AN UNEASY BURDEN: MATERNITY, PEDAGOGY AND AUTHORITY IN THE TRAVEL LETTERS OF MONTAGU, WOLLSTONECRAFT AND SANSAY

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ABSTRACT

AN UNEASY BURDEN: MATERNITY, PEDAGOGY AND AUTHORITY IN THE TRAVEL LETTERS OF MONTAGU, WOLLSTONECRAFT AND SANSAY

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Taking as its primary texts Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's 1716 *Turkish Embassy Letters,* Mary Wollstonecraft's 1796 *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* and Leonara Sansay's 1808 *Secret History; or, the Horrors of St. Domingo*, this thesis explores how each female-authored travelogue imbricates pedagogy with maternal embodiment. I argue that each author takes on a pedagogical perspective towards both the residents of the countries through which they travel, as well as their correspondents at home, training both groups to reconsider their conceptions of their own bodies and their capacity for child-rearing. Both Montagu and Wollstonecraft base their pedagogical potential in their maternal embodiment, while Sansay, in a novel with two childless sisters as protagonists, grants the two women quasi-maternal relations to one another based on their confident, pedagogical attempts on both local women and on each other. Montagu and Wollstonecraft, despite carefully constructed pedagogies directed at other women, find that pedagogy breaking down at the boundaries of their own bodies, as Montagu anxiously finds herself pregnant while training the Turkish women and her readers on the dangers of viewing pregnancy as an aesthetic necessity, while Wollstonecraft can only construct the sympathy with readers that drives her own pedagogical project distance from her own daughter. Sansay, by splitting herself across two fictionalized narrative personae, grants her protagonists a homosocial relationship based in maternal and filial affection.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

On January 4, 1718, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu penned a letter to her friend Anne Thistlethwayte from the town of Pera, Constantinople. Laid up in preparation for the birth of her daughter, and unsettled from her usual round of diverting letters, Lady Mary admits to being "wholly taken up with the preparations necessary for the increase of my family," (107) comforted that Anne will understand the nature of the "uneasy" burden under which she labors. This intimate concern reasserts itself throughout the letter, embedded among reports of the Turkish women's norms of pregnancy. The women there, as she expounds for Anne's benefit, believe that fertility is a sign of beauty, and the pregnant female body the visible expression of that beauty. Although Lady Mary disapproves of this reduction of the maternal form to an aesthetic object, she is unable to avoid writing her own body into the subject matter of her letter. As Lady Mary textualizes her own maternal body, she situates herself against the more traditional, masculinist mode of writing within Enlightenment[1] travelogues which privileged impartial observation and the absenting of the body from the text. Rather, Lady Mary, and the other authors in this study, make their feminine and maternal bodies the centerpieces of their writings, as well as the common experience on which to base the pedagogy which arises out of those writings.

After a series of gloomy reflections on the pain of childbirth, Lady Mary tries to forcefully cheer herself by providing Anne with vivid images of the beautiful summer-like

[1] Although detailed attention to the masculinist and objectivist traditions of writing within the Enlightenment are outside the scope of this project, for some contextualization of this historical trend, see: Scott Black. *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain.* New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2006, esp. introduction; Toni Bowers. *The Politics of Motherhood.* New York: Cambridge UP, 1996, esp. "Introduction: Historicizing Motherhood;" and David S. Shields *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997.

weather, her lush off-season garden, and her approval of the Turkish legal practice by which liars are branded on the forehead, making their crimes perpetually visible. Exactly at this moment of promoting bodily visibility, Lady Mary abruptly writes herself out of her own narrative by writing her pregnancy back in. Eschewing a traditional concluding remark, Lady Mary hastily apologizes for the shortness of these ethnographic sketches, gasping out, “I must send for my midwife” (108). This remarkable instance of writing to the moment of her own delivery serves to fixate attention on her maternal body precisely at the moment of that body's anxious absence.

By reading and writing her parturient body as text, Lady Mary steps aside from Enlightenment norms of bodiless rationality, unwilling, in the moment when her body is most central to her experiences, to keep up the pretense of fitting into a register which does not take those experiences fully into account. Rather, by sharing her bodily and maternal anxieties, in written form, with trustworthy female readers, Lady Mary, as well as the other authors of this study, construct an alternate set of norms, where their ability to serve as pedagogues to their correspondents are based on understanding and expression of bodily affects. For example, Wollstonecraft will establish an affection with her readers on the basis of her distant and contested relationship with her daughter, and Sansay will split herself across two authorial personae in order to allow for a self-reflexive maternal relationship between those protagonists, based on each sister's affection and respect for the other's body and mind.

This moment of Lady Mary's delivery of her daughter, represented textually, serves as a fitting introduction for this study, which will explore the place of maternal responsibility and anxiety which functions as a central but under explored aspect of each text. I will be considering

Lady Mary Montagu's 1718 *Turkish Embassy Letters*[2], Mary Wollstonecraft's 1796 *Letters written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark,* and Leonara Sansay's 1808 *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo*. All three texts share an epistolary format, a series of exotic (to European women) locales, and a central educated female traveler who records and publishes her experiences. In each, female travelers are depicted as maternal and pedagogical figures, a pair of terms that become productively conflated. As Toni Bowers argues, motherhood and authority can serve as fruitful paradigms to unite these texts, as the representations of the maternal body in each is "ambidextrous and multiple, irreducibly public because it is so intensely intimate....undermin[ing] the cultural systems that would delimit it" (26).

The three female travel writers of this study take on this kind of ambidextrous pedagogical perspective towards both their correspondents and the subordinate women of the countries through which they travel. Overtly, the letters recount the travelers' attempts to train female subordinates to reconsider how they tend to their children or conceptualize their own bodies, as Wollstonecraft tells of her attempts to convince the Swedish women that their habits of overdressing their children are ineffective and harmful. On the level of narrative, the published

[2] The *Turkish Embassy Letters*, although carefully prepared and edited by Lady Mary and widely familiar to a coterie audience, were not published until after her death. After returning from her journey in Turkey, Lady Mary established a close friendship with Alexander Pope that eventually deteriorated into a vituperative battle, lending her a scandalous reputation. She left England, travelling in Europe and writing to her husband and daughter. On her husband's death in 1761, Lady Mary returned to England, leaving a copy of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* in the hands of the Reverend Benjamin Sowden, with a note in her will that he was to dispose of the text as he thought proper. Her daughter, Lady Bute was incensed at the thought of publication, going so far as to burn her own copy of Lady Mary's writing and buy back the Reverend Sowden's. Nevertheless, the text appeared in print in 1763, a year after Lady Mary's own death, thanks to a pair of young Englishmen whom Sowden alleged had borrowed the letters, copied them, and smuggled them to a printer (Montagu xxiv-xxv).

letters serve to educate both the specific correspondents and the larger public readership, casting the letter writers as teachers with a large class of eager students. These women are enacting a form of what Mary Kelley calls “gendered republicanism...the discourse that took as its subject the role of women in the nation's public life,” a notion that Kelley in turn modifies from the concept of republican womanhood from the work of historians Linda Kerber and Jan Lewis. Under this latter model, proponents of republican womanhood called for a female education that went beyond the rudiments of reading, writing, and ciphering...claiming that wives and mothers once educated would school their families in republican virtue” (25). These female travel writers are granted their sanction for educating through their position as educated wives and, in Montagu's and Wollstonecraft's cases, mothers.

While this translation of travel experience into written record does grant these women a power—and a responsibility—to educate, the most compelling aspect of this pedagogical power is its recursivity and fragility. Each of the women writers is engaged in educating her subordinates, yet those others tend to return the pedagogy back on the sender, complicating the teacher-student dynamic. Furthermore, the pedagogy which each woman tries to transmit is finally undermined by and broken down at the limits of their own bodies. For example, Lady Mary's visible pregnancy, written into the text of her letters to the Abbe Conti as well as to her friend Anne Thistlethwayte, complicates her own pedagogy against the Turkish women's propensity for viewing pregnancy as a symbol of feminine beauty.

Later, Wollstonecraft will construct a pedagogical relationship with her readers through a narrative sympathy that encourages those readers to affix their own emotional affect in her romantic solitude. This narrative sympathy encourages her readers to reconsider their own bodily

relations by focusing their attention on the objects in Wollstonecraft's own line of sight. This maternal vision often takes as its objects the bodies of the local children, as when she focuses on the grotesquely overdressed Swedish children or on the unearthly boy balanced on the side of the Gothenburg waterfall, who requires maternal attention to bring him out of the shadows. Yet while this narrative affection is directed towards instances of ineffective child-rearing, and the bodies of the children hence undervalued by this maternal perspective, the affection itself is situated in Wollstonecraft's own contested, complicated and often quite distant relationship to her own daughter. If both Wollstonecraft and Montagu demonstrate a split between their wonted pedagogical project and their own maternal embodiment, Sansay suggests a partial solution to this division by, paradoxically, splitting her fictionalized self across two protagonists and developing satisfying quasi-maternal relations between them, based on their mutual ability to educate one another.

On a narrative level, by writing letters to readers at home in England (or Philadelphia, in Sansay's case), these female travel writers are directing their pedagogical focus towards their sophisticated correspondents. To this end, they use irony, Gothic horror, or the construction of a sympathetic narrative persona to attract readers' attention to the aspects of female subjectivity that are, in the writers' opinion, most troubling and most in need of change, using the examples of Turkey, Northern Europe, or Haiti, respectively, subtly to change conceptions of female power at home. In communicating their pleasure (or displeasure) with their surroundings, these letter-writers developed “novel ways of associating,” creating through their letters what David Shields refers to as “discursive institutions—social entities bound to linguistic formations” (xiv). In his book, Shields demonstrates how belles letters brought into being a new world of public arenas,

such as coffeehouses, tea-tables, taverns, card clubs, fraternities and salons, which both flourished and were transformed with the advent of print. Instead of the pleasures of urbane conversation, these spaces organized around texts "offered a middling readership the opportunity to participate imaginatively in a discursive analogue of genteel company" (12). These female letter writers construct similar institutions founded on shared literary texts, but unlike the coffeehouse or tea-table, these discursive arenas take place in an imaginative register, by situating both reader and writer textually. By encouraging their readers to sympathize with themselves as authors, and through that sympathy to feel themselves, as readers, into the situations the writers depict, these writers use that narrative sympathy to pedagogically unsettle the ways women have of relating to their own bodies and roles.

These three epistolary texts function similarly to how Scott Black sees early modern essays working, as "registering [a] kind of adaptive reading." Here, writing "takes the shape of reading, offering first thoughts instead of final words...follow[ing] the twists of interest and the by-ways of imagination rather than the rigors of system or scholarship" (2). Through the appeal of their letters on the imagination of their readers, these women explicitly make public their "power of independent judgment" to construct " 'communities of conscience'" and hence sway public opinion from inside their self-constructed "constituent territories of the 'republic of letters'" (Shields xv). In this way, these letters unsettle the boundaries between public and private writings, by suggesting ways in which private correspondence can be harnessed for a broader pedagogical aim.

In this study, I explore how these three texts imbricate pedagogy with female embodiment, particularly maternal embodiment, arguing that, although education offers women

an option for possessing and wielding power within a patriarchal system, that power is finally patriarchally-lent, and as such is contingent, partial, and anxiety-ridden. Deirdre Raftery's study historically situates the "unprecedented interest in the female condition and in female education" in England during this period, inspired by both rising cultural interest in rationalism and changing political and economic structures "which had brought home to women the limited roles they might expect to fill" (43). The rise of the merchant trading class in this period meant more households were maintained by servants, so that "the improvement in standard of living...resulted in women, who were more moneyed and marginal than before, needing occupation and seeking education." As Toni Bowers demonstrates, this complication over positions of authority was part of a larger attempt to construct "models for legitimate power and allegiance in Augustan England, a society where relations of authority on all levels were undergoing revision." This upheaval necessitated both the definition of "maternal virtue, authority, and responsibility" as well as the "containment of matriarchal authority at a time when patriarchal authority was undergoing radical reconception and was therefore particularly vulnerable" (14).

These possibilities were always deeply contested, coming with their own complications and potential pit-falls. As Toni Bowers exemplifies, the anxiety over the act of giving birth is inflected by the physical difficulties of child-rearing in the eighteenth century, with infant mortality rates appallingly high (although not universally agreed upon)[3]. This was a period in which conduct books schooled mothers to prepare for their own deaths along with their babies' births, as "puerperal fever, milk fever, and long, agonizing deliveries" were ever-present threats.

