine can thus be rewarded with an economically desirable and socially approved marriage for love.

As a female Bildungsroman, the Female Quixote begins with the education of its heroine and the contexts in which she is raised. Certainly the indiscriminate and almost exclusive reading of romantic fiction is the catalyst for

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Arabella's errors; still, that does not fully account for her behavior. Social practices common in the eighteenth century result in a deficient early education for Arabella, marked by the limited intellectual instruction typical for women of the period coupled with neglect by her father in monitoring her reading.

Lennox asserts Arabella's unusual intelligence throughout the novel, making the point that Arabella has learned her lessons too well. Lennox places the blame for Arabella's inadequate education squarely on the marquis' shoulders (FQ 6-7). He is so impressed by Arabella's early native intelligence that he dismisses her instructors and resolves to teach her himself; thus he has no one to blame for her errors but himself. The result is a daughter who cannot distinguish fact from fiction. Notably, the marquis is guilty of precisely what conduct books warn against: allowing his daughter's indiscriminate reading.

Compounding this problem is the context in which Arabella reads. As Margaret Doody points out, the marquis has created his own version of romance and he is the slave to imagination, not Arabella (FQ xx). After falling from favor at court the marquis retreats to the country, marrying a woman much younger and inferior in rank to himself. The marchioness is unnamed in the novel, suggesting her insignificance and lack of individuality. She is necessary to the story only as a breeder and reader. She dies shortly after childbirth, leaving the marquis in seclusion with his

infant daughter, who is robbed not only of a mother, but of any female companionship of her own rank and any model of marriage.

Arabella's legacy from her unknown mother is the romances which she is allowed to read unhindered. This lone connection to her mother is a dangerous one for Arabella and symbolizes a number of eighteenth-century limitations on women generally, and Arabella's mother in particular. Patricia Meyer Spacks explains the social function of romance (and I would argue it is not limited to that genre):

> Obviously, this novel criticizes the absurdity of romances. Its moral is perfectly clear. Its 'tendency,' on the other hand, demands investigation. If the text mocks far-fetched fiction it also emphasizes their profound appeal to women, not because of female gullibility, but because women need alternatives to their socially defined state of meaningless and powerless activity. (14)

Certainly if there is one thing that reading gives Arabella it is the ability to interpret her world so that she is both significant and powerful in her relationships with other characters.

While the narrator claims the marquis tenderly loved his wife, she was not happy in her secluded life at the castle. The description in the novel of the very different lives husbands and wives led in the country is quite similar to that described in conduct literature. The marquis spent his time in his extensive library, in his gardens, hunting, and overseeing his holdings. The marchioness, on the other hand, was much more limited in opportunities for amusement.

In her forced isolation her sole amusement was reading romances. Notably, these were in poor English translations, suggesting not only that she did not read French but by extension that she did not have a sufficient education to make use of the other books in the marquis' library. This is a dismal picture of life for the marchioness and highly congruent with the depiction of wifehood in conduct literature. Ironically, it is the marchioness' death which liberates Arabella to have an interesting, adventurous life. If her mother had lived, Arabella would have had a female model of modest (that is socially accepted) behavior to counterbalance that derived from her reading.

The romantic qualities of Arabella's life increase when her father dies when she is seventeen and unmarried. Arabella's uncle is her nominal guardian, who may advise but not control her, thus giving her unusual independence for her age. In short, Arabella lives in a story book setting in extreme seclusion, which allows her reading to have a much stronger effect than it ever could on a reader who lives in the world. As the architect of her upbringing and education, the marquis is as culpable as any book for the mistakes Arabella makes--and ultimately he is responsible for her access to the books as well.

Arabella has a faulty education, is largely independent, and has a guardian who does little in the way of providing guidance. But the native intelligence the heroine possesses leads the reader to believe that it would

be easy to re-educate her, that she has the raw materials for model citizenship but is in need of guidance. The significance of the ability to be re-educated is that the author shows the possibility of there being no permanent consequences of female reading. The ease with which Arabella is re-educated shows that she could have been better educated in the first place, thereby indicting society as complicit in her mistakes. Further, her intelligence and virtue suggest that she deserved a better education initially.

Perhaps to keep her heroine within the pale of polite (and judgmental) society, Lennox's "punishment" for the transgressive imaginations of Arabella is through humiliation. Arabella must be punished because she is willful. But the punishment threatened in conduct literature is spinsterhood. In this novel the heroine is humiliated in front of the man she loves and thus believes she has sunk her chances for marriage. Arabella's "punishment" is recognition of her errors, contrition, and the promise that she will not impose her imagination on the world in the future. Arabella's "reward" for accepting this re-education is marriage--for love--to Glanville.

Thus the author illustrates there is no lasting danger to society from female reading, imagination, and desire. The future husband knows of the transgressions of the heroine, but he is a better reader of individual conduct than are conduct authors themselves. He knows the true

character and worth of Arabella, and knows she is worth marrying.

Further, Arabella is not simply rewarded with any husband. It should be noted that Glanville is a socially approved match--again suggesting not only that the heroine can avoid ill-matches, but can independently achieve desirable ones. Women can be trusted. This complicates what might otherwise appear to be a conformist ending and a diminution of the heroine's agency, as is often suggested. It is a mistake to think that the marriage signals a default comedic or romantic ending, as Lennox is explicit in contrasting the love match of the heroine with the expedient marriage of the supporting characters, Charlotte Glanville and Sir George. The fact that female desire and society's desires (as represented by conduct literature) are congruent, I posit, is a defense of both trusting and fulfilling female desire. The ending suggests that patriarchal society has little to fear from women's reading of fiction or from marriage based on love.

Further challenging conduct literature precepts, Lennox illustrates her heroine's exercise of good judgment when it comes to romance generally. Conduct literature warns repeatedly that women's judgment about suitors cannot be trusted, that it will be based on fancy and whim. Women's judgment is thus dangerous to the economy of patriarchy because it is presumed that women influenced by their

reading will make undesirable matches if left to their own devices.

However, Arabella is pursued by a gold digger, Sir George, whose motive Arabella is too innocent to recognize. Although perverse by twentieth-century standards, this only strengthens the author's defense of female choice. Rather than depicting a worldly heroine who must recognize and be insulted by the motives of such men, the author depicts the heroine as innocent and naive (a conduct literature ideal) while almost instinctively able to defend herself from unsuitable matches. It is worth noting that this tactic also obliquely addresses the issue of arranged marriages by demonstrating that virtuous young women are not in need of parental protection. Because of her innate or "natural" good judgment the heroine is never tempted by the "wrong" man.

Helen Thomson, one of the few scholars who sees some balance in the ending of the Female Quixote, points out the paradox of female-authored and female-centered novels of the eighteenth century:

> No wonder the courtship novel became the dominant form of women's fiction in the eighteenth century, the didacticism serving to consolidate patriarchal authority, but also asserting for women not only a right to choose, but a right to love, and the necessity for careful evaluation. (114, my emphasis)

The Female Quixote, perhaps due to Lennox's desire to position the novel in the respectable mainstream of society, does indeed send mixed messages regarding ideal female

behavior. At first glance, in making any marriage, it would seem that Spacks is correct in saying that in such endings "the laws of the probable . . . triumph over a woman's imagining the possible" (30) because marriage means the cessation of adventure. But this diminution of the character is only true if we anachronistically assume that love and happiness were probable for eighteenth-century women. The ubiquity of love matches in eighteenth-century courtship novels has made us complacent in interpreting changing social practices. Interpreting those novels in light of the competing social paradigms of conduct literature tells us that even these "conventional" endings offered challenges to the status quo. We must recognize that Arabella, along with innumerable eighteenth-century heroines, is indeed rewarded for imagining the possible and not succumbing to the probable.

Chapter 4

MANSFIELD PARK AND THE MORAL INADEQUACY OF THE FEMALE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

> Being now in her twenty-first year, Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with Mr. Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object, it became, by the same rule of moral obligation, her evident duty to marry Mr. Rushworth if she could.
>
> Jane Austen, Mansfield Park

Around the end of the eighteenth century, notes Alasdair MacIntyre, the terminology surrounding goodness becomes muddy: moral becomes synonymous with virtuous, duty with obligation, and dutiful with virtuous (233). Such conflations are important in the history of conduct literature and its ideologies. As demonstrated in the second chapter, persuading young women that marrying well constitutes a duty is a primary concern of "traditional" conduct literature, in the same way that female submission to patriarchal prescriptions of duty also defines morality.

Conduct literature attempts to inculcate a rhetorical and ideological conception of marriage as a female duty in order to help maintain the economic and social orders. In the quotation above, Austen ironically exposes this kind of "logic" by specifying the conflation of moral and financial interests within the institution of marriage: women have a

moral obligation to marry; marriage is a financial arrangement; therefore, women have a moral obligation to marry to economic advantage.

The education required for the successful performance of this duty requires women to learn modesty, passivity, and filial obedience, a combination frequently used in conduct literature to define female virtue or morality. Paradoxically, successful competition on the marriage market requires performance of the female accomplishments designed to attract and focus (male) attention on the "modest" female. This is an incongruence of which even early conduct authors are well aware. Particularly in the last quarter of the eighteenth century this conception of female education was challenged by a wide variety of educational reformers.

For the purposes of this chapter, educational reform is delineated by the desire to give women some degree of intellectual education, as outlined in chapter one. A major argument used by reformist authors for this education is to enable women to practice "rational virtue," to play a more active role in their own and others' moral well-being. Thus we can view diverse late-century conduct authors such as More, Wollstonecraft, Chapone, and Macaulay as sharing "reformist" interests in expanding the education of women, while "traditionalists"--the earlier but still popular Fordyce, Gregory, Halifax, or Gisborne--advocate restricting female education to the accomplishments and obedience prescribed by patriarchy.

At issue between these two educational camps is what Beth Kowaleski-Wallace calls an "emphasis on internalized control" (19-20). The term nods toward the power involved in prescribing female education and female behavior. As demonstrated in the beginning of chapter three, outward conduct (that is, obedience) is not an adequate measure of an individual's acceptance of patriarchal power relations. Intellectual independence and emotional self-reliance are often touted as the internal refuge from the unpleasant demands for outward conduct. In short, traditional conduct literature allows that women are virtuous only insofar as they submit to the demands of patriarchy and deny the self. Intellectual education, to the extent that it develops a rational and independent individual, does not serve patriarchy.