[3] For a more detailed treatment of infant mortality rates in the period, and further sources, see Toni Bowers, *Politics of Motherhood*, pg. 27-32.

Yet against this physical anxiety written into the frailties of the maternal body stood the anxiety which maternity itself produced in "more cerebral realm of (male) intellectual discourse," as a site where "legitimacy and authority were routinely contested" (27). As such, the maternal was gradually divested of power over the course of the eighteenth century, culminating in the "radical withdrawal of the domestic woman" into a series of codified maternal behaviors that could be more easily controlled. Of these, particularly important for my study is the expectation for women to demonstrate "all-engrossing tenderness" for their children as well as "personal supervision and education" (28) over those children.

This "exemplar of republican virtue" also served a purpose in distinguishing relations among classes. The upper-middle-class women authors in this study were "positioned between an already established elite and a large population of commoners," functioning as implicit pedagogical "rebuke[s] to the practices of aristocratic luxury and the vulgarity of the lower orders. While granted this pedagogical power, however, gendered republicanism also "limited in scope," restricting the "influence of the republican wife and mother...to the members of her household" (25). In this way, pedagogical impulses are gendered as feminine and specifically maternal, so that the authors of letters who engage in attempts to educate their readerships are cast as a sort of surrogate mother to those readers, while also taking their authority from their physically female, maternal bodies.

The writers of the three texts I study work to assert their own authority through letter-writing by casting themselves as both mothers and pedagogues. In this sense, they are able to "undercut, subvert[] and reappl[y] what might be understood as a limited female intellectual capacity" in a period when, as Susan Stabile demonstrates, men were still "equated with the

mind and reason and women with the body and the material world" (16). While knowledge might have been traditionally separated from the female body, women were credited with a "specifically feminine way of knowing" in their "superior memory and affinity for detail." In this study, I am interested in exploring the ways these three female travel writers thus conflate their female, maternal bodies with their pedagogical projects, towards the subordinate women in Turkey, Sweden, or Haiti, but also towards their readerships at home in England and America. This pedagogy is, however, complicated by the women's anxious relation to their own body under a patriarchal system which both privileges and minimizes the maternal role. This pedagogy is further contested by its return to the women by those around them who serve as educators in their own right, as for example Montagu is educated on inoculation at the hands of the Turkish women, or Clara in *Secret History* returns Mary's pedagogy to her in the form of lessons on Clara's own abusive marriage.

In chapter one, I begin with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, which trace her trajectory through Germany and Austria, culminating in an extended journey through Turkey. The most famous episode of this journey, and the one that has received the most critical attention, is Lady Mary's visit to a Turkish bathhouse, where she notes the female bathers' remarkable confidence and ease in one another's presence, likening the bathhouse to a female coffee shop. I begin the chapter with an attention to this moment, particularly with regards to the way Lady Mary's clothed figure is read as an outlier within the feminine dynamics of the naked bathers. From there, I consider how pregnant bodies are read as symbols of beauty or fertility, constructions against whose adoption Lady Mary pedagogically argues, despite her own pregnant body's visible counter-argument. I compare this to her fascination with the Turkish inoculation

practices, and the ways Lady Mary, both intentionally and unavoidably, imbricates herself in these bodily discourses as pedagogue and reader. Lady Mary's pedagogy is undermined by her own conflicted responses to her own naked or pregnant body, but her maternal role grants her the possible agency to enact a self-reflexive bodily rhetoric on her children, a successive approximation of the rhetoric she is unable to inscribe on her own body.

In chapter two, I consider Mary Wollstonecraft's 1796 *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*[4]*,* a text that follows Mary, accompanied by her small daughter and a nurse, on a journey through Northern Europe taken to complete business at the behest of her former lover—and father of her infant daughter—Gilbert Imlay. In places the letters read as direct addresses to him, pleading with him to recognize, support, and care for herself and their daughter, upon Mary's discovery of Imlay's infidelity. Despite the intensely personal genesis, and the mournful sensibility the tone of the letters often display, the text was always intended for publication, and as such is more than a series of desperate love letters. In particular, I focus on Mary's maternal and pedagogical gaze towards her daughter Fanny, who is both central to the text's purpose and liminal within her mother's structures of vision. Fanny infrequently appears in her mother's accounts, and when she does, an intensity of maternal

[4] A note on the provenance of this text, and Mary Wollstonecraft's personal circumstances surrounding it: Mary met Gilbert Imlay in 1793, quickly falling in love. The two engaged in a secret relationship before setting up house together when Mary became pregnant. Imlay soon began to take longer and more frequent business trips, eventually setting up Mary in a separate house shortly after the birth of their daughter, Fanny, in 1794. Desperate at this separation, Mary attempted suicide but was thwarted. In May 1795 Imlay officially appointed Mary as his business representative in Gothenburg and Copenhagen. Mary undertook the journey accompanied by a fourteen-month-old Fanny and a nursemaid. Upon discovering Imlay living with a mistress when she returned to England, Mary again attempted suicide by jumping into the Thames, but was rescued by a passer-by. The letters that make up *Short Residence,* despite an intensely personal tone and frequent evocation of these circumstances, are distinct from Mary's private letters to Imlay, and were always intended for publication.

affection is counterbalanced by an inability to remain considering the child for very long, creating a gap in their maternal relations which is conserved across either distance or emotional space. Mary's gaze towards Fanny is pedagogical, in that through gazing at her child she can attempt to learn how best to approach Fanny's contested education as a woman in the system of republican womanhood. This gaze also serves as a pedagogical project to the outside readers of the text, as Mary constructs a sympathetically solitary narrative persona that encourages readers to attend to those objects within the author's line of sight. The very emotional power of the letters serves to construct this emotional connection in the reader, but with the text's constant shuttling away from the vision of Fanny, this narrative affection is produced through the tension within the text of Wollstonecraft's ambivalent relationship to her daughter.

In chapter three, I consider Leonara Sansay's 1808 epistolary novel, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo.* As do Wollstonecraft's and Montagu's, Sansay's text expresses an anxiety over maternal embodiment and women's pedagogical roles, expressed in part through the narrator's ironic educational attempts on the maternal mores of the local residents. Also as in the previous two chapters, this pedagogy becomes complicated, returning to the ostensible educators and recasting them as students, creating dynamic educational networks rather than simplistic uni-directional systems of transmission. Yet, as the only novel in the group, Sansay's text allows her to go a bit further, positing a partial way out of the maternal anxieties the others bemoan. To relay her real-life experiences in the days of the Haitian Revolution, Sansay splits her authorial persona into a pair of fictionalized sisters, Mary and Clara, with Mary writing to a fictionalized version of Aaron Burr concerning her sister and their mutual education. Late in the novel, Clara flees her abusive husband, sending three letters back to Mary in her own voice and thereby

further complicating the teacher-student dynamic that had been privileging Mary prior to this shift in voice. Each of the protagonists are childless, making their rich and complex relationship to one another—as sisters, mothers, educators, and lovers—the centerpiece of the text. By fictionalizing her account and splitting herself across two characters, Sansay can relate to herself as to an other, thereby offering a venue to productively destabilize the dynamics of maternity and pedagogy, and construct a deeply self-reflexive and mutually affectionate homosocial arrangement.

Throughout this project, I explore how these three female travel writers each express their own bodily relations and the anxiety that comes with motherhood in a culture of contested authorial relations. Each author constructs a kind of secondary family with their letter-reading public, casting themselves as educators, responsible for training their female correspondents in self-reflexive ways to relate to their own bodies, a training project that is both complicated and sanctioned by this maternal anxiety. While Wollstonecraft and Montagu construct their pedagogical potential on the basis of their own maternal bodies and maternal authority, Leonara Sansay, in a novel with two childless protagonists, reverses this direction by granting the two sisters maternal relations to one another as based on their confident, pedagogical attempts on both subordinate local women and on one another.

Chapter One: The Uneasy Burden: Maternal Anxiety and Bodily Rhetoric in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*

When, in the anecdote which began this study, Lady Mary concludes one of the letters in her 1716 travelogue *The Turkish Embassy Letters*[5] with an announcement of her need for a midwife, she textualizes her own maternal body. This maternal text takes on a pedagogical function, with both Lady Mary and the Turkish women reading one another's bodies as a form of cultural exchange and education. Although Lady Mary's education of the Turkish women and her English contemporaries on healthful ways to relate to their own maternity is undermined by her own inability to control her pregnancies in line with her pedagogy, she does find a way to exercise control over the bodies of her children through inoculation. In this way, a fascination with feminine and maternal bodily rhetoric structures the text, although relatively little critical attention has been focused on this aspect of Montagu's exceptionally rich text.

The most remarked-upon episode of Lady Mary Montagu's travel diaries is that of her visit to a Turkish bath, and her ethnographically sensitive portrayal of the women within the

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[5] In 1715 Lady Mary and her husband Edward Wortley Montagu lived in London, where Wortley had a seat in Parliament (for which Lady Mary helped him lobby) while Lady Mary herself collaborated with literary lights like John Gay, Abbe Conti and Alexander Pope. Shortly after Lady Mary contracted smallpox, Wortley was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of Turkey. Turkey being at war with the Venetian Empire, Wortley's assignment was to bring about a peace treaty through the offer of British mediation. For this end, the family left for Holland on 2 August 1716, traveling through Holland, Austria, and then Turkey, accompanied on the last leg of the journey by an escort of grenadiers, musketeers, hussars, horsemen and scholars. While Wortley negotiated, Lady Mary befriended the French Ambassadress, went sightseeing, and studied Arabic history and poetry with the *effendis*. *The Turkish Embassy Letters* trace these experiences, in a series of letters to a wide variety of correspondents, from 3 August 1716 to 1 November 1718 (Montagu xv-xvii). For biographical information, please see: Isobel Grundy. *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Comet of the Enlightenment.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

bath. In this moment[6], Lady Mary is pleasantly astounded by the grace and confidence of the naked bathers, while the bathers in turn are mystified by Lady Mary's restrictive wardrobe. This moment has been read from a variety of perspectives. Elizabeth Bohls observes Lady Mary's attempt to "challenge the male Orientalists of her day" (180). In a similar vein, Teresa Heffernan sees Lady Mary's letters as unsettling the Orientalist narrative of a reason/religion binary, by "releas[ing] the (un)veiled woman from her role as placeholder in the East/West divide" and performing Spivak's "model of 'speaking to the other'" (203). Mary Jo Kietzman sees Montagu's writing as an ethnography which resists representing culture as fixed and Other in favor of "convey[ing] the fluidity of a culture whose women seem remarkably able to accommodate a multiplicity of alterities into their social fabric" (537).

More recently, Kader Konuk saw Lady Mary as engaged in an "ethnomasquerade," or the "performance of an ethnic identity through the mimicking of clothes, gestures, appearance, language, cultural codes, or other components of identity formation" (393), exploring the historically specific ways this ethnomasquerade articulated changing attitudes towards the Other in exchanges between the Ottoman Empire and the West. Srinivas Aravamudan performs a psychoanalytic reading, in which she sees Lady Mary's reading of the Turkish women as a form of what she terms utopic levantinization, a gesture of "intellectual wagering without accountability," (70) paired with her reading of masquerade as a "model of female subjectivity...that will come to be structurally related to a kind of freedom that suspends truth"

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[6] The letter containing the anecdote of the Turkish bath, easily the most critically considered episode of the *Turkish Embassy Letters,* was written from Adrianopole on the first of April, 1717. The recipient is unidentified in the edition of the letters edited by Halsband, although Wharncliffe identifies the recipient as Lady Rich. In this edition, Malcolm Jack follows Halsband's lead, denoting the recipient only as Lady -----. (*Turkish Embassy Letters* 174).

(78). In a similarly psychoanalytical vein, Inge Boer claims Lady Mary explores the ways "surveillance also provides possibilities for resistance" against the patriarchal system which mimimizes these women into aesthetic objects, by demonstrating how, in the baths, the "monolithical and unidirectional character of relations among despotism" (45) are subverted and redirected.

While I concur with the near-universal valuation of the Turkish bath scene, I am more particularly interested in how the vision of the female body shown there interacts with depictions of the maternal body. I would like to read this moment as one of both cultural and intellectual exchange, where the terms of freedom and restriction are written on the bodies of the female participants. Lady Mary is granted access to the bathhouse due to her gender, but is unable fully to enter into the social exchange there due to her identification with her garments. Meanwhile, the Turkish women, although apparently free to circulate and converse within their gendered space, are hierarchically structured within it. Lady Mary's account of these bodily relations both serves to educate her English correspondents, and to demonstrate her own education at the hands of the Turkish women, constructing a two-way pedagogy. In this, Lady Mary exhibits a similarly productive, maternal pedagogy, as well as an anxiety over the place and direction of that pedagogical power, as Mary Wollstonecraft and Leonara Sansay will do. While Wollstonecraft will address this anxiety by producing narrative sympathy through a necessary distance from her daughter, and Sansay by textually splitting her persona into a pair of protagonists who then develop quasi-maternal relations to one another, Montagu finds a partial solution to the anxiety by transposing the bodily rhetoric which is problematic in her own case onto the less-contested bodies of her children.