The goal then of many reform-minded conduct authors is to show how the intellectual education of women benefits their morality and, by extension, that of society as a whole, but without essentially altering patriarchal structures. This is a calculatedly moderate position, which Mary Poovey describes Jane Austen occupying, particularly in her later novels: "because she does not wholly reject either social institutions or the power of individual desire, she is able to imagine the possibility of both personal moral education and institutional reform" (208).

The nature of the tangled relationships between female education, duty, virtue, and marriage is the debate into

which Jane Austen steps when making education one of the central themes of Mansfield Park (1814). Because these epistemological concerns are also the primary focus of conduct literature, they can provide a lens for gaining a deeper insight into what is perhaps Austen's most ambiguous novel and least favored heroine.

Many readings of Mansfield Park register the failure of female accomplishments to provide a foundation for moral action, and frequently connect female education to conduct literature. As Warren Roberts points out, this is a recurring concern of Austen's, citing her description of an "old-fashioned" boarding school in Emma, which gives girls "enough accomplishments to make them respectable, but not to give them solid education or develop independence of mind" (qtd in Roberts 163-4). Tracing Austen's attitude toward female education throughout her oeuvre, Roberts concludes that Austen does not criticize the accomplishments in and of themselves, but rather

> the female attitudes that, owing to the context in which they were acquired, were too often present. Girls were not taught these skills to develop their intellect; as female education was not regarded as intrinsically valuable it produced girls whose minds were ill-formed and whose values were shallow. (163)

The congruence between intellect, education, and values is crucial in Mansfield Park, but Poovey agrees with Roberts in reminding us that "Austen does not propose so straightforward a reversal of 'accomplishments' into 'conduct' " (215).

In fact it is this complexity that leads to the frequent identification of Fanny's silent submissiveness as exemplary of ideal conduct literature behavior: Fanny "is passive and submissive, fond of silence and anonymity--everything the conduct-books recommend" (Waldron 261). Mary Waldron, in an otherwise impressive article, is still nonetheless looking for the "attractive nonconformity" of the more typical Austen heroine. What she fails to recognize, to use MacIntyre's adjective, is Fanny's charmless nonconformity.

In Waldron's list of character traits we see her making the same mistake as the characters in Mansfield Park: mistaking silence for submission. This is the case even among scholars who rightly and usefully problematize Fanny's complex behavior as occasionally willful or selfish, debunking her previous identification by scholars as a "paragon of virtue." Identifying Fanny with traditional conduct literature ideals of submissiveness is an error that impedes both our understanding of her character and Austen's critique of female education.

Understanding the paradoxical nature of Fanny's behavior requires a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of the debate in the last quarter of the eighteenth century regarding marriage, duty, virtue, and how each is informed by women's education. Both novels and conduct literature were important venues for this debate. First, however, we must recognize that conduct literature is

not monolithic in its perspectives or recommendations. It is thus simplistic to take Fanny as an unproblematic example of conduct literature ideals, or to say simply that Austen's critique of female education ridicules a socially-sanctioned gap between external behavior and internal beliefs. Recognizing the various positions in the debate leads us to understand that in Mansfield Park Austen provides a positive alternative to the traditional accomplishments, such as drawing, music, and needlework, through advocacy of the rational education of women for the purpose of strengthening morality. Further, she shows that while rational virtue leads to the ultimate individual and social good, it is difficult to achieve, requiring self-sacrifice and submission not to patriarchy but to religious principle.

Throughout most of Mansfield Park both the extended Bertram and Crawford families operate on an unquestioning faith in the social and personal efficacy of the traditional system of female education in the accomplishments, marriage based not solely, but in large part, on financial considerations, and the "duty" of unquestioning obedience to the patriarch. Only Fanny, and to a lesser degree Edmund, recognize the pitfalls of these social practices, perhaps the most important of which is the split between external behavior and internal beliefs. One way to understand this gap is MacIntyre's analysis of Hume's conception of virtues, distinguishing between natural virtues

> which are qualities useful or agreeable or both to the man whose passions and desire are normally constituted--and the artificial virtues which are socially and culturally constructed to inhibit the expression of those passions and desires which would serve what we usually take to be our self-interest in a socially destructive way. (229)

This variance between the internal and external, the individual and society, is both implicitly depicted and overtly discussed throughout Mansfield Park. Austen is concerned with reckoning what society's and the individual's best interests are and what social practices might help them intersect. The answer is emphatically not in the traditions of the marriage market, the accomplishments, or blind obedience in the guise of duty.

Austen demonstrates the dangerous gap between upper class social practices and individual morality in two brief scenes. First, in his criticism of the immodest behavior of some young women after their coming out to society, Edmund suggests that their virtue was no different before, but that their manners then hid their vanity, "'such girls are ill brought up. . . . [T]here is no more real modesty in their behaviour before they appear in public than afterwards,'" their silence only makes it appear so (MP 50). And later, in the context of discussing the influence of the clergy on parishioners, Edmund again distinguishes between the internal and external individual: clergy indeed do not influence public manners, they are not

> 'the arbiters of good breeding, the regulators of refinement and courtesy, the masters of the ceremonies of life. The manners I speak of, might rather be called conduct, perhaps, the result of

> good principles; the effect, in short, of those doctrines which it is their duty to teach and recommend.' (MP 93)

In mentioning doctrine Edmund alludes to the foundation for moral conduct which is lacking in social practices such as marriage rooted in economics, education rooted in the accomplishments, or duty rooted in filial obedience. Religion as a foundation for social duty is an undercurrent running throughout the novel, from Edmund's future occupation, to several of his conversations with Mary, to Sir Thomas's recognition that "something" is wanting in the education of his daughters. But as religious doctrine in itself is not presented as an alternative variety of education in the novel, the question arises what education will provide a moral foundation, or, more fundamentally, what is a moral foundation?

Although Edmund is speaking of the upper class confusion of manners and conduct generally and not his sisters specifically, he nonetheless describes them quite accurately. Their early education has made them vain regarding their learning, which consists largely of rote memorization. They, and all the Bertram's except Edmund, consider this type of learning (rather than moral reasoning) superior education, and at Fanny's expense mistake education for intelligence. Early in the novel the narrator makes clear the mistake of Sir Thomas regarding the education of Maria and Julia, "that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the

less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility" (MP 19), the classical qualities of virtue which Fanny has in abundance.

By the end of the novel, however, Sir Thomas recognizes that both his daughters' education and its desired ends are inadequate. His daughters are "accomplished" in the sense that they obey him (up to a point), desire to marry well, and can compete socially in the marriage market. But it is only after Maria's adultery and Julia's elopement that Sir Thomas understands that an education focused on obedience, the accomplishments, and the marriage market foster an internal/external split in the morality and behavior of his daughters. Their socially-sanctioned behavior hides tremendous willfulness based largely on self-gratification and a lack of any feeling but fear toward himself:

> Something must have been wanting within. . . . He feared that principle, active principle, had been wanting, that they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. They had been instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice. To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments--the authorised object of their youth--could have had no useful influence that way, no moral effect on the mind. He had meant them to be good, but his cares had been directed to the understanding and manners, not the disposition; and of the necessity of self-denial and humility. . . . (463)

Sir Thomas wanted and expected conduct based on external manners to function as an internal moral foundation in addition to its social/fiscal function. Put another way, he wrongly believed that manners signify morals. What he

learns is that successful navigation of the upper classes of society is no guarantee of moral behavior. This revelation unmasks what MacIntyre calls "counterfeit virtues": "Morality in Jane Austen is never the mere inhibition and regulation of the passions. . . . Morality is rather meant to educate the passions but the outward appearance of morality may always disguise uneducated passions" (241, emphasis added). The novel closes with Sir Thomas's own re-education about upper-class social practices regarding the marriage market, female accomplishments, and female obedience because of the failure of all these institutions to supply a basis for moral action.

Clearly the novel is critical of this version of social and familial relationships and the female education necessary to maintain it. Because Fanny does have a different sense of morality and duty than the other female characters, she is thus justly perceived as their alternative, particularly because, as noted above, she exhibits some traditional conduct literature behavior. But we cannot have it both ways. Why would Austen create a character who embodies the ideal of the very system she is critiquing? How can we reconcile Fanny's ideal external behavior, her independence of mind, her virtue, and Austen's critique of female education based on the accomplishments? The answer lies in recognizing that Mansfield Park does not simply criticize female education in the accomplishments, but models the same kind of alternative intellectual

education for women that is found in much reformist conduct literature and which in both places is connected to a religious foundation.

As discussed in chapter one, a significant number of conduct authors demand the intellectual education of women as an alternative to the accomplishments and unquestioning submission to father or husband. This call for educational reform increases throughout the century, gaining particular strength in its last quarter and on into the nineteenth century.

One of the most common justifications for the intellectual education of women is what I will call "rational virtue." This argument, based in religion, claims that virtue does not arise from mere obedience. Rather, virtue requires consciousness of purpose and active moral choice. The ability to make virtuous choices rests in the development of rational judgment, which directly calls for the need for intellectual education. Thus "reformist" conduct literature attempts to redefine virtue to include not only modesty and obedience but also rational self-determination. This expanded definition links one's internal belief system with one's external behavior. Practicing active virtue requires discernment, judgment, and, most radically, independence of mind. This last presents a significant challenge to the patriarchal status quo and is one reason that the intellectual education of women was so controversial.

Because defenders of the status quo fear independent "masculine" women, many reformist conduct authors are careful to base their calls for the intellectual education of women in this idea of "rational virtue." Some even tie the practice of active virtue to the disposition of women's immortal souls, making it a moral imperative for men to better educate the women in their charge.

Significantly, the results of practicing rational virtue may not be readily discernable from simple obedient submissiveness. For example, the patriarch expecting submission to his will, let us say in prohibiting gambling, may be asking an action that is rationally virtuous. In this case the rationally virtuous female would behave the same way whichever rule she were following, her own or the patriarch's. Rather than the outcome, what is different in such a situation is the analysis and intention. Thus the outward expression of virtue may remain the same, while the motivation will spring internally from the self rather than externally from the patriarch.

For this very reason reformist authors commonly make the point that the intellectual education of women will have little material effect on social structures: intellectual education will not redefine rational virtue, only increase the number of people practicing it. Maria Edgeworth, for example, in her argument for the rational education of women tries to make independence of mind seem less appealing than either men or women often claim it is: "The belief that

pleasure is necessarily connected with the mere exercise of free-will, is a false and pernicious association of ideas" (52). In fact, Edgeworth's outline of rational female education would prevent a woman from

> acquiring any unconquerable prejudice in favour of her own wishes, or any unreasonable desire to influence the opinions of others. . . . Power over the minds of others will not . . . be an object of ambition to women of enlarged understandings (55).

Women will be educated, but that will not affect domestic relations with men. In short, power does not mean happiness, the latter of which is "the grand object of life" (Edgeworth 58); the way to happiness is through prudence and virtue, not dominance.[1]

Remarkably, surrounded by a family that privileges the accomplishments, Fanny, an autodidact, manages to achieve a version of this intellectual education. Thus Fanny functions as an alternative to the other characters not just in demeanor or morality, but in their source, education. That she does not succumb to the Bertram's paradigm of female excellence is due to a combination of factors that combine to keep her separate: class, her innate

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[1]The two women in Mansfield Park who do try to dominate men, Maria Bertram and Mary Crawford, "of course" end up alone and unhappy. On Mary Crawford's challenge to patriarchy see Eileen Gilooly and Maaja Stewart. Although outside the scope of this chapter, Stewart makes the important point that in Austen "wit is assigned to the women whose 'education' has corrupted their nature"; Mary Crawford's exclusion from Mansfield represents the repression of potential female power that could subvert male authority (133-4).

"sensibility," her relationship with Edmund as an educational mentor, and even her cold room that she fills with books.

Class is a determining factor in Fanny's education in a number of ways. Despite a decade of living in the same house with her cousins, her sense of being different never leaves her. Most of the Bertram clan encourages the belief that she is both inferior and beholden to them. Mrs. Norris and Sir Thomas from the beginning wish to maintain class distinctions in spite of Fanny's being a relative, what Maaja Stewart calls, in another context, "class formation at the expense of kinship relationships" (131). To Mrs. Norris Sir Thomas raises the question of how to maintain class distinctions among the three girls, revealing why his moral system is bankrupt:

> 'how to preserve in the minds of my daughters the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a Miss Bertram. . . . [T]hey cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different.' (MP 11)

Mrs. Norris is, of course, only too willing to comply, but without regard to the admonition regarding Fanny's feelings. Throughout their relationship Mrs. Norris treats Fanny more like a servant than a niece, including the recommendation that Fanny be put in an attic room "close by the housemaids" (10).

Maria and Julia are astonished that Fanny does not want to learn the accomplishments of music and drawing. The

narrator does not comment on the source of this eccentricity in Fanny, but shows the blindness of the Bertrams in believing Fanny ignorant. Indeed, Fanny is the feminine model of excellence despite Mrs. Norris's comment that her lack of interest in music and drawing

> 'is very stupid indeed, and shows a great want of genius and emulation. But all things considered, I do not know whether it is not as well that it should be so, for . . . it is not at all necessary that she should be as accomplished as you are;--on the contrary, it much more desirable that there should be a difference.' (MP 19)

Mrs. Norris's interest in maintaining differences stems from two interrelated sources. One is that the female accomplishments serve as class markers, signifying that a family has both the means to employ governesses and masters and the leisure time for lessons and practice. The second is that the accomplishments are the socially sanctioned method for putting upper class young women forward on the marriage market. Fanny's lack of education in this realm both maintains class distinctions and lessens the possibility of her competing with Maria and Julia for a husband.

The second factor that makes Fanny's education unique is what could be called her natural sensibilities. The contrast between the natural and refined critiques education as creating veneer, but also as removing untutored goodness. The narrator makes much of Fanny's sensitivity, which encompasses her feelings of modesty and shyness, and, just as importantly, an appreciation of nature that is shared by

no other woman in the novel. Because this set of qualities is largely innate, this factor is as notable for what education does not do as much as for what it does do.

The narrator is clear that it is a strength of Fanny's that she is not educated out of either her own honest modesty or her appreciation of nature. Austen repeatedly contrasts Fanny's naturalness to the educated (that is, false) modesty of the Bertram sisters, who "were too much used to company and praise, to have any thing like natural shyness" (MP 12). Years later a comparison of the girls shows that little has changed. When Sir Thomas leaves for Antigua it is revealed that none of the three really love or will miss him. Julia and Maria feel only relief at being liberated from his oppressive presence. Fanny, however, is sensible of what she should feel. While she is not hypocrite enough to pretend she loves him, she grieves that she is unable to fulfill her duty (MP 32-3).

Sir Thomas criticizes Fanny in this scene by suggesting that education has not "improved" her and that she is at sixteen too much like she was at ten (MP 33). But the reader is meant to recognize the dismaying irony of his criticism, for throughout there is a contrast between natural or true feeling and the falseness of manners that even Sir Thomas recognizes in the end. The distinction between sincerity and manner(ism)s is reiterated when Edmund tries unsuccessfully to dissuade his siblings from acting a play because they will make poor actors, for they " 'have

all the disadvantages of education and decorum to struggle through' " (MP 124). In short, the modesty that is natural to Fanny has become unnatural to the Bertrams.

Fanny displays her appreciation of nature in one scene in particular that provides a contrast even to Edmund, to whom she credits her knowledge. Edmund and Fanny gaze out a window at twilight while the other young people are at the piano singing. Referring to the scenery rather than the music Fanny exclaims, " 'Here's harmony! . . . Here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry only can attempt to describe' " (MP 111). Although her rapture may be due as much to the close proximity of Edmund as to the landscape, the scene nonetheless throws a new light on her unwillingness to learn the accomplishments of music and drawing: an education in the accomplishments would be an education that rooted out the superlative natural and replaced it with but a poor imitation.

Though Fanny attributes her interest in nature to Edmund, the student has surpassed the master in appreciation of the real over imitation.[2] When the two agree to step

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[2]The narrator makes much of Edmund's intellectual guidance of Fanny, pointing out four times that "she has been 'formed' by Edmund, who has told her not only what to think but also what to feel" (Stewart 134). While Edmund does influence Fanny, Jane Spencer does a nice job of examining this "mentor/lover" relationship and shows that it is Fanny who guides Edmund throughout much of the novel (170), due largely to what MacIntyre calls Fanny's constancy, which she possesses to a much greater degree than Edmund, despite her lapses.

outside for some star-gazing Edmund gets distracted by the singers before the plan can be executed. He literally turns his back to the window, giving up the natural scene entirely, rather than, say, having the music accompany his appreciation of it. To the "mortification" of Fanny, he definitively gives up one for the other, just as he is giving up his star-gazing with Fanny for the music of Mary Crawford. In the contest between nature/Fanny and art(ifice)/Mary, Edmund clearly makes the wrong choice, even though he claims to pity those who do not have an appreciation of nature.

This contrast between Fanny and Mary is extended when they are sitting alone together in the shrubbery at Mansfield parsonage. Fanny describes herself as rhapsodizing over the evergreens, and the stimulus to the mind that being in the natural world provides (208-9), while Mary can contribute nothing to this line of thought. She remains at times completely silent, at others interested only in herself, " 'To say the truth . . . I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it' " (209-10). Even though this is a joke on Mary's part, that she <u>should</u> joke at this moment is a stark contrast to Fanny's seriousness.

The third factor that makes Fanny's education unique is the degree to which she acquires an intellectual education. Regardless of whether Austen intended it or not, Fanny's education parallels many reformist conduct literature

recommendations very closely, and may at least indicate how much these ideas were "in the air" during this period. We know that Fanny learned French and history from Miss Lee, and that she also learned Italian and geography. What really sets Fanny apart, however, is her association with Edmund. Not only does he act as her intellectual mentor, but the association is so successful that she becomes an autodidact and then that relatively rare thing, a female-to-female mentor to her sister Susan.

Miss Lee is dismissed when Fanny is fifteen, but the didactic relationship between Edmund and Fanny is cemented well before that time. He is the only member of the extended family to recognize her intelligence and support her "fondness for reading, which properly directed, must be an education in itself" (MP 22), a refrain echoed again and again in conduct literature. Edmund takes enough interest in Fanny so that "he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment; he made reading useful by talking to her about what she read, and heightened its attractions by judicious praise" (MP 22).

This identification of education with reading is a common one in conduct literature and is used both positively and negatively for the same reason: it opens up the possibility of autodidacticism, a necessity among isolated women as it is with the isolated character of Fanny who loves knowledge for the sake of knowledge (MP 418). Her

unique education is emphasized when she takes over the abandoned school room. The narrator pointedly notes that the room had become "useless" to Maria and Julia, while Fanny, whom Austen could have given refuge anywhere in the house, uses it to continue her education despite the discomfort of not having a fire, a hindrance that serves to show Fanny's determination and dedication (MP 151).

The most important aspect of the room is Fanny's books, "of which she had been a collector, from the first hour of her commanding a shilling" (MP 151). The only texts we know to be there are given Edmund's seal of approval: a travel journal about China, Crabbe's Tales, and the Idler (MP 156). More is said about Fanny's reading when she begins to educate Susan. The description of this new didactic relationship says as much about Fanny as about her pupil.

Fanny takes her role as mentor seriously, and her yearning for books is so "potent and stimulative" that she views subscribing to a circulating library (that would be full of novels) as a bold step, awed to have the choice of which books to read left entirely to herself. Fanny proves deserving of the liberty, for her interest is in generating in Susan her own "taste for the biography and poetry which she delighted in herself" (398). Notably, there is never mention of Fanny reading novels, a move which obviates any debate regarding the propriety of reading fiction, or, significantly, the common conduct literature warning that men must supervise (that is, select) what women read.

Finally, in these scenes at both Mansfield and Portsmouth, we see intellectual employment as a source of solace and refuge for Fanny. It does not always work, as when she is waiting for news of her cousins, but that is hardly the point. Rather, the focus is on the attempt and its potential for good, namely finding an inner peace when the world is not accommodating to one's desires. For Fanny, who feared hearing of the engagement of Edmund and Mary, "if reading could banish the idea for even half an hour, it was something gained" (398). This illustrates nicely the conduct literature argument for finding a comfort in intellectual pursuits that is not available elsewhere.

Thus we see Fanny in terms of class, her innate appreciation of natural beauty, and her love of learning. She is also modest, self-effacing, and has a keen sense of obligations due to others. This combination of traits makes her unique in the novel. If these characteristics were the sum of her character we might evaluate the novel's comment on female education as relatively unproblematic: a moderate position showing the benefits of educating women without seriously altering their roles, demeanor, or relationships with men.