To this end, I will examine those moments of Lady Mary's reflections on Turkish pregnancy and inoculation practices, and her own involvement in these bodily discourses as both pedagogue and reader. This doubled pedagogical relationship, functioning around a rhetoric of the readable body, is undercut by Lady Mary's own conflicted responses to her naked or pregnant body, but her maternal role grants her the agency to enact a successive approximation of the bodily rhetoric which she tries to write onto the bodies of her children, enabling them to move a degree or so further in their education than she can in her own.

Within the celebrated bathing scene, Lady Mary's bodily reality is immediately present as a private subtext, underlying her rationalist, ethnographic descriptions of the building and the ceremonies of entering. She describes the second room of the bath as being “so hot with the streams of sulfur...'twas impossible to stay there with one's clothes on.” (58) Yet despite the heat, Lady Mary remained “in [her] travelling habit, which was a riding dress:” not only dressed, but dressed in a heavy and constricting costume intended to withstand the vagaries of travel. In this way, Lady Mary moves through the rooms of the bathhouse without engaging the norms of that space fully, remaining divided from the gracious nudity of the local women by cloaking herself in the tactile sign of traveling. The Turkish bathers can read in her dress signs of her gender, her ethnicity, and her class, allowing them to grant her a degree of respect and trust, and hence allow her to view their private ritual, a privilege that would be denied to men, and perhaps to women who came weighted without social and governmental approval.

Lady Mary, appreciatively struck by the lack of hierarchy on the score of her fashion, nonetheless constructs a hierarchy herself, taking pride in her place within it by expressing pleasure when addressed by the most considerable woman of the group. While “considerable”

casts the woman as an implicit leader, classifying her as such also promotes her intellectual prowess, as both worthy to be considered and capable of considering. Referring to this moment, Weitzman suggests that, despite her class consciousness, Lady Mary is working against a strictly Orientalist view by avoiding the “implication that these women are from some exotic world, distant from and alien to Europe, but instead discovers a link of commonality and sororal camaraderie” (351). While Lady Mary's social commentary is admirably willing to take the Turkish women on their own terms, with aesthetic readings of their persons that take their intellect, rather than simply their objectivity into account, far from a link of sororal camaraderie, this connection is constructed through the Turkish women reading Lady Mary's own body as an exotically mechanical object. By neglecting, at the expected time, to remove this clothing despite local custom and her own obvious discomfort in the heat, Lady Mary makes her clothes a literal second skin, an irreducible part of her body and herself. By remaining constrained within her clothes, Lady Mary makes of herself a translation error: while she views the clothing, and particularly the corset beneath them, as a requisite and immediately readable marker of her femininity and her status as an upper-class Englishwoman, the Turkish ladies see the garments as a barrier to reading which prevent them from divining Lady Mary's true shape.

Meanwhile, in trying to read the Turkish women's bodies under her own paradigm, Lady Mary examines the women's naked bodies as aesthetic and artistic values, such as those she finds in her own clothing. She attends to the women's “majestic grace” (59) of movement, famously paralleling them with Milton's vision of Eve, and also notices how, in absence of external ornaments, the women's hair becomes their most carefully manipulated beauty. By turning her own gaze away from the face, Lady Mary's attention to the most visible and explicit markers of

embodied female sexuality can be read as minimizing the women to the role of unthinking statues. By beginning with an implicit focus on the external, constructed markers of her own femininity, however, and then attending to the ways the bathers express their own version thereof, Lady Mary turns this scene into one, not of gazing, but of reading. Immediately after cataloging the women's bodily engagements, Lady Mary remarks that, “in short, 'tis the women's coffee house.” Within the containment of the bathing house, the women are granted a temporary bodily freedom, which extends to their freedom of expression. Excluded from the spaces of male discourse, such as the coffeehouse, the women here have constructed a space for their own knowledge circulation, a pattern of movement both bodily and intellectual.

When Lady Mary is finally persuaded to unfasten her shirt, she does so solely to persuade the gathered women of the impossibility of their request: underneath the clothing is not skin, but stays. Lady Mary and the women, seemingly sharing a gendered, biological common ground, actually share a miscommunication. When requested to exhibit her body, in order to join the social exchange, Lady Mary instead exhibits the cage of stays and corsets that contains her, and which she has internalized as her own body. The other women read this hesitancy as physical inability, assuming that Lady Mary must be “locked up in that machine” (60) by her vengeful, key-possessing husband. While Lady Mary is “charmed” by what she reads as creative naivete, the next sentence suggests that the key, while not tangible, is very much extant. Lady Mary, although desirous of spending more time conversing in this female coffeehouse, must hurry away at the behest of her husband, resolved to “pursue his journey the next morning.” The journey is singular, with Lady Mary being treated much like a child, required to commence, halt, or modify travel plans regardless of her own desires or convenience. In this, she exemplifies the position of

the mother within the patriarchal familial system of the Augustan period. While, as a mother, her physical body grants her an authority over the education of her children, that sphere of power is delimited by her own position under the authority of her husband. Lady Mary's accession to his power marks Mr. Wortley himself as the mechanistic force which motivates his wife against her will, the less-literal version of the key the bathers seek. Despite her initial moment of defamiliarization in the beginning of the bathing scene, Lady Mary fails to defamiliarize her own bodily relations, in which she has superimposed her garments, with their external patriarchal control, over her physical body figuratively as well as literally.

If the Turkish bath serves as a paradoxical gesture of freedom for Mary and the Turkish women, this contrasts with the need for Turkish women to write their own productivity in their bodies by remaining perennially pregnant, a bodily control mechanism which Mary ironically and contemptuously refuses. Here, the visibly maternal body serves as a writing surface to express tensions over freedom and constriction surrounding the body and particularly the reproductive organs. In a letter to the Abbe Conti dated February 1718, Lady Mary, while seeming to take a student's position, actually works subversively to educate him, and through him her wider audience of female readers, on the Turkish religious values for pregnancy and childbirth. She opens the letter with a school-girl's assurance that she intends to give the Abbe "punctual answers to all [his] questions," (109) in the style of a model student responding to a schoolmaster's queries. Playing up her humility, she proffers a prettily-worded apology for her lack of fluency in French, the literal *lingua franca* which itself serves as a specialized conceit to impress the Abbe Conti with her scholastic seriousness and linguistic grace.

Yet the remainder of the letter serves to educate the Abbe from within the structured

genre of the foreign-language writing exercise, in which the instructor is assumed to know the answers the student performs. Here, Lady Mary complicates the role of teacher and student, casting Abbe Conti as her pupil of Turkish habits. In a classic psychological move, she begins by encouraging her student to further effort by remarking on what he does well, here confirming his suppositions about Koranic law. After this comforting assurance, however, she sharply reproves him on his misconception that Islam rejects women from Paradise, on the ground that Muhammad "was too much a gentleman and loved the fair sex too well to use them so barbarously" (109). To complicate his simplistic view of Islamic morals, Lady Mary tells him the virtue which Muhammad demands of women in order to enter Paradise: they are "not to live in such a manner as to become useless to the world, but to employ themselves as much as possible in making little *musulmans*" (110). Here, the pregnant female body enters the discourse as an abstraction, one embedded in a discourse of civil and religious responsibility, a discourse purposely tangential from that of Lady Mary's own female body.

Despite this visceral distance, Lady Mary uses the female form as a pedagogical tool to pointedly address the Abbe's own misconceptions in ways that will be most immediately effective for educating him. Demonstrating that, as the Muslims believe God entrusted the women with an important and honorable office, those who "out of malice or laziness do not make it their business to bear or to breed children...rebel against the commands of God," (110), Lady Mary bitingly remarks, "Here are maxims prodigiously contrary to those of your convents!" Lady Mary brings a discourse that had been philosophically distant and ruminative directly to bear on the Abbe's personal beliefs, demanding that he reflect on what will become of the "whole bead roll of your holy virgins and widows" who, if judged by the Muslim system,

“will be found to have been infamous creatures that passed their whole lives in a most abominable libertinism.” Rhetorically, Lady Mary has embedded the bitter pill of cultural self-reflection within the more palatable backdrop of herself as a humble language student. To dispel the Abbe's misconceptions fully, however, Lady Mary must resort to a shift in vocal register, adopting a more-obviously tutorial variant on her narrative persona to drive home the role of the generative female body.

This lesson is continued in a second letter directed to Abbe Conti, dated 29 May 1717, in which she lightly mentions that Turkish women who die unmarried are mourned as reprobates, since the woman's role is to increase and multiply, and “she is only properly employed in the works of her calling when she is bringing forth children or caring for them.” (100). Here, Lady Mary grants the work of bringing forth children the respect of a “calling,” while praising the women's resilience and sense of purpose within the restriction of the Turkish ways of life “which shuts them out of all public commerce.” Following this with an ironic observation on superstitious women who rush into marriages immediately following the loss of a husband, Lady Mary seems to take comfort in the religious progressiveness of others who “like their liberty and are not slaves to their religion, content[ing] themselves with marrying when they are afraid of dying” (100). Here, if the women's acceptance of their place within a restrictive society is laudable, even more so is their intellectual and religious flexibility in relation to that role. These women who “like their liberty” express that liberty through their control of their own bodies in balance with their submission to their religion. Their submission then becomes an educated choice , one which Lady Mary applauds by omission as she archly leaves the Abbe to determine which divinity is more rational, the Turkish listed above or his own Catholic system which

privileges perpetual and enforced virginity.

The Abbe's choice might predictably fall on the Christian side, but Lady Mary's rhetorical move to abruptly conclude the topic with this wryly polarized decision serves to leave the matter open for outside readers. While the letter is ostensibly addressed to Abbe Conti, the publication of this personal epistle allows for Lady Mary to address a diverse readership, and pedagogically encourage female readers to look between the lines and see themselves in this image of the liberated Turkish woman who is capable of both attending to the dictates of society and those of her own body. In this way, Lady Mary enacts her pedagogical project on the bodies of her English readers, encouraging them to take responsibility for the use of their own bodies, and relate to both those bodies and the belief systems constructed around them with a similar degree of rational flexibility. Here, the Turkish women are not the object of pedagogical pressures, but are rather held up as models for her European readership on the basis of their intimately personal relations to their own maternity.

Yet, while Lady Mary lauds the Turkish women's flexible bodily rhetoric in the bathhouse and in their understanding of remarriage, she advises her readership against espousing the Turkish women's concept of their maternity. The two letters addressed to Abbe Conti frame the remarkable Letter 39[7], addressed to Anne Thistlethwayte. Here, Lady Mary enacts a bi-directional pedagogy, working to rectify both the Turkish women's and her own contemporaries'

[7] The letter to Anne Thistlethwayte, dated 4 January 1718, ends with the announcement of her daughter's forthcoming birth. A letter addressed to Lady Mary's sister, Lady Mar, dated at 10 March 1718 lists the child as five weeks old, making her actual birth date in late January or early February. The first of the Abbe Conti letters is dated 29 May 1717. Working backwards, (and assuming that her daughter was not born substantially premature) Lady Mary was likely four to six weeks pregnant when writing the first Abbe Conti letter, a consideration that is ironic in light of her heralding the Turkish women's reasonable choice to prolong a hiatus in marriage and pregnancy that she has been unable to sustain herself.

maternal self-conceptions, through a much more personal and evocative tone than either of the letters to Abbe Conti. Once again, in order to enact her pedagogical project, and come to terms with the anxieties inherent to that position, Lady Mary must switch between separate vocal registers, taking on different voices for different roles as pedagogue, student, and reader. As we will see, Mary Wollstonecraft takes a similar approach, shunting frequently between a strictly rational and a deeply sentimental tone in order to affix readers' sympathy, while Sansay takes the more extreme approach of literally splitting herself into a pair of fictionalized representations, multiplying the possibilities for pedagogical relations. In Montagu's case, Lady Mary seems compelled to discuss her own pregnant state, with varying levels of directness and personal invocation. In both the letters to the Abbe and to Anne, however, her response to child-bearing is ambiguous, charged with anxiety, and reflective of a conflicted attraction to the Turkish women's relative unconcern with the process.