However, as scholars have shown, Fanny's character is more complex than this,[3] and so too is the issue of

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[3]Despite my disagreement with Waldron on the point of Fanny's submissiveness, her article is extremely useful for both Austen's attitude toward the evangelical movement, and for overviews of the scholarly receptions of Fanny's character and the conclusion of the novel.

education. As Jane Waldron points out in a comparison of Mansfield Park with Hannah More's Coelebs in Search of a Wife, rather than being purely didactic Mansfield Park is more realistic than much didactic fiction (More's Coelebs in particular) in that it is not peopled by ideal characters. Thus Fanny is "real" in the sense that she is not a "picture of perfection." In spite of being shy, retiring, and self-effacing she nonetheless has desire and will. These last characteristics often do not mesh easily with the first three for Fanny or for the reader. So the question arises of how to read her desire and will in terms of the novel's critique of education.

One solution is that Austen is critiquing the kind of rationality promoted by reformist conduct literature as well as the accomplishments promoted by traditional conduct literature. Austen demonstrates the difficulties inherent in practicing rational virtue. Just as there is an internal/external split between the manners and beliefs of the Bertram sisters, so there is one with Fanny. But the nature of the split is different, and it shows Fanny engaged in a series of moral struggles between desire and virtue: loving her uncle, wearing Mary's gold chain, acting in the play, sitting in judgment of Mary's impiety, refusing Henry Crawford.

Not only is Fanny not perfect, she is often not happy. Repeatedly we are shown her struggle to overcome her unhappiness, to bend her will by rational employment. She

often fails. As Mary Poovey points out, this failure is definitely not depicted in reformist conduct literature: "In presenting the psychological and social origins of propriety and the costs that it can exact, Austen alerts her readers to complexities of the ethical code that the conservative moralists overlooked. But Austen does so in order to endorse this code" for the purpose of generating in the reader sympathy for Fanny (217-8).

Poovey's analysis is right on both counts. Because it always involves choice, virtue is difficult and we are meant to sympathize with Fanny's struggle to attain it. I think, however, that Poovey overemphasizes the importance of "feelings" in her analysis. Fanny is no doubt exquisitely sensitive, but the problem with Poovey's argument is that feelings do not prove any more of a reliable foundation for rational virtue than the accomplishments do. As Edmund's blindness to Mary's character and to the propriety of his acting demonstrate, even the most virtuous of characters can be misled by following her feelings. The only reliable guide is rationality--regardless of its costs. This is Austen's response to those who either deny the existence of feelings and desire or who promote unthinking obedience.

In much reformist conduct literature rationality is held out by educational reformers as the panacea to every unhappiness women suffer (see chapter five). There is no indication that rational engagement is difficult or anything but one hundred percent effective in allaying personal

unhappiness. In contrast, this novel demonstrates how difficult trying to practice rationality--rational virtue--within society can be. It can mean both self denial and risking alienation from others through displeasing them by rejecting "duty." Doing "right" can be a lonely and unhappy experience if society defines duty differently than the individual does.

Because Austen works in a relatively more realistic than didactic mode Fanny must struggle, must be unhappy, must be human and make mistakes. In fact, to fulfill the legacy of her education and to show that she does indeed have the moral foundation other women lack, she must have the opportunity to act independently, to be tested. This, too, is a crucial fulfillment of reformist conduct literature's premise that the purpose of intellectual education is active virtue.

Fanny's independent streak surfaces early. When she is fifteen and is threatened with the possibility of going to live with her Aunt Norris she tries to forestall Edmund's approval of the scheme by telling him that, " 'though you have often persuaded me into being reconciled to things that I disliked at first, you will not be able to do it now' " (MP 25). This does not stop Edmund from trying to convince Fanny of the plan's efficacy, but still she resists. In fact, she tries to ameliorate her disagreement by maintaining her position while simultaneously acknowledging she should yield to him. "I cannot see things as you do;

but I ought to believe you to be right rather than myself' " (MP 27). One could almost call this a lie: if she really thought virtue demanded that she should yield, she would. Fanny may not put up a fight regarding where she will live, but she will not be told what to think about it. This act serves as a maintenance of identity in the face of the Bertrams's, including Edmund's, demands for total obeisance, while her rhetoric tries to preserve the patriarchal nature of their relationship in the face of her independent dissent.

What makes Fanny's independence of mind acceptable in this deeply patriarchal household (and coincidentally by the lights of traditional conduct literature) is that she seldom expresses her opinion, and then usually only when asked. In fact, her lack of consequence at Mansfield is such that "few young ladies of eighteen could be less called on to speak their opinion than Fanny" (48). Amongst the self-centered inhabitants of Mansfield this unsurprisingly leads to the conclusion that she has no opinions, no desires, no will.

Because Fanny is often obedient the Bertram's believe they know her, having confused silence or timidity with submission. When Sir Thomas interrupts Fanny's enjoyment of the ball by telling her with the "advice of absolute power" (280) to go to bed before she is ready the narrator suggests that his ulterior motive is to show Mr. Crawford that Fanny would make an excellent wife "by shewing her persuadableness" (281). Here, as elsewhere, Sir Thomas

completely misreads the source of her persuasion. Going to bed at a reasonable hour may go against her wishes, but it is a rational request, and therefore Sir Thomas's authority as head of the household should not be challenged.

The Bertrams do not suspect that Fanny can exercise independent judgment. But Fanny is often willing to judge where she is unwilling to speak. The family's complacency regarding Fanny's obedience leaves them wholly unprepared for the ultimate independent act: refusing Henry Crawford's proposal of marriage.

The proposal scene reveals just how strong "timid" Fanny's will and confidence are. She recognizes immediately that Crawford is trying to manipulate her by doing a favor for her brother and then proposing to her at the moment she feels the most gratitude. Not only does she recognize the ploy, and so remain unmoved, she is more "absolutely angry" than at any point in the novel. Her language is equally strong: "such were his habits, that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil," the proposal is "inexcusable, incomprehensible" (302). Fanny is "insulted" by the proposal of this man who is her social and economic superior, the man the Bertram sisters have fought over, because she knows herself to be his moral superior.

In refusing to accept the judgment of every other member of the family, including Edmund, Fanny's "diseased" judgment fulfills every dire prophecy of conservative conduct literature: when women are educated they become

self-centered, irrational, and disregard the advice of their "friends" who have the wisdom of experience and disinterest on their side. In the words of Sir Thomas, Fanny's decision is "self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful," and had his own daughters acted similarly he would accuse them of " 'a gross violation of duty and respect' " (319).

For Fanny to maintain her position in the face of this onslaught does indeed demand tremendous independence. But because the reader understands the foundation of her principles--her rational virtue--we are meant to see not only her strength but its cost. At this juncture Fanny is in the uncomfortable position of knowing and judging better than Sir Thomas, who has yet to recognize Henry's weak principles or his own ill-founded ones. Fanny has done right; her education has been justified.

But Fanny is not simply disobedient or ungrateful. The financially motivated Bertrams throw her principles into high relief. In the case of Sir Thomas Fanny had hoped that "the simple acknowledgement of settled dislike" for Henry would be enough to make Sir Thomas cease pressing her, but "to her infinite grief she found it was not" (318). Even her Aunt Bertram, so lazy and selfish that this is virtually the first time she has ever offered a "rule of conduct" to Fanny, is motivated by a "good estate": " 'it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptionable offer as this' " (333).

In the face of such admonishments Fanny chooses not to reveal her real reason for refusing Crawford. In saying that she does not "like" Crawford well enough to marry him (315), Fanny trusts the Bertram's not to force marriage upon her. But she trusts that good will only so far; she dares not tell them she believes herself morally superior to Crawford. Further, she dare not reveal that cardinal sin of conduct literature: being in love with a man, Edmund, to whom she is not betrothed.

Even so, her resistance infuriates Sir Thomas, who accuses her, in classic conduct book fashion, of a lack of respect for the judgment of her betters: " 'you can be wilful [sic] and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you--without even asking their advice' " (319). He even goes so far in his relentless pursuit of economic interests as to try to make her feel guilty for not thinking of the financial benefits the Price family would reap if she were to marry Crawford. Even Edmund is more interested in rationalizing his own questionable behavior in acting the play, and, even more importantly, rationalizing the questionable morals of both Crawfords than he is in seeing Henry's character accurately (335, 348-9).

Of course, Fanny is vindicated in the end. MacIntyre observes that in refusing Henry's proposal "she places the danger of losing her soul before the reward of gaining what

for her would be a whole world. She pursues virtue for the sake of a certain kind of happiness and not for its utility" (242). Fanny does not want a reformed rake (a commonly expressed fear in conduct literature regarding young women who choose for themselves), she suffers disapprobation, even the wrath, of the people to whom she owes the most and loves the best, and she risks never marrying, for there are no other prospects on her horizon, despite her love for Edmund.

Despite the Bertrams's misperception of a gap in Fanny's internal and external behavior, ultimately there is no gap in her principles, no matter how she may vacillate or struggle in trying to do right. Her judgment of Henry and Mary, and even of Julia and Maria, is ultimately vindicated. She is the only character who has the correct combination of values, taste, judgement, and self-denial for the sake of principles. She is willing to submit to a father-figure or lover/mentor when they are rational and moral, but has the strength to act independently when they are not.

This strength exemplifies active virtue. It dramatizes the reason why women must be rationally educated. "Virtue in the individual is nothing more or less than allowing the public good to provide the standard for individual behavior. The virtues are those dispositions which uphold that overriding allegiance" (MacIntyre 236-7). Happiness for the virtuous is when individual desire and social demands (based in rationality) coincide. Of course, what Austen points out in Mansfield Park through her critiques of various social

constructs--female education, upper-class immorality and greed, demands for unquestioning obedience to a patriarch, and marriage motivated by money--is that sometimes the public does not know what its own best interests are. Social practices can be perverse. It is at that point that the virtuous individual, male or female, must lead rather than follow.

Chapter 5

MARY HAYS: USING SENTIMENTALITY IN THE SERVICE OF VIRTUE

> 'The first lesson of enlightened reason, the great fountain of heroism and virtue, the principle by which alone man can become what man is capable of being, is independence.'
>
> Mary Hays, Memoirs of Emma Courtney

Throughout the history of conduct literature for women the central organizing concept in women's education was virtue. Virtue was used concurrently by both conservative and liberal writers for their different ends. The revolutionary moment of the 1790s occasioned challenges to popular but conservative conduct literature constructions of ideal virtuous women as passive/submissive "unproductive vessels of morality" (Todd 202). In contrast to this ideal, Mary Hays, in her conduct book Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous (1793) and sentimental novel the Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796), articulates a model of rational/active virtue in support of radical social changes in the status of women. True to her revolutionary values, Hays's tactic for improving the status of women was to redefine virtue or rationality for society generally, not for women only. Her vision requires that men not simply tolerate changes in women, but modify their own behavior.