While the Abbe, as a clergyman and a male, is provided with a pair of increasingly exhortative sociological lessons on childbirth trends, Anne, as an understanding female correspondent, is privileged to a warmly intimate confession of Lady Mary's pregnant state: “my head [is] wholly filled with the preparations necessary for the increase of my family, which I expect every day. You may easily guess at my uneasy situation....” (107). Here, Lady Mary's wonted vivacity is dropped, revealing a tone of mental and bodily exhaustion peering through the time-worn euphemisms. This forthcoming birth seems to provide little anticipatory pleasure for Mary, waiting to be relieved of her “uneasy” load, overfilled in both head and belly with potentialities which require a force of responsibility great enough to press out the concerns of other letters. Remarking ironically that she ought to be comforted in her travail by the “glory that

accrues to [her] from it," Lady Mary takes the opportunity of Anne's unfamiliarity with this trope to educate her on the Turkish maternal customs, a lesson that remains much more proximate to her own bodily experiences than do the letter to Abbe Conti. She announces to Anne that the women of this country have "a notion that whenever a woman leaves off bringing children, 'tis because she is too old for that business, whatever her face says to the contrary." The diminutive "notion," the casual tone of "leaves off," and the dismissive summation of "that business," promptly followed by the rational visual evidence that, perhaps, Lady Mary herself would follow, suggest a light-hearted ironization of the Turkish women's naivete.

This satirical irony takes on a darker tone as the paragraph progresses, however, and Lady Mary tells Anne that the women "fly to all sort of quackeries" (107) to avoid the ignominy of seeming too old, at the frequent result of poisoning themselves. She recounts women of her acquaintance who have given birth a dozen or more times, with old women taking pride in broods of twenty-five or thirty. Uneasy with her own load, she contemplates its repetition with horrified irony as she queries what happens if the women are delivered of "such a flock as they desire" to which the women blithely answer that "the plague will certainly kill half of them." The objectifying "flock" and the casual self-reflexivity of the "vanity" the women feel for "having brought forth so plentifully" makes the children appear as a sort of fashionable—and disposable—accessory, allowing their mothers, through their prenatal visibility, to write their own youth, beauty, and fruitfulness into their flesh, while mattering very little in their persons once separated from that of their mother.

While Lady Mary dryly satirizes these women's desire for large broods, the object of her pedagogical intent is again complicated. In a later letter to Madame de Bonnac on the same

subject, Lady Mary once again switches into the vocal register most conducive to her reader's education. In a lightly satirical style, she reiterates the Turkish women's desire for many offspring, claiming with exhausted irony that she can “hardly convince them that [she had] a legitimate excuse for being three months without pregnancy because my husband is a hundred leagues away from me” (132). Here, Lady Mary explicitly positions herself as a wise and rueful pedagogue, complaining to a colleague about her difficulty in transmitting lessons to recalcitrant pupils, although she leaves unclear the content of her student's misconceptions: do the Turkish women expect her to magically become pregnant despite her husband's absence, or, more practically, to commit adultery? Yet this Lady Mary's teacherly viewpoint is undermined by her sudden school-girl apology on her own inability to resist being normalized by her Turkish companions: “Idleness is the mother of vices, as you know, and having nothing better to do, I have produced a daughter. I know you will tell me that I have done very badly....” Here, the rhetoric of the letter shifts Madame de Bonnac into the position of pedagogue to whom Lady Mary must address her apology and recite her lesson, as a schoolchild who promises harder work in the future to make up for an unaccustomed misdemeanor today.

To further complicate the direction of this pedagogical transfer, the Turkish women themselves are cast as powerful, if not always salutary, pedagogues, whose fashionable passion for child-bearing has molded Lady Mary's behavior—and her body—in line with their own almost against her will. In the letter to Anne Thistlethwayte, Lady Mary displaces her dissatisfaction onto the body of the unfortunate French Ambassadress, who is pregnant with her second child in the space of a year. Here, her friend's assumption of the Turkish women's predominant maternal rhetoric stands in for Lady Mary's own, a surrender which Lady Mary

recognizes as problematically compulsory. The French Ambassadress' visible pregnancy serves as the marker not only of her fertility and beauty, but also of her coercion into a foreign register, a state which seems to distress Lady Mary considerably more than it does the Ambassadress herself. While Lady Mary does not share the Turkish women's fervent desire for constant pregnancy and large families, her current pregnancy nonetheless writes her body into that discourse, re-establishing her as commensurate with a maternity that she sought to both exempt herself from and pedagogically modify.

The Turkish women's discourse on pregnancy and child-bearing disrupts Lady Mary's pedagogical attempts, much as the pregnancy itself short-circuits her role as an educator of Anne Thistlethwayte. Lady Mary provides Anne with a lesson on the Turkish judicial system, particularly a punishment for liars which she finds delightfully fitting: “they are burnt in the forehead with a hot iron, being proved the author of any notorious falsehood” (108). Just as she wistfully considers the pedagogical usefulness of considering the body as text, displaying a subjective grammar, Lady Mary makes her own parturient body textual by writing it into the space of her letter. Lady Mary interrupts her own pedagogical narrative on Turkish law to exclaim that she “should go on to tell you many other parts of justice, but I must send for my midwife.” As an intrusion which sets a temporal limit to her discourse, the imminent delivery of her daughter demonstrates Lady Mary's inability to control the ways in which her own body is read, while working to modify the bodily grammars of her readers, both Turkish and English, through a satirical account of the former's maternal conceptions. Yet by being unable to avoid falling into line, at least in appearance, with the very practices she seeks to adjust, Lady Mary's bodily pedagogy stops short of her own person.

If Lady Mary is unable to exercise the control she preaches on her own body, she is able to practice a more actively agential pedagogy in relation to the bodies of her children. Her fascination with, and dissemination of, the process of smallpox inoculation displaces this bodily rhetoric from the site of Lady Mary's own maternal body, where the constrictions of her own gender and class undermine her pedagogical aims, to her children, where she is able to write her own knowledge onto their physical bodies in the form of inoculation. Here, the role of teacher and student are again productively conflated. She is able to receive education on the practice of inoculation at the hands of the wise old village women, and then prove her mastery of the topic by reproducing the beneficial effects in a text of her own, bypassing her own complicated and contingent body in favor of those of her children. Thus graduated, Lady Mary is able to serve as a pedagogue herself, transmitting the benefits of inoculation to correspondents back home in the form of both written letters and the healthy, treated bodies of her children[8].

Lady Mary's account of her introduction to inoculation starts with a story-book exclamation that the wonders she is about to unfold to her correspondent, Sarah Chiswell, are so fantastic as to "make you wish yourself here," (81) a framing narrative which already pedagogically serves to draw attention to the emotional, as well as scientific, import of the following passage. Her own first introduction to the process likewise has a school-room

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[8] Lady Mary inoculated her son in Turkey. Rationalizing this decision to Sarah Chiswell, she called herself a "patriot" for her desire to "take pains to bring this useful invention into fashion in England" (83) and even to fight with doctors who might limit the technique's spread from mercenary motives. In 1721, Lady Mary had her chance to act the patriot, inoculating her then three-year-old daughter against smallpox in London as a public exhibition. In 1722, Princess Caroline followed Lady Mary's example, inoculating her own two children, and Addison Steele applauded Lady Mary's civic mindedness in *The Plain Dealer*. A cenotaph memorializing her introduction of inoculation to Englad was erected in Lichfield Cathedral after her death.

structure, as she describes groups of wise women who, in the autumn, gather classes of fifteen or sixteen youths to begin their education, arriving with the comfortingly quotidian “nutshells” full of the “best sort of smallpox,” with the pleasantry of asking “what veins you please to have opened,” granting the students a sense of personal responsibility and immediacy in the bodily grammar she is soon to inscribe upon them. In this, Lady Mary is most a mother when she is most a scientist, experimenting on her children's bodies for their own betterment.

If this bodily grammar is quite physically written upon the body of the children, its viscerality is then transmitted textually to a group of readers which includes Lady Mary, Sarah Chiswell, and future readers of the letter. All of these readers are brought into the class of students through a second-person address that locates these operations directly on the reader's own body, in a graphic dialogue of ripping open proffered veins, inserting venom, and tying off wounds with sharpened shells. The location of these wounds is then offered up as a code for reading the belief systems of the patient, with visible wounds speaking to a superstition of stigmata, while those placed where clothing will hide them suggest a more rationalist dispensation. After this moment which locates the discourse so intimately on the readers' bodies, Lady Mary shifts the narration to an attention to the bodies of the smallest patients inoculated in this manner, from the time the virus takes to travel through their bloodstream, which the children occupy in democratically playing together, to the “running sores” which mark the body of the little sufferers while simultaneously providing relief, to the facial pockmarks which do not persist in marking their bodies, unlike the full form of the disease more common in Europe. Here, Lady Mary once more undertakes a shift in role from student to pedagogue, transmitting the details of the practice to Sarah Chiswell, and through her, to the medical establishment of

Europe. So well “satisfied with the safety of the experiment,” is she, in fact, that she is willing to tear open the body of her “dear little son” to protect his health, so that the boy's body, and eventually that of her daughter as well, serve as living, textual proofs of Lady Mary's achievement in this bodily rhetoric.

In this way, Lady Mary is seemingly free to act upon and modify her children's bodies, and in fact does so despite considerable social and personal pressure to the contrary in the interests of their bodily health, as well as the efficacy of her own knowledge. However, this knowledge and freedom is denied her in response to her own body. In the bathhouse scene, she unreflectingly accepts her clothing and its patriarchal connotations as part of her body, despite their being a series of mechanical constraints that both impede health and restrict her entrance into the social sphere of her travels. Also, although she attempts through satire to modify the relations women, both Turkish and English, have to their maternal bodies and roles, her own pregnancy undermines her pedagogical authority. In sustaining a pregnancy and delivering a daughter, her body is acting at cross-purposes to her own implicit rhetoric of healthful bodily expressions, a dissociation she expresses through her uneasily rueful melancholy. If her pedagogy breaks down at the borders of her own maternal body, however, this very maternal function grants her the space for a more productive pedagogical engagement, acting upon her children's bodies in the ways she is unable to work upon her own.

Chapter Two: Maternal Vision and Structures of Affection in Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Journey*

Mary Wollstonecraft seems to have been a remarkably beloved woman. The *Westminster Review* quotes William J. Fox's effusive plea for a closer reading of Mary's writing and life story: “How long will it be before we shall have read to better purpose the eloquent lessons and the yet more eloquent history of that gifted and glorious being, Mary Wollstonecraft?” (quoted in Chaney 277). Her contemporary, novelist Mary Hays, reported feeling as though she had forged a personal friendship with Wollstonecraft, while Robert Southey exuberantly demanded of a publisher friend whether if had read Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark.* Despite the fact that the letters are surrounded by a group of affectionate and excited readers who are placing themselves in relationship with both the text and its author, the text itself revolves around the ambivalent, tangential position of intimate personal relationships. Conflating the woman and the book she authored, the perhaps over-excited Southey claims “ 'She has made me in love with a cold climate, with frost and snow, with a northern moonlight'” (quoted in Chaney 278), apparently disregarding the fact that, as the letters describe a summer's journey, they contain not a single tangible snowflake, despite Wollstonecraft's occasionally anxious reflections on the presumed winter experience in these northern expanses.

Southey's affection for the author is such that he is willing to gloss over substantial details of her actual travel experiences, leaving one to wonder on what basis his intense affection for the author's person, as well as her text, is founded. In effect, Southey has relocated the physical body of Mary Wollstonecraft into a doubly-imaginary landscape, so that it becomes unclear with whom or what Southey is in love. Mary Wollstonecraft may have made him in love with a cold

climate, but Mary herself in this affection is both instrumental and oddly elided. Southey is not alone in taking for granted the text's direct emotional appeal to members of its readership, but is one of a cluster of readers, most notably men, who surround the text with an affection bordering on passion for the author's person. In perhaps the most famous example of this narrative investment from outside, William Godwin, her future husband, wrote in his *Memoirs* concerning *Short Residence* that "if ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book" (Wollstonecraft x)[9]. Here, Godwin conflates the text with the author: by writing in the margins, he brings the physicality of the text to the forefront in the same gesture as he proclaims his affection for the woman who produced it.

Traveling through the northern countries with her child but without that child's father, Mary can be perceived as a sort of free agent, temporarily dissociated from the patriarchal household where she would hold a position as second-in-command under the authority of a husband. In recognizing and sympathizing with her solitude, these men present Mary as someone who needs to be rescued, and themselves as potential knights, casting her often anxious sorrow at her own solitude and her daughter's paternal abandonment as cause to rehabilitate her through their own emotional intensity. She is someone, they seem to consider, who would benefit by being loved, a rhetorical effect which I argue is purposefully constructed on Mary's part, and based on the contested, circumspect relationships of characters within the text, most notably

[9] In Godwin's case, this affection becomes quite literal. When the two met socially their relations were at first cool, but reading *Short Residence* converted Godwin to an active admirer. They began a romantic relationship, living together for some time before marrying in March 1797, in order to insure their daughter would be born legitimate. Mary Wollstonecraft died in August of that year, giving birth to the daughter who would become Mary Shelley. While Mary Shelley, notably, grew up to be a famous author in her own right, Mary Wollstonecraft's elder daughter, Fanny, instead inherited her mother's melancholia, committing suicide in 1816 by overdose of laudanum.

Mary's to her daughter Fanny. In particular, Mary's maternal and pedagogical gaze becomes a central tenet of the text, while her daughter Fanny holds a liminal position as the object of that maternal gaze. I argue that the outside affection solicited by Wollstonecraft's text is produced through the tension within that text of Wollstonecraft's melancholic relationship to solitude and ambivalent relationship to her daughter.

The text of the *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* develops a narrative persona on whose emotional intensities Wollstonecraft can base rhetorical authority for her writing. As Christine Chaney suggests in her article, Wollstonecraft's self-portrait "invit[es] readers to an 'intimacy' with her that simultaneously prompts the personal and affectionate responses noted above while also grounding her rhetorical authority in the trustworthy and admirable characteristics she exhibits along the way" (Chaney 279). By constructing an, at times, pathetically solitary narrative persona, Wollstonecraft invites sympathy and identification from her readers, so that her very quality of romantic solitude cements their attention to her own person, and thereby directs that attention to the objects within Mary's line of sight.

As Wollstonecraft herself notes her novel reviews, narrative sympathy, as an "emulative passion, one prompted by the imagination of the bystander as he or she witnesses another's feelings" is potentially dangerous (Teagan 362). Since readers can and do imbibe sensibility through their reading, there is always the chance of them taking away "empty, trivial, and unrealizable" structures of feeling from feebly-written fiction. Through sentimental novels, "novel readers are taught to want, but they are taught to want wildly, wrongly, investing in objects and ideas beyond their grasp" (Teagan 363). Teagan suggests that, for Wollstonecraft, a

proper novelistic pedagogy would instead be directed towards encouraging readers to espouse pure, bold and rational attitudes, and to be simultaneously contented with “domestic duties and 'moderate, rational prospects.'” By presenting herself as a solitary wanderer, traditionally an eighteenth-century masculine identity, Wollstonecraft constructs both a sentimentally intense heroine, onto whose impressions a reader can superimpose their own affective responses, and also an “appropriate model of behavior,” (Teagan 364) centered in the pedagogical observations which counterbalance her sentimentality.

As Nancy Yousef notes in her article, many current and contemporary readers reduce Mary as a narrator to “ the isolate self, aloof, removed, and at peace in its autonomy” (Yousef 537) a position most typically associated with the romanticism of Wordsworth's or Rousseau's first-person narrators. Yet Mary actually uses readers' expectations of this sort of sentimentally solitary wanderer to direct those readers' gazes pedagogically, subverting the ideal of solitude while seeming to most conform to an expectation for it. Mary's seemingly solitary persona is actually a carefully constructed “subjectivity explicitly wrested from fantasies of solitary self-fashioning, one shaped by vulnerability and acknowledged dependence on others.” This interpersonal dependence grants readers a place to affix their narrative sympathy: in the pathos appeal of the complicated, situational solitude that constitutes her relationship to her daughter.

On the first night of her journey, Mary lies awake soliloquizing on the beauties of the northern summer evening, granting to the natural features the peaceful unity in each other's presence that she herself lacks: “the rocks, even grown darker in their appearance, looked as if they partook of the general repose, and reclined more heavily on their foundations” (8). In contrast to the collegiate peace of the mountains, Mary is forced into solitary communion with

herself, exclaiming in frustration, “Why fly my thoughts abroad when everything around me appears at home?” If, as Barbara Taylor phrases it, Wollstonecraft is playing up her state as a “companionless voyager in a loveless world” (640), it is remarkable that this is a moment in which Mary does, in fact, have a companion, albeit a sleeping one: her fourteen-month-old daughter, Fanny. Far from serving as a companionate comfort, however, Fanny's sleeping state makes her as “innocent and sweet as the closing flowers.” Here, Mary's equation of Fanny with the peacefully unified natural world makes her daughter a radical other, who, in the same degree as the rocks and flowers, cannot be counted on to provide emotional support.

It is, however, through this very moment of sentimentally intense solitude that Mary is able to reach out for her daughter physically and emotionally. This moment is one of the few where we see Wollstonecraft physically holding or touching her daughter, as the contemplations of home and society that had occupied Mary's thoughts are expressed in the “tear drop[ped] on the rosy cheek [she] had just kissed” (Wollstonecraft 9). Mary's gesture combines a close bodily proximity along the register of an affectionate response with the the actualization of Mary's downward gaze onto her sleeping daughter, who in this state is incapable of returning the gaze. The combined contemplation of the distant natural scenery and her unresponsive daughter provoke “emotions that trembled on the brink of ecstasy and agony...which made me feel more alive than usual.” While Mary physically takes up her child to comfort herself in the face of the night's distance, she also mentally turns away from the equivalent distance represented by the sleeping child herself.

In this, Mary's relation to her child exhibits a similar tension over distance as does Lady Mary Montagu's own relation to maternity. Montagu, in order to drive home her pedagogy on the

Turkish women's habits of maternity, must distance herself from her own parturient body, but is unable to avoid her self-reflexive maternal discourse. Here, Mary's affectionate physical gesture towards her insensate daughter likewise demonstrates this anxiety over her own position relative to her child, as she simultaneously reaches out for and draws away from the intensity of solitude represented by the infant. As Barbara Taylor suggests, this "image of the lone woman, shorn of all intimate ties, was... a startling contrast to the familial, male-oriented feminine ideal of the late eighteenth century" (640). Here, Mary is indeed moving away from the maternal ideal of a woman caring for her child, but the alarm is Mary's own at her daughter's radical independence and unsuitability, at this moment, for caring for her own mother rather than the reverse.

In the oft-quoted passage immediately following this moment of maternal solitude, Mary exclaims rhetorically, "What are these imperious sympathies? How frequently has melancholy and even misanthropy taken possession of me, when the world has disgusted me, and friends have proved unkind. I have then considered myself as a particle broken off from the grand mass of mankind; --I was alone, till some involuntary sympathetic emotion, like the attraction of adhesion, made me feel that I was still a part of a mighty whole, from which I could not sever myself" (9). The passage begins with an imploring question, addressed in the second person to an unseen interlocutor, as to the nature of "these imperious sympathies" which her daughter's unresponsive body provokes in Mary but cannot satisfy. Here, Mary breaks open the familial solipsism of the perfectly paired mother and daughter, to create a space where outside readers of her text can feel themselves into her solitude. Narrative sympathy is constructed through this imagined reader's ability to empathize with Mary's plight as a stranger in a strange land, but that very constitutive solitude is itself mitigated by the promise of the eventual chemical reaction

which will re-affix sentimental attachments. The character within the narrative and the reader outside it are thereby united around the empty center of a solitude which forms the necessary catalyst for the construction of affective sympathy.

Even when Mary and Fanny are sharing the same daylight experiences, during their most seemingly salutary interactions, a similar emotional distance obtains between them. In the first letter of the collection, while waiting for a boat, Mary picks some heart's-ease, reading the blossoms as a good omen and momentarily considering pressing them as a keepsake within the pages of a letter. This connection to the flower instantiates both an emotional connection to the pain of her lost romantic relationship and a reference to Shakespeare, in which she recalls that the flower is appropriately called love-in-idleness. On making this observation, she turns to bring her child into her line of sight, noticing that, “the gaiety of my babe was unmixed; regardless of omens or sentiments, she found a few wild strawberries more grateful than flowers or fancies” (Wollstonecraft 6). Here, Fanny seems to serve as a comforting contrast for Mary, a reminder to appreciate the simple wildflowers, like the strawberries, for their innate attraction. Yet simultaneously Fanny is again cast as a radical other, a non-linguistic being who cannot understand her mother's emotional state, and whose own mental processes Mary can only extrapolate. Despite their immediate proximity, Mary's relationship to her daughter is constructed around a necessary distance of emotion that is conserved in the form of an intensity of emotional investment but a distance of physical space when they are parted by the contingencies of their journey. This constituent distance again echoes the similar distance in Montagu's conception of maternity, when she emotionally disengages herself from her pregnancy so as to avoid reading her own swelling belly as a symbol of beauty as do the Turkish women. In both women's cases,

their children are central to their position and self-conception as pedagogues, but also necessarily liminal to their educational projects, even as those projects focus on other children and cast the writers as pedagogues on the very basis of their credentials as mothers. Both children thereby serve as paradoxically prominent and necessarily liminal blind spots within their mothers' pedagogies.

As Mary travels north through Sweden, Fanny is literally marginalized, left behind in the care of the maid Marguerite, classified as excess baggage which, if expelled, will allow for smoother travels. Yet, this externalizing impulse is counteracted by Mary's attenuated yet emotionally powerful relationship to her daughter when physically distant from her. While absent from Fanny in Sweden, Mary is privy to the image of a

> "little car loaded with rye, that presented, for the pencil and heart, the sweetest picture of a harvest home that I had ever beheld. A little girl was mounted astraddle on a shaggy horse, brandishing a stick over its head; the father was walking at the side of the car with a child in his arms, who must have come to meet him with tottering steps, the little creature was stretching out its arms to cling round his neck; and a boy, just out of petticoats, was laboring hard, with a fork, behind, to keep the sheaves from falling" (90).

The picture of the three children on the hay cart emerges with vibrant and sentimental clarity, with each separate image of the unknown children uniting to represent Fanny to her mother, as through a play of mirrors, which projects Fanny through the very quality of her absence. Mary follows the visual of these unknown children, and, in seeing their mother preparing their dinner, experienced an "involuntary sigh" of envy. By equating her daughter with the peasant's children, Mary looks forward to the time when she will be able to provide similarly for her own daughter's physical needs. In this way, her daughter's body momentarily appears by implication, as Mary bemoans the poor fortune of her "babe, who may never experience a father's care or tenderness" and currently lacks a mother's as well. Reflecting on her daughter's double abandonment, Mary

briefly achieves a sort of union-in-absentia with her daughter, as the “bosom that nurtured her heaved with a pang” (91) of physically intensive maternal passion. Yet this moment of metaphorical connection fails to drive Mary into a desire for a closer personal connection with her daughter. Rather, directly after this emotional tie the text turns to Mary's plans to prolong her trip to see the famous Gothenberg waterfall, hence suggesting both the intensive affective response she is able to construct with her daughter, and the necessity of that connection to be extended over time and space.

This conservation of distance is most apparent in Mary's relationship with her own daughter, but her relations to other children encountered throughout her travels exhibit a similar emotional distance, as well as a more overt pedagogical effect. In this, she forms an apt connection between Lady Mary's education at the hands of the Turkish women on the process of inoculation, and Sansay's satirical descriptions of Creole mothers, intended to serve as warning tales to readers at home. For Mary Wollstonecraft, the local children she encounters are radically separate from Mary herself, bearing the same unearthly similarities with the natural world as does Fanny. The scene of the children on the hayrick suggested first the absent body and distraught, parent-less condition of her own daughter, but also, and more effectively, the natural appeal of the cascade at Gothenberg. Before the sublime view of this waterfall, calculated to impress its small human observers with a sense of its majesty, Mary stands gazing “stunned with the noise....and scarcely conscious of where she was” (91), taken for a moment from the intensity of her own emotional responses which the image of the hayrick children had so recently aroused. The waterfall then serves as a secondary site of attachment for Mary, when the images of her distant daughter are impressed too painfully upon her. Rather than actualizing this image by

returning to her daughter, however, or even explicitly holding that daughter's image in mind, Mary extends this sensation of distant, intimate longing by keeping the waterfall in her view as a substitute, intended to overwhelm the maternal affections in its overpowering rush of sublimity.