Although in Letters and Essays Hays's positions on issues such as female education, marriage, and employment are both more strident and more daring than most earlier conduct authors who advocated intellectual education for women, their foundation in rational virtue means that they are not essentially different in kind. Hays's paradigm of female virtue and the education necessary to attain it becomes distinct with her first novel, Emma Courtney. But in a twist within literature advocating rationality, Emma Courtney is also in the tradition of sentimental novels, allying emotional sensitivity with virtue. By the 1790s the sentimental was falling into disfavor, in part because it was being relegated by critics of female authors and novels to the "irrational" realm of emotion. In a bold move Hays co-opts the genre in order to validate emotion.

Briefly, Emma Courtney, in epistolary form, combines polemic and loose autobiography with the conventions of the sentimental novel. Based in part on Hays's apparently unrequited love for the radical Cambridge mathematician William Frend, Emma Courtney (Hays) relates her unsuccessful pursuit of Augustus Harley (Frend), and the advice of her philosophical mentor Mr. Francis (William Godwin). Emma, motherless, is raised largely by relatives, although at fourteen her father steps in to supplement her intellectual education in order to counteract what he believes is a dangerous tendency toward overindulgence in emotion, or what Hays calls sensibility. It is through him that Emma is

introduced to two of the most influential people in her life, Mr. Francis and the young Mr. Montague.

A series of deaths leaves Emma with an unusual education, little experience of the world, and not enough money to live on independently. Forced to live with her uncle Morton's family, Emma learns to regret that because she is a middle-class woman she has no economic means to support herself independently, for even a governess must live in the household of another. Marriage is the only means of escape, which Emma refuses in the form of Mr. Montague for lack of love.

Emma falls in love with Augustus Harley, whose inheritance is contingent upon his remaining single for life. When he evinces no more than friendly interest in her, Emma does the unthinkable and declares her love for him and her willingness to forego his inheritance. This unconventional act, based upon her judgment of Harley's virtue and her desire to be his wife, becomes the centerpiece of the novel's critique of social mores and the need for women to be rationally educated. Harley is distant, but they maintain a mentor/student relationship for years until she learns that he is secretly married and has two children.

When Emma suddenly finds herself bankrupt with no hope of support from friends or relatives she decides to marry Montague after all, with his full knowledge of her motivation. When Harley and his wife die Emma is left to

raise their son, Augustus. This arrangement torments Montague, and, when he is accused subsequently of killing his bastard child by a servant, he commits suicide. Emma raises the young Emma and Augustus as brother and sister, but with secret hopes they will marry. She educates them according to her philosophy of equality and revolutionary virtue, until the death of young Emma at the age of fourteen. This leaves Emma, as the sole adult survivor, the mentor of young Augustus.

As discussed in previous chapters, many advocates of intellectual education for women from at least Mary Astell onward tried to turn intellectual education into a moral imperative by connecting rationality and virtue. The practice called rational or active virtue requires both intellectual education and independence of mind: judgment by the individual based on intellect and experience. But while this argument runs throughout women's educational writings of the eighteenth century it was eclipsed in popularity by a submissive/passive model of virtue which subordinates the individual female mind to a demand for blind obedience to the patriarch. This passivity is what Mary Wollstonecraft calls the "negative virtues" of "patience, docility, good humour, and flexibility; virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect" (Rights of Woman 58), while Anne-Thérèse Lambert makes a similar list of what she calls the "difficult," "painful," "obscure" virtues (141).

During the revolutionary period educational reform was often viewed as the primary method for altering the conceptions of female virtue that demanded passivity and subordination in women. Early in the Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) Wollstonecraft lays out the purpose and type of education she advocates as leading to intellectual independence, and thus active virtue, when she recommends

> exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. (21)

From the perspective of patriarchy, Wollstonecraft here gets to the heart of the danger of active rather than passive virtue: rationality by definition entails independence. Therefore, giving women an education that fosters rationality tacitly endorses their acting independently. This may not only change women's interpersonal relationships with men, but also, to use a popular eighteenth-century term, their social sphere. As Mary Hays puts it, men are afraid that "by enlarging and ennobling our minds, we shall be undomesticated, and unfitted . . . for mere household drudges" (L&E 26).

Earlier and less revolutionary authors minimize the potential of female intellectual education to change social relationships by ignoring the implication of independence or by suggesting that male and female interests are so closely

aligned that there would be no material change in behavior by giving women intellectual education. Sarah Pennington reminds her daughters that, assuming the husband acts with Christian virtue, the woman must

> strictly perform the duty of a wife, namely, to love, to honour, and obey. The two first articles are a tribute so indispensably due to merit, that they must be paid by inclination; and they naturally lead to the performance of the last, which will not only be an easy, but a pleasing task. (103)

Pennington's argument exemplifies that of early advocates of female education who suggest, implausibly, that the results of women's education will be super-private--that is, completely self-contained, or, if externalized at all, a relationship between the female individual and God. Anne-Thérèse Lambert, another early author, is not alone in recommending independence as emotional self-sufficiency:

> the greatest science is to know how to be independent. . . . Secure yourself a retreat and place of refuge in your own breast. . . . When the world is less necessary to you, it will have less power over you. (162)

For Lambert independence has something of a different meaning than for Wollstonecraft and Hays, who emphasize the individual in relation to society.

The purpose of Wollstonecraft's "perfectibility" argument in Rights of Woman is change for all of society, not only the (internal female) individual. Her "revolution in female manners" is not about how to serve tea, play the piano, or converse with servants, but rather about recasting woman's roles or "spheres" in society, for which manners had

become a synecdoche. Wollstonecraft wishes to change the concept of virtue itself so that women can practice rational virtue not only internally in relationship to God or within the family, but externally within the larger community.

Katharine Rogers suggests that the prose work of Mary Hays can be seen as a complement to Wollstonecraft's; Wollstonecraft is the better theorist (131-2), while Hays's forte is demonstrating the practical consequences of revolutionary theory within the home (132-3). That leap, from theory to practice, proves a sticking point in the text of Rights of Women, for it has become commonplace to observe that it advocates rationality to such a degree that it denies emotion, passion, sexuality. That is, essential elements of human experience are unaccounted for in Wollstonecraft's model of social relationships. Therefore, while Rights of Woman is arguably the single most important text regarding women's rights and education in the period, it is in a sense incomplete. (Such arguments do not account for either Wollstonecraft's often passionate language in the book or for her ambivalence toward some of Rousseau's more romantic views.) Wollstonecraft's novel, Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman, may be seen as a partial redress of this dearth of emotion. But we can also turn to the early work in didactic fiction of Wollstonecraft's close friend and disciple, Mary Hays, to find the blending of rationality and passion that portrays humans more fully than rationality alone can do.

According to Gina Luria, Hays was a Rational Dissenter who moved in the highest intellectual circles of the Unitarian Church, including her association with the literary society of the publisher Joseph Johnson. She was deeply affected by Rights of Woman and sought out Wollstonecraft soon after its publication. Meanwhile Hays also became a close acquaintance of William Godwin, who encouraged her to write Emma Courtney, and to whom she introduced Mary Wollstonecraft in 1796. Hays was present at Wollstonecraft's death in 1797, and was asked by Godwin to write her obituary. The echoes of both Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's philosophies ring throughout Hays's work.

Hays published Letters and Essays the year after Rights of Woman and after consulting Wollstonecraft on the manuscript (Luria 8). Though Letters and Essays was inspired by Rights of Woman it is, as a whole, a much less revolutionary work. Even so, Wollstonecraft is a palpable presence throughout this work (as in Emma Courtney) not only in the many quotations from Rights of Woman, but also in the unattributed echoes of Wollstonecraft's phrases and in oblique addresses to Wollstonecraft as reader. It is not until Emma Courtney that Hays fully embraces many of the revolutionary tenets of Rights of Woman. As an inheritor of Wollstonecraft then, Hays's contribution to discourse on women's rights and education in these two works is not so much original thought but original mode of presentation. What Rogers claims for Hays's nonfiction prose--that it

works out much of the theory at the practical level--can be made for the fiction as well. In Emma Courtney, the more revolutionary of the two works considered here, Hays's embrace of sensibility is an answer to the rationality that Wollstonecraft prescribes in Rights of Woman.

Given Hays's repeated attempts to meld sensibility and reason and her argument that this melding would have significant social consequences (a redefinition of virtue for both men and women, for one), it seems incongruous for Janet Todd to identify novels of sensibility as simply attempts to validate (feminine) emotion. Todd argues that authors of sentimental novels "were trying, through self-pitying contemplation" to gain "a new notion of female significance based merely on self-consciousness, desire, and self-expressiveness. In this effort sensibility is unsettled but not in the end opposed and the route is not out of but into its excess" (237).

In Todd's formulation of Hays's use of sensibility in Emma Courtney Todd persists in following exactly the formulation Hays was trying to resist: the dichotomizing of reason and sensibility and of female and male. This leads Todd particularly astray in reading the novel's ending, which she describes as a "trajectory of misery and death" and a "self-destroying impasse" due to excessive sentiment (234). Granted, Todd can on occasion acknowledge more subtlety on Hays's part:

> Emma is clearly not the rationalist ideal, the woman of sense from the Rights of Woman, but a

> woman wanting passion on her own terms, emotional, introspective, and demanding. Implicitly she seems to be qualifying the Wollstonecraftian feminist ideal, urging a place for the affections within radical discourse. (246)

Nonetheless, elsewhere Todd insists on the sentimental/rational binary to negate the possibility of Hays's use of sensibility in the hope of social development (228, 246), a move that also narrowly circumscribes Wollstonecraft's proposals.

In short, Todd conveniently does not account for the ending of the novel. Death is indeed rampant, but it is not all consuming. Although Emma is never rewarded with the marriage to Harley that she so desires, she lives to tell the tale. Emma is clear that she does not repent her actions or her principles, and she remains firm in her belief that through the blending of rationality and sensibility society is improvable. She thus gives rationality pride of place, but still accounts for "the human heart."

In the end Emma does consider herself a "moral Martyr" (a role she had resisted). But because she maintains her belief in improvability her martyrdom has not been in vain. Furthermore, despite the deaths of three of the four people closest to her, she still gets the opportunity to instruct the next generation. Her legacy will live on, a far cry from Todd's claim that Wollstonecraft's and Hays's novels find "no exit from the political impasse of sensibility; women will cling to the fantasy of romantic love simply

because the world is indeed a prison . . ." (252). Hays leaves Emma much more hopeful both about the future of society and her own significance in shaping the reformation she sees dawning: the efforts of moral martyrs will not be lost.