The moment of Mary's overwhelming attachment to the cascade is interrupted when she "observed a boy, half obscured by the sparkling foam, fishing under the impending rock" (91). The boy appears as an unearthly apparition, hidden by mist and placidly fishing, from an impossible and nearly invisible perch where "nothing like human footsteps appeared, and the horrific crags seemed to bid defiance even to the goat's activity" (Wollstonecraft 92). Here, the reader, already attuned to following Mary's lines of sight during her moments of greatest solitude, has been taking in the overwhelming majesty of the cascade along with her, when, through her eyes, the scene coalesces around the image of this lost boy who doesn't seem to realize he is lost. Despite his recognizable child's form, he leaves no footsteps that resemble a human's, and is in fact even more animalistic than the hardy goat, which dare not venture to such an improbable seat. The crags are "horrific," the rocks "impending," and even the pines which manage to cling to the sides of the cliffs furtively "dart[] up their spiral heads" as if afraid of retribution, while the boy fishes on unperturbed. Mary's horrified adjectives place the boy in a world apart from her own, a mythological universe where it is only the boy's innocence of his position, his quasi-human state, that prevents his quite literal and always imminent fall.

By directing readerly attention towards this boy through Mary's aghast gaze, a pedagogy of viewing is constructed that focuses responsibility on the viewer rather than the viewed, while simultaneously complicating the direction of that pedagogy, similarly to how Montagu's text complicates the direction of vision in the famous bathhouse scene. While standing near the

cascade, Mary is watching the boy on the cliff side with horrified concern. Yet the boy himself is unaware of his plight, and, like a mythological creature, might lose his confidence and hence his animalistic grip on his perch were he to be made aware. Rather, the reader themselves, through their identification with Mary's literal and figurative viewpoint, are made aware of this boy's liminal existence, and directed to do something about it. As Thomas Ford suggests, “different practices of reading produce different kinds of reader. A shift in textual apprehension makes different kinds of acting possible. Reading, then, can be understood as a kind of midwifery” (198). Here, Mary uses her readers' narrative affection for her own person as a springboard for metaphorical midwifery, encouraging readers to approach the boy with a forgiving, supportive gaze that might draw attention to his improbable perch. If the reader is encouraged to take on the role of midwife, Mary herself seems to claim the boy as her own, through the second-degree kinship to the natural world which Fanny also shares. By spotting the boy hovering implausibly on the side of the cliff, and subordinating all the natural visual elements of the cascade to his presence, Mary directs her readers' vision along with hers to bring the boy to a fuller life out of the shadows, thereby providing her readers a pedagogy of vision that instructs them on how to interact with the world, through the object lesson of the unearthly boy on the cliff which even the animals won't frequent.

This implicit placement of the reader in the role of pedagogue is complemented by passages of more explicit pedagogical reference, when Mary takes on the judgmental role of educator in reference to the native women's child-rearing practices. When traveling in the Swedish countryside, for example, Mary observes that men and women must spend the summer making cloth for warm clothes to ward off the always-impending winter chill. This surplus of

cloth, however, combined with a “mistaken tenderness...for their children, makes them, even in summer, load them with flannels” (19), a care-taking tendency which Mary argues has the opposite effect. Rather than protecting the children against wintry weather, this untimely overdressing weakens them, granting them a “squalid appearance” and a “noxious smell.” In fact, the tendency to overdress seems to Mary so detrimental that she ominously wonders why she “did not see more children in the villages.”Unlike the boy on the cliff, the village children are not unnaturally prominent, but rather are nearly completely invisible. When they do appear, as in this moment, they are withering, wilting creatures, grotesquely wrapped in their own perspiration and decaying from the outside in before they have a chance to grow up. Rather than growing luxuriantly and free, a state Fanny exemplifies as she enjoys the wild strawberries with childish abandon, these children are “nipped in the bud.” In short, the children, like flowers out of season, are dead or dying without having blossomed, a doleful state of affairs which Mary blames solely on their mothers' collective ineptitude.

Here, the reader's eye is directed towards the bodies of these unfortunate children, depicted piecemeal for the most viscerally grotesque effect. Through the language of this passage, packed with reference to “continual perspiration,” “unwholesome moisture” and mother's breasts which seemingly exude salt fish and brandy, Wollstonecraft depicts these mothers as ridiculous, even monstrous figures who should not be trusted with their own children, while the children themselves emerge as pathetic sites for pity. This ridicule, with its pedagogical purpose of instructing Western European mothers to avoid the Swedish women's negative example, is directly opposed to Montagu's enthusiastic praise of the Turkish women's practices of inoculation. In the latter case, Montagu is recast as a student of this new, persuasive bodily

rhetoric, and subsequently incorporates the practice into her own pedagogy, giving herself a method of granting greater security and health to her children's bodies than she is able to do for her own. In contrast, Mary Wollstonecraft encourages her readers to rethink their own and their children's embodiment by directing attention to the baneful effects of a poorly-considered bodily pedagogy.

While admitting that the Danish women's habits of frugality might enable them to "save something in their kitchens," Mary bewails the effect this ignorance has on their children, rendering them spoiled and unruly under "the care of weak, indulgent mothers," who themselves, without strength of mind, "become the slaves of infants, enfeebling both body and mind by false tenderness" (97). Here, Wollstonecraft spells out her own philosophy of child-rearing through opposition to this disdainful picture, privileging a pedagogy that allows children free rein to exercise their bodies, without the enclosure of unseasonable clothing to enfeeble them. The mind, in contrast, ought to run within guidelines, with the mother exercising control over her child, yet allowing flexibility within those limits, thereby granting the child a strength of mind from being exercised against a stronger outside force. In contrast, the weak-willed northern mothers, in Wollstonecraft's eyes, do a disservice both to their offspring and to themselves, enfeebling their own minds as much as those of the children whom they grant too much license.

In contrast to this troubling approach, Wollstonecraft depicts the Danish Princess Matilda's praiseworthy methods with her son, with Matilda functioning as a mouthpiece of appropriate pedagogy: "she "bathe[d] him herself every morning, insisted on his being loosely clad; and would not permit his attendants to injure his digestion, by humoring his appetite" (98). If the boy's body and its appetites are carefully controlled, so too are his emotional appetites,

with his tendency for haughtiness being carefully managed lest the boy become a “tyrant in leading strings.” Here, Matilda serves as an example of a strong-willed mother who, thanks to her privileged class status, is able to rear her child in the methods Wollstonecraft herself vociferously recommends, a practice the lower-class women of Sweden seem to be incapable of accessing.

Although Wollstonecraft is privileging her own pedagogical practices over those of the locals, her own child-rearing practices are far from secure, and are based in the contingent, difficult work of familial sympathy. Upon arriving in the Norwegian town of Laurvig, Mary, due to her appearance of exhausted delicacy, is given particularly kind and attentive care, a show of sympathy that overwhelms her reserves, “more than it would have done, had [her] spirits not been harassed by various causes,” most specifically the “weak melancholy that hung about [her] heart at parting with [her] daughter for the first time” (33). Defending her emotional response, Mary produces an apologia of her “weakness” that recasts her melancholia as a pedagogical concern on her daughter’s behalf: “you know that as a female I am particularly attached to her—I feel more than a mother's fondness and anxiety when I reflect on the dependent and oppressed state of her sex.” If Fanny's state is dependent and oppressed, then Mary's presence close to Fanny is necessary to teach her how to comport herself within that state.

Mary is more than a natural mother, then: she is a teacher who, as a woman, will be able to shape Fanny's expanding world view in line with her expectations. Yet, as Thomas Ford points out, the “syntactical ambiguity of the phrase 'as a female'--it can refer to both 'I' and 'her'--establishes a female solidarity that exceeds maternal, biological rectitude” (203). Fanny, at fourteen months old, is too small to join her mother in reflecting on the “dependent and

oppressed state of her sex," so that her mother's ostensible lessons would be wasted. Furthermore, these lessons are so ambivalent as to cancel each other out: while anxiously attached to Fanny and concerned for the chance that she might have to "sacrifice her heart to her principles" (33) or the reverse, Mary simultaneously plans lessons which will "cultivate sensibility" and "cherish delicacy of feeling" in her daughter, lest she unfit that daughter for the trials her sex is heir to. While in other places celebrating her own pedagogical practices in contrast to those of monstrous local women, when the focus of the pedagogy is her own daughter, her radical uncertainty becomes such that no action can be conclusively taken. Furthermore, between the ambiguity of "as a female" and the generality of "hapless woman! What fate is thine," Fanny herself drops out of the rhetoric. The passage is addressed apostrophically to an absent other which could categorically encompass all women, although the very word "woman" excludes Fanny in her present state, in favor of Mary's imagined representation of her in the future.

Throughout the *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, Wollstonecraft constructs a rhetoric of affection and personal attachment within her readership, a process of investment which goes so far that more than a few contemporary readers professed a veritable love for her. Yet this affection is in tension with the way relationships to children and pedagogy are portrayed within the body of the text itself. In particular, Mary's relationship to Fanny, and that daughter's liminal position within her mother's world, is an intensively affective relationship which can only be constructed through a certain narrative distance. This is certainly not to say that all relationships within the text are doomed to failure, or even that Mary's relationship with her daughter is not as affectionate as perhaps it should be.

More importantly, noticing the solitude at the heart of this relationship raises "questions about forming and sustaining human relations" through "the necessary epistemological limits of knowing and being known by others" (Yousef 541). Wollstonecraft is an intensely sentimental writer engaged deeply in a process of self-building and relation-building with her readers, but if this self-fashioning is "shaped by vulnerability and acknowledged dependence on others" (Yousef 537), that very dependence is tangential, qualified by a necessary distance.

Chapter Three: Solving the Two-Body Problem: Maternal Relations and Split Authorship in Leonara Sansay's *Secret History*

Thus far, I have engaged in exploring how Mary Wollstonecraft and Lady Mary Montagu, as female travel writers of the eighteenth century, experienced their maternity as a pedagogical tool, a standpoint from which to educate their traveling companions, the residents of the areas through which they travel, their readerships, and themselves. Through their descriptions of their own maternity, these women have tried to convince those around them to use and relate to their own bodies, and their own role as women and as mothers, in more thoughtful, positive, and self-reflective ways. However, through Wollstonecraft's fears for her daughter's future, and her own inability to relate to that daughter without a necessary interpersonal distance, as well as Montagu's uneasy pregnancy which undermines her satire of the Turkish women's passion for child-bearing, both previous studies have uncovered an anxiety about women's maternal and pedagogical potential. While women's position within the household, second only to the husband, ostensibly allowed them power over educating their children, this pedagogical possibility, dependent on the maternal body, broke down at that body's very boundaries. Despite sophisticated rhetorical ploys including the construction of narrative sympathy, and satirical letters carefully modulated on their recipients' prejudices and understandings, the maternal embodiment expressed in these letters which gave the women their pedagogical sanction also complicated their own roles in relation to that pedagogy.

In Leonara Sansay's *Secret History, or, The Horrors of St. Domingo*[10], amid the rhetoric of violent revolutions, both political and personal, women likewise assert a pedagogical function based on their own maternal, and sexualized, bodies, a function which is undergirded by anxiety on the extent of this female power. Also like Wollstonecraft's and Montagu's, Sansay's *Secret History* is an epistolary text, whose letters construct a teacher-student dynamic both between the writer and the letter's specific recipient, and between the writer and the larger readership which can be reached through the publication of ostensibly private correspondence. As in Wollstonecraft and Montagu, the "classrooms" created by these letters are not simplistically

[10] *Secret History*, as I will refer to the text, follows the story of sisters Mary and Clara, shortly after their reunion on the event of the latter's marriage to St. Louis. The story is expressed through a series of letters written by Mary to her friend (and likely lover) in Philadelphia, Aaron Burr, and relate the sisters' stay in Cape Francois on St. Domingue, the amusements and fashion of the residents, Mary's anxieties on behalf of her unhappily-married sister, and her second-hand accounts of the racialized violence under Dessaline's reign. After tensions between Clara and her husband escalate, he threatens to disfigure her, at which threat she plots escape, running away into the nearby mountain town of Cobre and writing a series of three letters to Mary during her absence. Mary herself, meanwhile, leaves for Cuba in the evacuation which precedes Dessaline's racial cleansing of the new island nation. At the end of the novel, the sisters are reunited in Jamaica. The final letter ends with Mary apprising Burr of her plans to return with Philadelphia with Clara and set up housekeeping.