> Posterity will plant the olive and the laurel, and consecrate their mingled branches to the memory of such, who, daring to trace, to their springs, errors the most hoary, and prejudices the most venerated, emancipate the human mind from the trammels of superstition, and teach it, <u>that its true dignity and virtue, consist in being free</u>. (2.219)

Even the more recent work of Eleanor Ty, while acknowledging that in the course of the novel the moral becomes "increasingly contradictory and ambiguous," focuses on the female rather than the more universally social concerns. Ty suggests "the unstated but undoubtedly calculated thesis of the work seems to be the fatal repercussions of repression the eighteenth-century middle-class woman" (46). Certainly Ty's analysis of the centrality of the repressions of women in <u>Emma Courtney</u> is accurate, but as with Todd's, it fails to emphasize adequately Hays's interest in the reform of society as a whole rather than reforming women's place within the status quo, which is one of the defining characteristics of revolutionary authors. While Emma often talks about vanquishing emotion, she also elsewhere and repeatedly holds emotion close to her. It is clearly a mistake to understand vanquishing as eradication.

Ty is undoubtedly correct when she claims that Emma Courtney created an "outrage" because its heroine crosses "the boundaries allocated to women by the male-dominated culture" (56), but what about Hays's depiction of that male culture? At the end of the novel it is the men who are dead because it is the men who must be punished. It is a man who secretly marries, who takes money to which he is not entitled, and another man who has an illicit affair and who murders his offspring.

Emma repeatedly expresses disgust with what she perceives as a lack of virtue in society. Her expectations are continually disappointed. She is chided by Mr. Francis for having unrealistic expectations, which, despite his avowed belief in human improvability, is tantamount to suggesting that she must accept the status quo (EC 1.89-96). But with true revolutionary fervor Emma refuses. Moreover, for all that Emma respects and admires Francis, she never seriously considers the idea that she should lower her standards of social virtue. Though she may temporarily despair at what she perceives to be the dearth of virtue in the world, ultimately she maintains her hope. Emma's statement that she wants escape from "from the tyranny of the passions, restored to reason, to the vigor of his mind, to self controul, to the dignity of active, intrepid virtue" (2.220) needs a more subtle reading than Ty's suggestion that Emma advocates eradicating emotion. We must keep in mind Emma's claim that she views emotions as a necessity,

"the social affections were necessary to my existence, but they have been only inlets to sorrow--yet still, I bind them to my heart!" (2.219)

In many ways Letters and Essays is a trial run for Emma Courtney, and it is therefore useful to use the earlier work as a lens for the latter. As its long title suggests, Letters and Essays, Moral and Miscellaneous is a hodgepodge of political, fictive, didactic, and even poetic writing. The poems and two political essays (one on pulpit elocution and one on civil liberty and both addressed to a male audience), are only casually related to anything else in the text. Two didactic stories were contributed by Hays's younger sister Elizabeth (called Eliza), although she does not share credit as a co-author. Much of the didactic fiction is in the form of letters, the persona of the addressee paralleling the intended audience, some addressed to mothers on how best to educate their daughters and some addressed to young women about their own reading, education, and matchmaking. One story on female reading practices is modelled closely (with acknowledgment) on Charlotte Lennox's Female Quixote. This assemblage, while not particularly unusual for eighteenth-century publications, serves to blur the focus on what Hays said motivated her to publish the work in the first place: Wollstonecraft's Rights of Woman and its challenge to patriarchy, women's education, and women's social roles.

The introduction and letters regarding female education and marriage make up the bulk of Letters and Essays, and it is with these that I am concerned here. These letters are usually in the form of didactic fiction. They employ a friendly mentoring tone in the narrator that softens the revolutionary quality of Hays's advice. Despite the haphazard presentation, readers were not blinded to the book's challenges to the status quo, and Hays was labelled a "political subversive" upon the book's publication (Luria 8).

While the advice book does not rant as Emma Courtney often does, it does cover all of the major concerns of the latter novel. These include the nature versus nurture debate and Hays's belief that men and women are inherently equal, therefore any differences between them are due to socialization; that early experiences (including reading) have irrevocable influence over the adult individual; that manners are not the equivalent of virtue, but that independent rationality is; that some current manners are actually immoral; that women need to be better educated and employable; that marriage should be for love; and that rationality is indissolubly connected not only to education but also to sensibility--or the "the human heart" as she repeatedly calls it.

This last point is Hay's most significant contribution to the debate surrounding women's education and place in society, and provides clues not only about her vision of a

future social structure, but helps to explain her use of sensibility. Although Hays appears comfortable writing rationally-oriented discourse, including a pamphlet on religion, a book-length polemic on women's rights (in the vein of Rights of Woman), reviews, and historical biographies, she makes clear that the fiction of sensibility suits both her revolutionary and didactic purposes.

By the last decades of the eighteenth century, sentimentality had become extraordinarily conflicted, in large part because the genre had become "feminized" and thus second rate. This relegated the genre to women writers and readers and served the purpose of maintaining the stigma still attached to the novel as a genre and to female novelists as outside the more privileged (male) genres. Wollstonecraft's critiques of sentimental novels in the Analytical Review can be taken as exemplary of her privileging--at this time, at least--rationality over sentimentality in the causes of female education and virtue.

In a review of the sentimental novel Edward and Harriet in the Analytical Review of June 1788 Wollstonecraft avers: "An analysis of novels will seldom be expected, nor can the cant of sensibility be tried by any criterion of reason; ridicule should direct its shafts against this fair game" (Works 7.19). This diatribe appeared soon after the Review's founding, and Wollstonecraft would follow her own advice in many subsequent reviews, even though she would

publish two sentimental novels of her own, the first of which came out the same year as the review cited above.

The inconsistency in these actions is partially explained by Janet Todd's observation that despite the ill repute of the sentimental novel in this period, there was nonetheless a sustained belief in the novel generally to influence its readers, and "in the radical years the idea gained ground that this fictional power could be harnessed for reform" (227). Add to this Eleanor Ty's speculations that Hays, like other revolutionary authors, employed "sentiment and sensibility to arouse sympathy in her readers for her cause" and that the emotional conventions of sentimental literature are used to "intensify Hays's rational arguments, illustrating and thematizing graphically the reasonable and logical contentions found in her essays" (48), and we begin to understand why champions of reason such as Wollstonecraft and Hays risk marginalizing their ideas for social change in the "feminized genre" of sensibility.

The criticism did indeed come. Wollstonecraft's acceptance of the importance of emotions in her second novel put her on the receiving end of the type of antisentimental reviews she had been dishing out. Hannah More, in a discussion of Wrongs of Woman, called novels of sensibility "the most destructive class in the whole wide range of modern corrupters" (1.51). It is a big conceptual leap from vilifying sentimental novels to authoring them, and much

recent scholarship has been devoted to how female writers, and novelists in particular, appropriated the genre.

Hays makes the approach in the preface to Letters and Essays by expressing the hope that young readers will be improved "by seeing some common truths placed in an interesting point of view" (viii). She supports this goal by creating a narrative persona that is more of an equal to the reader than the eighteenth-century convention of the "disinterested friend" (read older and wiser parent, guardian, or other person of power). Co-author Eliza extends the narrator-as-equal conceit with a sly jab at fellow conduct authors who condescend to their readers: "many . . . have been the times, and various the ways, in which you have been addressed: the grave divine, the sober matron, and the anxious parent have alternately taken up the pen for your instruction" (156). These allusions might be to Fordyce, More, and Gregory respectively, but regardless the narrator is set up as a true friend manifesting good will. Eliza's own advice is "neither dictated by spleen, nor rendered gloomy by misfortune. I mean not to satirize your foibles. I wish not to restrain your vivacity" (157). Unlike much conduct literature throughout the century that assumes female vanity and frivolity, the writing of both Hays sisters is similar to Wollstonecraft's when she writes for children and teenagers: there is a clear sense that the authors actually like, respect, and even enjoy young people.

Mary Hays conceives that she can achieve the influence of friendship most effectively by telling stories rather than prescribing rules. This requires a careful blending of rationality (which is necessary for the ultimate goal of female independence) and emotion (which is necessary both for narrative appeal, but more crucially as an accurate portrayal of the human psyche) (EC preface 1.9). It is only from this blending that one can arrive at realism or even "truth":

> We are not required to annihilate our passions, but only to keep them in subordination; for so mingled are the qualities of the human mind, that was it possible to prune off every exuberance, you would destroy the energy from whence arises its excellence. (L&E 4)

The belief that passion, alternatively called sensibility, is a source of genius is repeated throughout Letters and Essays and Emma Courtney. Scholars that overemphasize Hay's directive to subordinate passion overlook the fact that in creating the hierarchy of reason over passion, she nonetheless embraces passion. Hays does not believe in the didactic efficacy of the "pictures of perfection"--the idealized female characters frequently portrayed in novels or conduct literature. In fact, in the belief that one will get more converts through emotion than through reason, with results equally good (L&E 5), Hays defends displays of emotion in the pulpit because one purpose of emotion is to appeal to virtuous reform.

Further, telling stories rather than prescribing rules is actually central to Hays's goal of putting ideology into

practice. Much of Letters and Essays and all of Emma Courtney is explicitly cautionary rather than exemplary. This is necessary for the sake of realism, which she did prefer (EC preface 7-11). Hays believes that cold, perfect, or untested characters are unattractive, thus their didactic function is weakened. Further, cautionary narrative is valuable if one is promoting independent rationality. Encountering perfection requires no active discernment or judgment, only passive acceptance.

Reading about characters who must struggle with real problems as people do in real life forces readers to apply their own principles actively. Hays believes strongly that life is lived in the particular, but that society makes demands that are universal. General rules often are not easily applicable to real life, which is why one must have (virtuous) principles upon which to base particular judgments. Like the scene which produces it (Emma's decision to remain true to a man who will not marry her) Hays's argument for relative virtue as opposed to absolute virtue is revolutionary:

> The infraction of established rules may . . . in some cases, be productive of mischief; yet, it is difficult to state any rule so precise and determinate, as to be alike applicable to every situation: what, in one instance, might be a vice, in another may possibly be a virtue. (EC 2.50)

Promotion of this type of relative virtue, even though based in an orthodox religious faith, nonetheless suggests a type of independence, not only from patriarchy but from society

in general, that perhaps has not appeared in female conduct literature prior to the revolutionary period. While it is not unusual for conduct authors, male or female, to acknowledge that women must be able to make independent judgments regarding Christian virtue (for example regarding chastity, gambling, religious faith), Hays moves this same argument much further into the more purely social realm regarding practices that are more closely connected to fashion than piety (for example, a woman declaring her love for a man, earning her own living, or living alone).