The plot takes many of its thematics from Sansay's own life, and particularly from her relationship with Aaron Burr. The two were friends from as early as 1796. In 1800, Leonara, seemingly at Burr's suggestion, married Louis Sansay, a refugee from St. Domingue who had sold his plantation to the revolutionary Toussaint Louverture. Leonara set up housekeeping with Louis, but maintained a romantic relationship with Burr. She was apparently staying with Burr in Washington in 1802, when, upon hearing of the French re-invasion of Haiti, Louis decided to reclaim his plantation, pleading with Burr to send Leonara to join him in Haiti (Drexler 28-9). Burr seems to have convinced Leonara on the safety and prudence of joining her husband, playing the role of interested friend to her as the fictionalized Burr does for Mary and Clara. Sansay continued to correspond with Burr throughout her tenure in St. Domingue, concerning the events of the revolution, her own boredom and frustration on the island, and her relationship with Burr himself.

For detailed historical and textual background, see Michael Drexler's Introduction. *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo.* By Leonara Sansay. Ed. Michael Drexler. Buffalo: Broadview, 2007. Print.

didactic environments. Rather, the pedagogy constructed by these female writers doubles back upon them, recasting the readers as teachers and the writers as students, and thereby creating a recursive dynamic of educational exchange rather than a one-way transmission of knowledge.

However, Sansay's text differs dramatically from Montagu's and Wollstonecraft's in two important respects: it is the only novel of the group I am considering, and as such it has two protagonists who bear a maternal and sororal relationship to one another. If Wollstonecraft and Montagu are relaying their travel experiences directly through their correspondence, albeit modifying their rhetoric to appeal to varied audiences for varied educational purposes, Sansay's novelistic format allows her to go a step further, bifurcating herself and her experiences into two separate fictional characters: her own doppelganger, Mary, and her fictional sister Clara[11]. Her more overtly fictional format allows her to diffuse the anxiety of feminine embodiment over two selves, amplifying the possibilities for education through their interactions. No longer limited to a two-way process of educating a single reader or a group of them, and being educated by them in return, Sansay's doubling strategy allows for a whole network of pedagogical relationships: Mary to Clara, and Clara to Mary; Mary to Aaron Burr, the fictionalized recipient of her letter; Leonara Sansay to the historical Aaron Burr, and, through that mouthpiece; Sansay to the wider readership drawn to her text's appeal as both novel and history.

Current scholarly articles on Sansay often discuss her text's structural and potentially novelistic aspects through a postcolonial lens, turning to women's roles as supporting details,

[11] Clara makes her first appearance in a private letter from Leonara Sansay to the real-life Aaron Burr, in which Sansay complained of her frustration at being cooped up in Cape Francois, surrounded by soldiers. She takes on Clara as a flirtatious alter ego, asking Burr if he remembers "that Clara you once loved?" (*Secret History* 29). From there, the rest of the letter presents the plot of *Secret History* in condensed form, with Clara serving as a lens through which to view Leonara. Clara's invention marks Sansay's entrance into literary circles.

while often minimizing the sisters' mutual relationship. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse note how early American novels, including Sansay's, map the New World in line with the Gothic novel, arguing that through their similarity to captivity narratives and their attention to the "problem of population," such novels imagine a cosmopolitan community rather than the national one of British fiction during the same period (668). Gretchen Woertendyke attends to the tension between the *Secret History's* simultaneous generic classifications as private correspondence and *roman à clef* intended for public consumption, arguing that the novel's power lies in its interplay of genres as well as its "spectacle[s] of horror" of both Clara's abusive marriage and the racial violence of the revolution (258).

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon argues that Sansay's apparent focus on "elite, white domestic relations against the backdrop of warfare over colonial race slavery" serves as an "astute analysis of the relations of production and social reproduction that stand at the core of colonial politics" (78). Matt Clavin attends to the didactic purposes behind narratives of the Haitian revolution, with both pro- and anti-slavery writers "engaged in blurring the line between nonfiction and popular novelistic genres, in order to "startle, titillate, and frighten readers" while also "inform[ing] them of either the benefits or the horrors likely to accompany abolition" (3). Michael Drexler historically situates *Secret History*, arguing that the text reflects the violently redefined categories of freedom which emerged in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. He also provides extensive historical background on Leonara Sansay's friendship and romance with Aaron Burr, and details how *Secret History* both grew out of and complicated Sansay's real-life

correspondence and experiences in revolutionary Haiti[12].

Like Wollstonecraft and Montagu's, Sansay's letters both serve as pedagogical tools for educating her readership and as an expression of the anxieties inherent in the pedagogical project that relies so heavily on the rhetoric of the readable female body and its implication in a patriarchal system for its authority. With the construction of Clara, Sansay overtly splits her authorial voice over two distinct characters. This device allows each of Sansay's personae to relate to each other pedagogically, reflecting roles as teacher and student onto one another. Neither of these personae are mothers within the plot of the novel, yet Mary takes on a maternal role towards Clara, through their sororal one, educating her to the proper decorum of married life. If Mary takes on a maternal role as pedagogue to Clara, then Clara herself, through the three letters in her own voice, complicates Mary's attempted pedagogy, returning it to Mary in a revised form and once again casting the latter as the student, in a educational revision akin to that Mary Montagu undertakes when she recasts the Abbe Conti as her student. In the process, Clara's reversal uncovers both women's anxiety as powerful educators and powerless victims within the domestic sphere. In this, Sansay's text fits into the same paradigm as Montagu's and Wollstonecraft's. However, in the protagonists' complicated maternal/sororal relationship lies the important difference. By making both of her protagonists childless, Sansay de-emphasizes their maternal embodiment in favor of their pedagogical relationship to each other. Each sister is periodically cast as a child and a student of the other, creating a mutual, metaphorical kind of

[12] For more extensive background and context on the Haitian Revolution, as well as British and American female travel writers' responses to slavery, see Michael Drexler's "Brigands and Nuns: The Vernacular Sociology of Collectivity after the Haitian Revolution;" Moira Ferguson's *Subject to Others*, pg. 3-26 and 209-248; Robert Blair St. George's *Possible Pasts*, esp. Peter Hulme's "Postcolonial Theory and Early America: An Approach from the Caribbean." pg 33-48; and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's *This Violent Empire,* pg. 1-46, 250-290, and 365-412.

motherhood that is constructed through their sororal relationship rather than their embodied maternity.

Yet this metaphorical motherhood is not created by completely devaluing the female body. On the contrary, especially after Mary learns of the horrific domestic abuse Clara suffered at St. Louis' hands, the sisters become progressively closer, both physically and emotionally. Mary professes fervent admiration for Clara's intelligence, her beauty, and her physical form, crying out in her relief at their reunion after the latter's escape from her husband that she "had held that truant girl to [her] heart and ha[d] forgotten whilst embracing her all the reproaches [she] intended to make" (152). This homosocial affection is offered as an antidote to the damaging male attentions of St. Louis, granting a romantic connotation to the sister's already complex relation. If the first two texts of this study exhibited the tensions of maternity and pedagogy as played out on the female body, so that the pedagogy each author was able to express to others was undermined by her contested relations to her own body, Leonara Sansay offers a two-body solution to this maternal anxiety by splitting herself into two narrative personae. Rather than remaining a self-contained and self-identical narrative presence, Leonara Sansay, through the narrative device of splitting herself into two bodies, interrogates what it means to be a pedagogue, a mother and finally, a woman. At the level of plot, she grants Mary and Clara an alternate domestic arrangement between women, one which invokes sisterly, maternal, pedagogical, and, finally, romantic models. On a meta-narrative level, Sansay's self-duplication serves as a pedagogical lesson to her readership, providing an example of the development of satisfying personal relations between women that extend beyond the bounds of maternity, suggesting the self-reflexivity and flexibility possible when viewing oneself through the lens of a

fictional other.

The very first letter of the novel begins by uniting the sisters through a maternal metaphor, in the opening description of the sisters' arrival by ship, which privileges Mary's bodily reactions, as she suffers “horribly from sea-sickness, heat and confinement” (61). When she feels well enough to venture on deck, she glories in the “profound tranquillity of the ocean, the uninterrupted view, the beautiful horizon,” and wishes to unite herself with these assorted beauties by “build[ing] a dwelling on the bosom of the waters, where, sheltered from the storms that agitate mankind, [she] should be exposed to those of heaven only.” Woertendyke notes the unsettling maternal connotations of this opening image, which works to “animate[] the violence of totalizing forms of history” (9) by depicting the contested site of a ship carrying returning slave owners to the very place of the slave revolt through a “metaphor of maternal warmth and comfort.” Elizabeth Maddock Dillon likewise makes note of this passage as setting up an “incongruity of experiential registers” which expands hyperbolically from this opening moment until asserting itself in “scenes of bayoneted bodies interspersed with accounts of blushing glances exchanged at balls” (28).

While the maternal metaphor is undercut by the unsettling relationship to colonial power it overlooks, it is also bolstered by the responsibilities of the sororal relationship. Mary introduces us to the fortune of her sister, who “repents every day having so precipitately chosen a husband...and I foresee that she will be wretched” (61). In light of this likelihood, Mary is obliged to follow her sister's fortunes, effectively turning away from the maternal promise the ocean holds out for her, and instead taking up the maternal role towards her sister herself. If Clara will be “wretched,” Mary promises to be there for her, sacrificing her own friends, fortune,

and possibly happiness for her betterment.

If Sansay begins by casting Mary in a maternal role, that maternity in the absence of children is sanctioned throughout the text by her self-confident pedagogical attempts on other mothers. Like Wollstonecraft and Montagu, Mary's satirical, and at times horrified, depictions of local mothering practices are written to a single correspondent, but, in being published, serve as a wider social warning against mothering one's own children ineffectively. Yet unlike those authors, Mary is not empowered to speak out against local practices by virtue of her own maternity. Quite the reverse, as her confidence in making these judgments grants her efficacy as a pedagogue, allowing Sansay to construct the figure of the pedagogue as a childless mother, and implying that there could be more than one way to accrue power over education. In a passage on the Creole women's sexual mores, Mary casts the baneful effect on young women in specifically educational terms, bemoaning how “female virtue is blasted in the bud by the contagious influence of example” (96), with every young girl eager to throw off the social shackles imposed on her in a single state, and take up the licentiousness she sees represented in her mother's behavior.

Here, she sounds very like Mary Wollstonecraft in her indictment of the Swedish women who nip their children in the bud through overdressing. Both authors suggest that the residents of Haiti and Sweden, respectively, share a similarly inappropriate fixation on the bodies of their children, which serves to enfeeble both their own and their children's minds. However, unlike Wollstonecraft, Mary places the blame for this state of affairs not only on the mothers who abuse their own educational prerogative, but even more so on the husbands who do not allow their wives proper dignity, and hence obviate their possibility to serve as positive behavioral models.

The Creole men, she contends, “seek only the gratification of their sensual appetites” and hence minimize the women into mere “enchanting...ministers of pleasure,” (96) a diminishment which, while privileging the body, evacuates the heart from both the lustful man and the coquettish woman. A thinking, feeling man, in distinction, would “view[] in woman the beneficent creature who nourished him with her milk, and watched over his helpless infancy.” While the right sort of man would be able to see the woman's function as a nurturing educator informing her body, rather than allowing that body to overwhelm the educational possibility, Sansay, through Mary, warns female readers of the dangers of men willfully misreading their bodies, casting them simply as objects to satisfy male desires. Once again the relationship between the protagonists stands in relief against this danger, as Sansay sets up the sisters to educate each other on their concepts of embodiment, sexuality, and responsibility while avoiding the potential violence of the male gaze.

The tale of Madame C provides an example of this male violence within the supposedly-safe confines of the heterosexual home. As Clavin points out, the rise of the Gothic novel coincided with publication of historical and biographical documents about the Haitian revolution, with many authors taking advantage of this temporal connection to turn Gothic conventions to task in attracting readers. In this tradition, Sansay “borrowed and mimicked these conventions not only 'to furnish an awful, yet practical lesson,' but also 'to excite and gratify a laudable curiosity'” (Clavin 5). Through this borrowing, Sansay, as in the tale of Madame C, pedagogically builds on her readers' pre-existing knowledge while playing on their emotions in order to reward curiosity as it is created, directing attention to the particular ills of female embodiment and power. The story is thus: Madame C discovers her husband, in her absence, has

turned over his property to his new Creole mistress. He then sets up housekeeping with the mistress, retracting his financial support from his family and hence leaving Madame C and her daughter, Clarissa, to starve. Despite embarrassment and physical want, Madame C remains stoic, unwilling to ask her friends for assistance, only "seeking consolation in the bosom of her daughter" (114). Eventually, a Frenchman falls in love with Clarissa and presents his case to her mother, who, though sympathetic, is unwilling to expose her daughter to further poverty. The man addresses himself to Clarissa's father, who despite lavishing riches on his mistress, refuses to provide Clarissa with a dowry. The mother, moved by Clarissa's "tears, her sighs, and the ardent prayers of her lover" (115) finally consents to their marriage. In true Gothic style, however, Clarissa is struck by a fever only ten days after the ceremony, and although her new groom rushes to her father's house for succor, he is turned away with indifference. The mother and son-in-law between them lack the money to pay a physician, and can only "h[a]ng over her in all the bitterness of anguish" (115) until she dies.