The cautionary tale provides a venue for the concept of what Hays calls judgment based on principle rather than on rule (manners). Echoing Wollstonecraft's call for a "revolution in female manners" Hays claims, "Moral precepts have been so warped and confused, that it requires a clear and a strong head to disentangle them: seeming, through all the intercourses of polished life, has been substituted for substantial virtue" (L&E vii). Not only are manners and rules the semblance rather than substance of virtue (L&E vii), they are sometimes immoral themselves, even though society has deemed them necessary and "correct." Rational education and independence of mind are required to enable both men and women to identify and enact "true" virtue.

Hays finds true (relative) virtue only in independence: "Free thinking, and free speaking, are the virtue and the characteristics of a rational being: . . . every principle must be doubted, before it will be examined and proved" (EC

preface 1.7). But this is not an anything goes type of relativism; it is founded on both religion and education. Providing rules without education is where the real immorality lies, for people of both genders and all classes: "The morality of an uncultivated understanding, is that of custom, not of reason:--break down the feeble barrier, and there is nothing to supply its place--you open the floodgates of infamy and wretchedness" (EC 2.190). People are virtuous because of convention rather than conviction. The danger lies in the moment when conventions are challenged or are inconvenient. Without education there is no moral underpinning on which to base virtuous choice. On the other hand, Hays naively never addresses the consequence of a lack of moral consensus when moral relativism is the social paradigm.

Education focused on independent thinking, principle rather than rule, is a favorite theme of Hays's, and is strikingly illustrated by a plot line that appears both in Letters and Essays, as "Josepha, or the Pernicious Effects of Early Indulgence," and as the driving concern in Emma Courtney: a woman pursuing a man and proposing marriage. Although "Josepha" is a story largely about love, it ridicules sentimentality rather than valorizes it.

Little if anything has been written about the connection between "Josepha" and Emma Courtney, most probably because the former was one of the two pieces in Letters and Essays attributed to Eliza Hays. While this

certainly puts a kink in drawing connections between the two works, the conceit of a woman pursuing a man is obviously a preoccupation for Hays, especially as her pursuit of Frend is seen by scholars as a defining event in her own life.[1]

A didactic story, "Josepha" is ostensibly addressed to young women and urges them to apply themselves in their studies and improve their minds, but really functions more as a cautionary tale for parents who have control of the education of their daughters. Raised by an indulgent and uneducated father, Josepha, never satisfied with anyone or anything, is spoiled to the point that she is incapable of happiness. In fact, Josepha's indulged upbringing "increased her natural sensibility to a degree bordering on weakness" (L&E 142). It is clear that Josepha's biggest problem is an underdeveloped mind. She has the best education in the accomplishments that money can buy, has a devoted husband, children, and wealth, but none of this is enough to make her happy.

The price Josepha pays for indulging in imaginary problems is the punishment of a real one: the murder of her husband. She has no inner resources to support her through the tragedy; she is emotionally overcome, her household disintegrates, her children are dissipated, and she

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[1]As has been true of Wollstonecraft studies, much of the Hays scholarship to date remains focused on biographical issues (see particularly Rajan, Todd, and Rogers). It seems that biographical scholars would have to investigate this story by Mary's sister as additional evidence of an abiding interest.

eventually dies. The narrator's closing moral reiterates the importance of intellectual education and its legacy: the education of future generations. Josepha's poor education (fine though it was by some standards) was inadequate to happiness or virtue, and her weaknesses were visited upon her children.

In the context of cautionary conduct literature, "Josepha" is not remarkable except for one peculiar feature that accounts for much of the relatively little detail in this brief story: Josepha is the pursuer in the courtship with her future husband Clermont. When Josepha confesses her unrequited love to her father he, ever indulgent, imagines that Clermont's reluctance must be monetary inadequacy, and offers to approach the young man with a marriage settlement sufficient to support the couple. Josepha is pleased with her father's approval but fearful that his "blunt and mercantile style" will alienate the refined Clermont (L&E 147). She thus exacts a promise from her father that he will not act without consulting her, then secretly writes to Clermont herself, confessing her love. Interestingly, Clermont's response is lukewarm, he unromantically declares himself "not absolutely in love with Josepha," but as he is not attached to anyone else, his regard grows quickly (L&E 150).

In terms of conduct conventions Josepha's forwardness is an unheard of breach of propriety. Not only does Josepha take the role of pursuer, but she acts secretly, and

furthermore behaves improperly towards her father. Josepha does not respect or trust her father to act in her interest, despite his devotion. This is the kind of female independence from the patriarch that traditional conduct literature specifically and frequently warns against. Hays displays this kind of independence twice more in Emma Courtney. Emma's cousin Ann chooses a marginally attractive marriage as an escape from her mother, for whom she has no love: "my desire of liberty is stronger than my duty" (1.143). Emma herself calls her father "Mr. Courtney" because he does not deserve the title of father and she never loves him (1.26, 41-2, 47). In the cases of Emma and Ann, Hays makes clear that the parents have not earned filial love or respect; filial disrespect, so often attributed to inadequate education in the children, here is attributed to careless parenting. This is the kind of female independence that traditional conduct literature specifically and frequently denounces. It is also the kind of revolutionary recommendation that necessitates a change in social behavior that goes beyond the purely female sphere.

Yet in a story with substantial narratorial comment Josepha's pursuit of a man is presented without approval, disapproval, rationalization. Only Josepha's discomfiture in the knowledge that she has behaved in an unconventional manner, and a fear that her impropriety will alienate the fastidious Clermont, mark her unusual behavior. In the end

Josepha gets what she wants, but is unhappy. Although she is a poor wife and worse mother, it is clear that her ultimate "punishment" has nothing to do with her forwardness, but rather with her spoiled upbringing and education. In fact she is rewarded for her assertiveness; her father approves of Clermont, who comes to love her and is a good husband.

As in "Josepha," Emma Courtney explores a variety of social themes, but the main action revolves around the heroine's pursuit of a lover. Reading the story and the novel dialogically shows how the call for restructuring female virtue is expanded and refined in the later work. The lengthy novel allows for more complexity in plot and character development, and more narratorial comment as well. The essential strategy remains the same: an otherwise virtuous woman pursues a man, consciously making an unconventional choice based on her judgment that the man is more than usually virtuous.

The most significant differences between the two stories are twofold. First, Josepha is highly conventional for a conduct literature heroine: she is motherless, educated only in the accomplishments, chaste, spoiled, and bored. Josepha is ruined not in terms of reputation but because she was spoiled when young and was not educated to overcome it. Emma, on the other hand, while sharing many of the same conventions (motherless, educated in the accomplishments, indulged because of her precociousness,

chaste) has an unconventional intellectual education so that she knows what she wants (financial independence), even though she often laments not having the social resources (female employment other than servitude) to acquire it.

Further, while Emma acts more unconventionally than Josepha, she is, overall, more virtuous in that she is not clearly labelled with a flaw such as being spoiled or selfish. While her mentor Mr. Francis chides Emma for being too sentimental and chasing unrealistically after virtue and happiness (1.89-90), Emma never retreats from the central tenets of Hays's social message. Emma's belief that happiness is the reward for virtue, and that rationality should be tempered by sentiment (1.4) are set up as models for imitation, despite her unconventional behavior. Therefore, Hays's several disclaimers that the novel is cautionary rather than exemplary are to some degree disingenuous, and eighteenth-century critics are right to be threatened by the revolutionary nature of her actions and beliefs. The argument that circumstances are incidental to principles enables Hays to claim impunity for depicting scandalous behavior and labelling it virtuous.

The second significant difference between the story and the novel is the representation of sensibility in the latter. In the story Josepha is ridiculed for being almost purely sentimental, a self-indulgent figure. Sensibility here is not treated subtly but conventionally: Josepha is unhappy because her sensibility borders on the irrational.

But the novel has a contrary message. There the demand for pure rationality is self-effacing and cannot offer happiness, which Hays, like Wollstonecraft, makes clear is the end of earthly human existence on earth (1.168, 2.99). A happy medium must be found--one which will literally bring happiness. This middle way is not for the benefit of the (female) individual only, but for society in general, nor does the responsibility for change rest in women.

Calling Emma Courtney a "'philosophical romance'" or "fictionalization of 'philosophy'," Gary Kelly points out that

> 'Philosophy' in this sense was a masculine discourse and Hays aimed to novelize and thus feminize it, thereby resolving what she saw . . . as a devaluing of women's intellectual culture and therefore a dangerous separation of masculine and feminine discourses. . . . [S]he aims to interfuse these discourses to create a more effective alliance of men and women 'philosophers' in the cultural revolution. (95-6)

Perhaps the best illustration of this desire to change society rather than to change women is exhibited in Hays's attempt to redefine virtue in Emma Courtney as the practice of independent rationality informed by sensibility. Her formulation is that rationality alone denies human emotion, while sensibility alone reinforces the marginalization of "emotional woman." Further, the dependent or submissive rationality popular in conservative conduct literature denies women the possibility of both independent thinking and emotion.

"Josepha" is an inconsistent work because it punishes the protagonist for being irrationally sensitive while it rewards her for indulging in unconventional (really unvirtuous) behavior to satisfy her passionate desire for a man. Rewarding Josepha with a loving husband is tantamount to arguing that female pursuit of a man can and should be rationally virtuous, but as long as Eliza Hays works within the androcentric tradition of rationality she has to deny the emotional desire that would make the pursuit necessary.

Once Mary Hays embraces rather than denies the legitimacy of sensibility in Emma Courtney this contradiction falls away. She is finally able to illustrate what Hester Chapone had written more than twenty years before: "our feelings were not given us for ornament, but to spur us to right actions" (72). When Harley tells Emma that it is her duty to make her reason conquer her heart, she does not comply but replies with her own "rational" argument in favor of sensibility: "'The Being who gave to mind its reason, gave also to the heart its sensibility'" (EC 1.160).

The right action in this case is altering socially accepted courtship practices (going far beyond the more common debate regarding arranged marriages), which in turn requires a redefinition of virtue for both women and men. In both stories the protagonist's decision to pursue her object is based solely on what she believes is his exceptional male virtue. And, to the extent that neither

object abuses this knowledge sexually or economically, this form of courtship is justified. Unlike some other social behaviors (education, certain aspects of motherhood such as breastfeeding) this issue does not rest with the female alone.

Changing this social practice requires changes in the behavior of both sexes, making the term "feminization" used by Sandra Sherman (and to a lesser degree Todd and Kelly), while accurate, seem inadequate. Throughout her writings Hays demonstrates a consciousness that change in a patriarchal society requires the cooperation, if not the leadership, of men. More than most female conduct authors Hays addresses her writing to men. The very title of her polemic Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women (1798) is indicative of that view, but it recurs elsewhere. Letters one and thirteen in Letters and Essays are directed to men, and letters four, five, and six are about men in the sense that they illustrate what men should look for in a wife. Finally, the occasion for Emma Courtney's memoirs is to instruct her "son." This last point is significant as sentimental novels are so often by, about, and for women, that the protagonist's consciousness of a male reader throughout the text is unusual. Emma often takes the tone of arguing with males (Harley, Francis, young Harley) regarding social practices and she never shies from contending with male "authority."

To return to Hays's reconceptualization of virtue, one of the novel's key lines comes in the preface characterizing Emma's internal conflicts, namely "loving virtue while enslaved by passion" (preface 1.8). And yet, even here "enslaved" is not the best choice by an author whose character never renounces passion. Indeed, sensibility is later elevated to an essential characteristic that should be harnessed: "Sensation generates interest, interest passion, passion forces attention, attention supplies the powers, and affords the means of attaining its end" (1.5). Emotion is generative of genius.

Hays constructs the inextricably intertwining nature of sensibility and rationality from the outset, but persuading readers that the (unconventional) behavior based on this new wholeness is virtuous is a more difficult task, one which must be reinforced throughout the novel. Hays constructs Emma as virtuous in a number of ways. First, Emma has an emphatic, unshakable belief in the virtue of Augustus (virtually identical to Josepha's faith in Clermont's virtue). The reason each heroine finally decides to act transgressively is the belief that their objects will not exploit the information for money (through mercenary marriage), or sex, or ruin their reputations. Josepha's faith is rewarded, while Emma's is not. However, Harley's situation is complex; he is not simply a cad. Although he is secretly married, he has mitigating circumstances attaching his inheritance, and he is punished with an

unhappy marriage. Additionally, he takes the generous and highly unusual step for an eldest son of splitting his second inheritance equally with his siblings and mother, which, while admirable, leads to his dependence on the ill-gotten inheritance (1.97-8).

Second, Emma remains chaste as long as she is single. Her physical purity is perversely emphasized by Emma's disregard for its social significance. In fits of protective jealousy for her own daughters, Emma's Aunt Morton repeatedly impugns Emma's character by spreading rumors about her association with Harley. The matter becomes so serious that Mrs. Morton will not receive Emma. These episodes demonstrate the baseless and mean-spirited inaccuracy that renders public opinion valueless to Emma. She refuses to take seriously the loss of her reputation amongst people she does not respect; with those she does respect, her Uncle Morton and Harley's mother, Emma can easily clear her name and goes out of her way to do so. But their reasonableness heightens the contrast with those who enjoy or profit from the sunken reputation of others, to whom Emma declares "the world may do its will--but I will never be its slave" (1.82-3). This episode is exemplary of Emma's disdain throughout the novel for the judgment of society. She is concerned only with living up to her own standards.

This is a revolutionary independence compared to conventional conduct literature claims that reputation is

all, both publicly and privately. Even those who acknowledge the constructed nature of virtue acknowledge its moral efficacy: "Honour is indeed an invention merely human; yet nothing is more real than the evils that people suffer who would get rid of it"; "a contempt of reputation naturally leads to a contempt for virtue" (Lambert 138-139). Sarah Pennington, one conduct author who personally experimented with the idea that reputation is irrelevant if one is truly virtuous, lived to regret her loss of social standing. Ultimately, she advised her daughters "that, next to the consciousness of acting right, the public voice should be regarded; and to endeavour by a prudent behaviour, even in the most trifling circumstances, to secure it in your favour" (58).

Ironically, however, Hays plays into the hands of those who argue for the efficacy of public opinion to circumscribe sexual behavior. Emma's chastity is problematized when she appears to offer sex to Harley without marriage (2.68). This is a difficult scene to rationalize, as Emma's chastity (one version of virtue) is essential to her moral credibility with eighteenth-century readers and for acceptance of other types of change in society's expectations regarding female virtue. In the event, Harley turns down Emma's offer. The refusal demonstrates that on at least one important level he is honorable and that her independent judgment of him as virtuous is not misplaced, even though her own judgment at this juncture is weak.

While Emma remains chaste and Harley is partially redeemed for his secret marriage and ill-gotten inheritance, the offer is ammunition for those who want to control women's lives in the name of protection; the refusal may be too unusual to justify the offer as safe. Again, Hays's remodelling of virtue is dependent upon men as well as women, and she constructs the scene so that her faith in men (if not romance) is not disappointed.

Third, Hays makes clear that society's current construction of courtship entails immorality. As has often been noted, women, when they have the opportunity of judging at all, only have the right to refuse proposals. Not only is proposing barred to virtuous women, but they cannot publicly evince interest in particular men and keep their reputations intact (the reserve of Pride and Prejudice's Jane Bennett comes to mind).

The unfairness of this system in terms of the consequence of unhappy marriage is often noted in conduct literature, but Hays takes the unusual step of noting the consequences for the courtship phase as well. She maintains the demand for young women to remain impassive is not only self-effacing, but, more significantly, deceptive. It is ludicrous to pretend that young women do not experience romantic attractions. Such denial is socially sanctioned lying. Therefore Emma is acting on principle rather than rule when she confesses her attraction to Harley; her honesty is virtuous while society's disapproval is corrupt:

"It is a pernicious system of morals, which teaches us hypocrisy can be virtue" (1.155). Even though it looks like Emma is acting as self-indulgently as Josepha in pursuing the man she loves, the differences in education, principle, and experience make the rationale for their actions different. Josepha thinks of nothing but getting what she wants; Emma, while certainly desirous, believes that acting honestly on her desire is more virtuous than denying its existence.

Finally, although as a cautionary tale the novel cannot have an unalloyed happy ending, Emma in the end is not without solace or hope. Though not rewarded with the fulfillment of her desire to marry Harley, Emma is a survivor nonetheless, both literally and figuratively. For all the virtue she imputes to Harley (overall an ill-founded judgment) and for all her unconventional behavior (though in the letter virtuous), and for all the initial good will and devotion of Montague (who suffers both for extreme sensibility and infidelity), it is only Emma who lives. Thus Emma's lack of gratification is due to the actions of others and "systematic injustice rather than personal failings" (Kelly 104).[2]

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[2]Emma's marriage to Montague is questionable in terms of her own ideals, but not in terms of society's. She marries Montague because she has no hope of marrying Harley, is bankrupt, and because, as a woman, she is unable to earn money. Although Emma does not believe in marriage without love, it is certainly tolerated by society. Montague, knowing Emma's history, is not deceived; thus Emma lives up to her principle of honesty. The blame for the unhappy marriage passes from Emma to society for making her survival

Emma survives to teach rather than to be punished. Although young Emma dies early, so that the union of the young versions of Emma and Augustus is stymied, deferring the hope of revolutionary domesticity to the third rather than the second generation (Kelly 80-2, 106, 245), Emma does get to live out some of her ideals. She is careful to describe the equal educations that the two receive, and is pleased when the girl was sometimes quicker in her lessons than the boy (2.214). Interestingly, young Emma dies at the crucial point when she would be trained for marriage, perhaps a problem Hays was not ready to deal with in an explicitly revolutionary way (the elder Emma's education was haphazard, but the daughter's would have to be systematized).

Most importantly, Emma lives to inhabit an unconventional mentoring relationship with young Augustus, giving Emma (the only virtuous adult) the opportunity to educate the next (male) generation according to her own philosophy, perhaps focusing on the potential of male power for significant social reform. Through young Augustus she lives to disseminate and practice her ideals by telling her story to advocate a rationality informed by sensibility.

Ultimately Hays extends the argument of previous female conduct authors that women can aspire to earthly happiness rather than deferring it to the after life: "pleasure, happiness is the supreme good" (2.99); further, "<u>happiness</u>

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contingent upon marriage.

is, surely, the only desirable end of existence!" (1.168). Hays's argument in much of Letters and Essays (as it sometimes is for Wollstonecraft and many prior conduct authors) is that happiness for women rests in rational equality with men. It is an argument that while demanding change in social practices such as female education tacitly accepts a gendered hierarchy of male rationality and female sensibility that undermines the effectiveness of the argument (emotional woman will by her nature never achieve the rational heights of men).

But during the revolutionary period even the women who argue most vehemently for female rationality recognize that it, too, is inadequate. The question that Emma asks in Emma Courtney, "Why is intellect and virtue so far from conferring happiness?" (2.50), seems to supply the reason that two of the strongest promoters of reason, Wollstonecraft and Hays, both take a step back from rationality. Emma's question recognizes that the ultimate goal of happiness will never be achieved by women merely joining the intellectual ranks of men. Rather, the whole value system needs to be reformulated to bring the standards for behavior of both sexes more nearly into line.

The telos of this argument for rationality informed by sensibility is the perfectibility of society. Since at least the time of Locke there had been an argument that improving the quality of future leaders of England depended upon improving the quality of education and morality of

young women--the future mothers who are responsible for the earliest education of boys. Yet other than this very early mother/child relationship, the male/female spheres are kept remarkably separate in much popular conduct literature throughout the century. But with the revolutionary period there is a concerted attempt in conduct literature and novels of sensibility to examine society as a whole, including the intersecting spheres of male and female rationality. In short, this body of literature emphasizes the interconnectedness of all our actions: "Virtue can exist only in a mind capable of taking comprehensive views," for "what is virtue, but a calculation of the consequences of our actions" (2.90, 91-2).

This broader vision demands revolution rather than mere reform. Rationality must be reconstituted for men and women so that both value emotion, rather than simply admitting women into the club of rationality, while further devaluing or even disowning sensibility. Emma Courtney, the front on which Hays chose to fight that battle most vehemently, represents an attempt to redefine that most important of eighteenth-century concepts: virtue. The creation of a simultaneously virtuous and independent heroine is a significant alteration in the portrayal of female desire. That she is perpetually disappointed by the apparent lack of virtue in both society generally and the important men in her life emphasizes her radical virtue. Yes, she desires romance and marriage, but in that similarity to scores of

other novels of the period, we must not overlook the most revolutionary aspect of the novel: a female character who desires--and actively pursues--a new morality for the whole of society.

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