At the moment of this mother's greatest distress, and greatest helplessness, Mary reemerges, directing her readers' attention through her own emotional intensity and bodily immediacy, dwelling on how she's "held this disconsolate mother to my breast; my tears have mingled with hers....she wishes only for the moment that will put a period to her existence, when she fondly hopes she may be again united to her daughter" (115). Here, the only possible expression of maternity left Madame C is her own death, which would allow her renewed communication with her daughter through a reenactment of the violence visited upon that daughter. In a moment of intensely personal, politically charged exhortation, Mary urges her readers to consider the rule behind this unfortunate woman's example: "How terrible is the fate

of a woman thus dependent on a man who has lost all sense of justice, reason, or humanity; who, regardless of his duties, or the respect he owes society, leaves his wife to contend with all the pains of want, and sees his child sink to an untimely grave, without stretching forth a hand to assist the one or save the other!" Since there can be no guarantee against anyone losing their sense of "justice, reason, or humanity," the danger of being thus terribly dependent is always extant. One could just as easily drop the latter half of the sentence: "How terrible is the fate of a woman thus dependent on a man." While Wollstonecraft and Montagu express their anxiety over their implication within such a patriarchal system in their letters, Leonara Sansay attacks this terrible dependency directly through fiction, by splitting herself into parallel narrative personae and hence obviating, through their more-salutary relations to one another, the need for a patriarchal marriage structure.

The letters of *Secret History* are addressed to Aaron Burr, who in real life had been Leonara Sansay's former lover, and in the world of the novel seems to have been Mary's, although the conditions of the latter relationship are never graced with any name more specific than that of "friend." Indeed, Clara also has her "special friend" who recommended her marriage to St. Louis, as the real-life Aaron Burr recommended Sansay's marriage, suggesting that Aaron Burr, as a bridge between the fictional world and the historical one, has also been doubled to match Sansay's own self-duplication. Despite this romantic attachment on the part of each sister, the most structurally remarkable, and seemingly satisfying, marriage plot is that between the sisters themselves. When writing to Aaron Burr, Mary reminds him of the gratitude she bears him for rescuing her from painful circumstances, when, "an orphan without friends, without support," she had been "separated from [her] sister from [her] infancy" (79). Instead of the love

of that sister, Mary had been “cast on the world without an asylum,” in the depths of which despair, she met Burr who, as Mary sentimentally exclaims, “raised [her]--soothed [her] and “whispered peace to [her] lacerated breast!” Furthermore, his intervention reunited the sisters at the moment of Clara's marriage, and in so doing “procured for [Mary] a home not only respectable, but in which all the charms of fashionable elegance, all the attractions of pleasure are united.” Here, Mary fervently thanks Burr for granting her with a home in which she can see no fault, quite like a lovestruck bride overjoyed at the security with which her new groom provides her. However, Burr does not take the role of the groom in this arrangement. Rather, he serves as a placeholder which unites the sisters in a domestic arrangement, superimposing Clara over the place of the groom, in a pattern which structurally echoes marriage.Through Burr's activity, Clara is put into a position of pedagogical power over Mary, able to grant her the security of a stable home and a loving partner.

While Clara's pedagogical potential over Mary is latent, based on her structural role relative both to Burr and to her own husband, Mary's attempts to educate Clara are overt and specific, often obscuring Clara's alternate pedagogy while also giving it its sanction, in happily accepting the proffered home. Yet despite the “intoxicating scenes of ever-varying amusement” and the “incense of adulation,” which Mary experiences in her new home, Clara is as wretched as Mary had predicted. This prevents Mary's own happiness, but also provides her the opportunity for a pedagogical remonstrance. Since Clara has been “accustomed from her infancy to enjoy the sweets of opulence,” Mary bemoans the expectations thus created, giving Clara “a bosom to which peace is a stranger” (79). As Mary remarks in an earlier letter, “nothing amuses her,” and she “seems to exist only in the recollection of past happiness” (63). Here, Mary sounds

like a concerned teacher or parent summing up the psychological blocks to a student's progress. Though Clara remains silent and dissatisfied, Mary recognizes this petulance to arise from the depth of Clara's aversion to her husband, speculating on “how painful her intercourse with him” must be, since “her elegant mind, stored with literary acquirement, is lost to him” (64). Mary recognizes Clara's intellectual potential, which is currently rendered impotent by St. Louis' disinterest. Despite these potential gifts, Mary blames the previous pedagogical attempts on Clara, by her unnamed friend, for leaving her without self-sufficiency, requiring Mary’s own guidance to support Clara's spirits and bring her latent intellectual talents to the fore. Here, Mary asserts herself as a pedagogical authority over Clara, thereby placing herself in a maternal role relative to her.

If this pedagogical project seeks to make apparent the anxiety underlining women's roles as mothers and teachers, true to form Mary's own pedagogy is anxiously returned upon her through the text of Clara's letters. While the grand majority of the letters comprising *Secret History* are written in Mary's voice, three remarkable letters from Clara, written while in hiding after her escape from her husband, serve to reverse the pedagogical direction which has predominated. In the first, and most extended, of these letters, Clara provides a lesson of the particular circumstances of her escape as well as the generalized conditions of violence which ensured its necessity. Clara recognizes that Mary must have misread her hopeless dissatisfaction with her marriage as petulance, since she now admits she presented an edited version of her sorrows, in order to “spare you [Mary] the anguish of lamenting sorrows which you could not alleviate” (137). Here, Clara reveals that all along she has been training Mary by redirecting her vision, unwilling to provide her with information that would be beyond her capacity. Now,

deciding that the time is ripe for further education, Clara tells the whole story, including the places where she protected Mary from unpropitious secrets. St. Louis, Clara reveals, “has treated [her] with the most brutal violence—this you never knew, nor many things which passed in the loneliness of my chamber, where, wholly in his power, I could only oppose to his brutality my tears and my sighs.” Like Madame C, Clara is dependent, and can do nothing but bemoan her fate, although, unlike Madame C's overburdened stoicism, she promptly places the blame on St. Louis' unconquerable jealousy and unreasonable demands. Clara recasts her lassitude in light of this secret violence as frustrated resignation, rather than childish petulance or incomplete education, as she had been taught to consider the marriage-bond as sacred, and “recoiled with horror from the idea of breaking it.”

She goes on to trace for Mary the specifics of her shift in understanding, and the rationale by which her decision was not only logically consistent, but necessary and responsible. The night before her departure, she asserts, St. Louis “came home in a transport of fury, dragged [her] from [her] bed, said it was his intention to destroy [her], and swore that he would render [her] horrible by rubbing aqua-fortis in [her] face” (138). Clara is struck insensible with the violence of this threat, able to do nothing but consider how best to escape this “monster.” Her cognitive process, however, is disrupted by a vivid scene of sexual abuse painted in intimately painful detail for Mary's education: “I was roused by his caresses, or rather by his brutal approaches, for he always finds my person provoking, and often, whilst pouring on my head abuse which would seem dictated by the most violent hatred, he has sought in my arms gratification which should be solicited with affection, and granted to love alone” (139). While Clara is willing to tolerate emotional incompatibility and even mental abuse in order to maintain her belief in the sanctity of

marriage, she is unwilling to allow St. Louis free rein over her body. Rather, she asserts her power over her own bodily affects as well as her own pedagogical power by choosing, on rational consideration, to leave St. Louis the moment he trespasses on those boundaries, as well as providing Mary with the logical progression of her decision. Clara then involves Mary in the production of this knowledge, urging her to "recollect my unusual sadness that day; for well do I remember the kind efforts you made to divert me." Here, she plays on their shared memory to encourage Mary to recast her own indifference, explaining why Mary's pedagogical attempts couldn't succeed without full knowledge. Furthermore, she recognizes and rewards Mary's emotional investment in her happiness, assuring her that "my heart was breaking at the idea of being separated from you," but confident that, with the full spectrum of facts before her, Mary can't help but approve her choice to get out from the terrible condition of dependence exacted on her sex.

Clara's pedagogy, reversing Mary's earlier authority, is in fact effective. Even with Mary's self-defined "fine sentiments of correctness and propriety, and the duty of content and resignation," she agrees with Clara upon rational, if painful, reflection, that "never was there anything more directly opposite than the soul of Clara, and that of the man to whom she was united. Their tempers, their dispositions, were absolutely incompatible" (136). The final consideration to convince her of the need to support Clara, however, is her own affection. Unable to think of Clara, abandoned and pining among strangers, Mary exclaims sentimentally, "Ah! No, she is twined round my heart, and I love her with more than a sister's affection." This romantic declaration echoes the earlier classification of the marriage-like structure of the respectable home Mary is overjoyed to build with Clara, albeit in a higher emotional key. If the

women were originally reunited through the men's double imposition, in the persons of Burr and St. Louis, Mary's exclamation suggests a possibility for a deeper emotional connection on the basis of their shared escape from those men.

Writing to her sister to plead for more information, Mary demands of Clara whether her "heart require[s] the affectionate sympathy it has been accustomed to receive from mine[.] Can you live without me? Without me who have followed you, and love you with an affection so tender? Dearest Clara, speak and I will fly to you!" (137). Here, sororal affection is nearly overtaken by a sympathy that sounds much more romantic than filial, with Mary closing her letter as "more than a sister" but a "friend, who loves you, who adores your virtues, and who pardons...your faults." If St. Louis has invalidated his claims on his wife's affections by abusing her body, then Mary advertises her own suitability to fill his role by her adoration of that very body, as well as, inseparably, the mind that belongs to it. By now understanding and complementing one another's pedagogical projects, Mary suggests that she and Clara, as women, can be better insurers of one another's comfort, affection, and peace than any man could be to either.

In the final letter of the text, Mary tells Burr the touching tale of the sisters' reunion, and their plans to remain in one another's society, in terms that privilege both their complicated sororal/romantic relations, and the educational prerogative on which that relationship is based. In describing the moment of their meeting, Mary touchingly says she has "held that truant girl to my heart, and have forgotten while embracing her all the reproaches I intended to make" (152). She notes her physical attraction to Clara by rhetorically wondering "who can behold her and not believe that she is all goodness," yet that subtle physical cue is quickly inundated by a panegyric

on Clara's astonishing mental characteristics: “Whatever subject may engage her attention, she seizes intuitively on what is true.....her memory, surer than records, perpetuates every occurrence. She accumulates knowledge while she laughs and plays.” Mary continues to wax poetic in this strain for nearly a paragraph longer, overcome by an attraction that privileges the superior efforts of a star pupil while simultaneously recognizing her own indebtedness.

Clara is here cast as both a beautiful and desirable woman, and as a winsome child, complicating, yet again, Mary's relationship to her. When Mary assures Clara that she bears her “more than a sister's love,” the excess of the humble “more” denotes a complex of relations from sororal to homosocial which collectively offer the potential for a new kind of relationship altogether. In the final paragraphs of the text, Mary assures Burr that, although when Clara fled her husband's house she was “alone and friendless,” with Mary's endeavors she can now “enjoy[] a delightful tranquillity” (154). Rather than asserting power over Clara, as her heterosexual marriage had done to such baneful effect, Mary now claims her own usefulness to Clara in a way that simultaneously humbles Mary, deepens her emotional attachment to her sister, and grants her a sense of purpose. Concluding the letters with the sisters' plans to return to Philadelphia and set up housekeeping together, the text offers up their homosocial domestic union as a possible alternative to the gendered violence, both racial and domestic, which plagues women.

The novel privileges the role of women as educators by dint of their biological capacity for mothering, yet the novel's central characters relate to each other in pedagogical terms in the absence of children of their own. While a unidirectional pedagogy might risk categorizing the receiving sister as a child, granting sole power to the pedagogue, the eruption of Clara's own voice in her letters addressed to Mary serves instead to make the power relations recursive.

Furthermore, the sentimental and instructional language often directed toward children is intensified by exclamations of emotional reliance, self-sacrifice, and physical attraction which is imbued with a romantic model. Taken together, *Secret History,* through Sansay's doubling in the characters of Mary and Clara, productively destabilizes the power dynamics of that relation to open the more conducive possibility of homosocial domestic arrangements between women which privilege both their affection and their mutual potential for educating one another.

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